CAPTAIN AMERICA

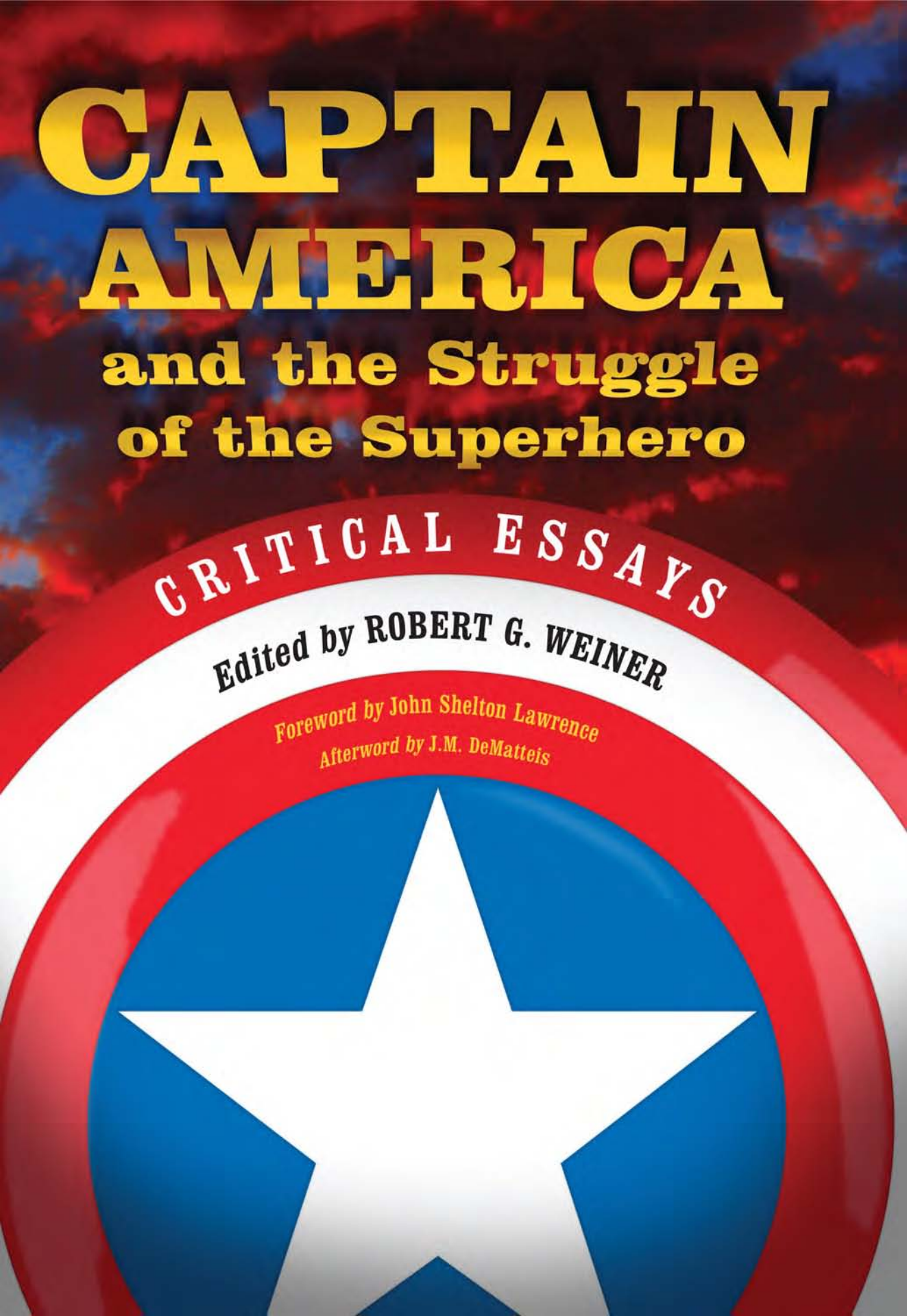
and the Struggle of the Superhero

CRITICAL ESSAYS

Edited by ROBERT G. WEINER

Foreword by John Shelton Lawrence

Afterword by J.M. DeMatteis



Captain America and the Struggle of the Superhero

This page intentionally left blank

Captain America and the Struggle of the Superhero

Critical Essays

Edited by Robert G. Weiner

Foreword by John Shelton Lawrence

Afterword by J.M. DeMatteis

McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers
Jefferson, North Carolina, and London

Also by Robert G. Weiner

Marvel Graphic Novels and Related Publications: An Annotated Guide to Comics, Prose Novels, Children's Books, Articles, Criticism and Reference Works, 1965–2005 (McFarland, 2008)

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Captain America and the struggle of the superhero : critical essays / edited by Robert G. Weiner ; foreword by John Shelton Lawrence ; afterword by J.M. DeMatteis.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7864-3703-0
softcover : 50# alkaline paper ∞

1. America, Captain (Fictitious character) I. Weiner, Robert G., 1966–
PN6728.C35C37 2009 741.5'973 — dc22 2009000604

British Library cataloguing data are available

Manufactured in the United States of America

McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers
Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina 28640
www.mcfarlandpub.com

Dedicated to

My parents (thanks for your love, and for putting up with me), and Larry and Vicki Weiner (thanks for your love, and I wish you all the happiness in the world).

JLF, TAG, DW, SCD, "Lizzie" F, C Joyce M, and AH (thanks for your friendship, and for being there).

Thomas Paine, Alexander Hamilton, Sitting Bull, Patrick Henry, Paul Revere, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mother Jones, the Grateful Dead, Dred Scott, Tim Leary, William S. Burroughs, Neal Cassady, Ken Kesey, Robert Hunter, John Perry Barlow, John Hancock, Patrick Henry, Nathan Hale, Crazy Horse, Crispus Attucks, Tecumseh, Ben Franklin, Harriet Tubman, Samuel Adams, Albert Parsons, Red Cloud, Robert Anton Wilson, and Aaron McGruder (all strong believers in Freedom and Liberty).

Everyone who has held the first office, but especially John Adams, Harry S Truman, Abraham Lincoln, Millard Fillmore, John Tyler, Woodrow Wilson, FDR, Andrew Jackson, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, James Monroe, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, James Madison, William Henry Harrison, Theodore Roosevelt, Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, John Quincy Adams, and B.H. Obama.

J.M. DeMatteis, Frank Robbins, Sal Buscema, Avi Arad, Steve Englehart, Steve Gerber, Gary Friedrich, J. Kirby, J. Simon, J. Steranko, S. Lee, A. Ross, J. Romita, R. Thomas, A. Schomburg, Erich Von Stroheim, Pink Floyd, Terry Gilliam, Mike Nelson, Joel Hodgson, Kevin Murphy, Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Joe Quesada, Boris Karloff, Daniel Burnham, Clark Gable, Cary Grant, Louise Brooks, Sir Ernest Shackleton, Sir Mick Jagger, Townes Van Zant, H.R. Giger, Sir Alfred Hitchcock, Al Jolson, Roger Stern, Otto Binder, Mike Ploog, Ian Fleming, Clara Bow, Sir Roger Moore, Daevid Allen, Mark Waid, Led Zeppelin, Mark Grunewald, Sir Sean Connery, Ed Brubaker, Steve Epting, Mike Zeck, Paul Neary, Jeph Loeb, Kyle Baker, Robert Morales, and everyone who has ever written, drawn, inked, worked on, or *loved* a Captain America comic (*you* are the makers of magic).

All those who are or have been in the U.S. armed services, and have fought or died for the cause of freedom and democracy.

And lastly, all Sentinels of Liberty, whoever you may be.

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

A toast to:

The good Captain, Bucky, the Falcon, the Avengers, Rick Jones, the Young Allies, the All Winners Squad, Invaders, Liberty Legion, Kid Commandos, and to all of the Sentinels.

Special thanks to:

My friends and family who have supported me over the years. A work like this is not usually done by just one person.

All of the peer reviewers, editors, and others who encouraged and contributed to this work.

John Shelton Lawrence for his enthusiasm for this project, and J.M. DeMatteis for believing in this project and being wonderful to work with!

The Texas Tech Library and its wonderful staff, including the late Carol Roberts.

Document delivery for being my lifeblood: Conni Kitten, Susan Hidalgo, Constance Renee Benton, Jennifer Hatchet, Dulcinea Almager, Christina Gonzales, Penny Morava, and Kory Young.

My excellent colleagues in the IS department: Jake Syma (thanks for the good conversations), Donnell Callender, Cynthia Henry, Carye Syma, Sandy River, Innocent Awuf Awasom, Esmeralda Rodriguez, and Minerva Alaniz (the mentor god)!

Laura Heinz (for giving me a chance and believing in me), Shelia Hoover (thanks for the conversations—you rock), Jon R. Hufford, Tom Rohrig and Brian Quinn (you three have put up with my many questions and have been patient and exceptional to work with), Jack Becker (who has been my mentor and has great patience), Louise Sanders (the lifeblood of the department), and Arlene Paschal (us newbies have to stay together). I hope I have not missed anyone in the organization, but thank you one and all.

Larry Scott, Dan Watkins, Y. Chandler, Frank Plemmons, Heather E. Rushing, the Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts, Linda Whitebread, Chris Caddel (the Maestro), Julie Storey, Kathrin Dodds, Payton Ware, Sara Peso White (the best-dressed and one of the loveliest women on the planet), Karen Wiley, Janie Hemmings, Lubbock's Arts Alliance, Harry Grubb, Snapper Carr, Bernie Rosenthal, Sharon Carter, TAG, Southwestern Popular Culture Association, Sally Sanchez, Ken Dvorak, Peter Rollins (for inspiration), and Philip Heldrich.

Dr. Cynthia J. Miller, aka ordinary Chick (you are *awesome*, and thanks for

the phone calls), the lovely Sara Dulin for her friendship, support, and putting up with me, Dr. Elizabeth Figa (thank you for mentorship, and for teaching me how to teach and your friendship; you've become a great friend), the celestial Alicia Holston (thanks for your friendship and those many nights talking), and the charming Dr. Jorgelina Orfila (thank you for your friendship).

John Cline, Joe and Geraldine Ferrer (I wish you all the happiness in the world on your journey together), Anthony Quigley (see, I did not forget you this time), Scott and Tom, Peter Laverity, Tim Janson, Michael Rhode, Kurt Amacker and Mania, John Rhett Thomas and the Masterworks Ezboard, Joe Gulick, Lubbock Sketch Club, Will Terrill, Star Books and Comics, Robert Mora, and anyone who has ever been my friend.

Director James Leonard, Leah Stuhltrager and Dam Stuhltrager Gallery, and Lazarus, for working with me on helping officially document their Captain America DVD project.

And my little furred friends who always have a yahoo whenever I walk through the door: Shelia, Zowie, Princess, Remy, Sunshine, LeRoy (my best buddy), and Poncho, who warms my heart. This book is dedicated to anyone who has ever loved a prairie dog.

Table of Contents

COMPARISONS OF CAPTAIN AMERICA WITH OTHER CHARACTERS

POLITICAL INTERPRETATIONS AND THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN AMERICA

LITERARY INTERPRETATIONS

GUIDES

Key to Abbreviations

A.I.M.: Advanced Idea Mechanics

ASC: All Select Comics

AW: All Winners (Also known as All Winners Comics)

CA: *Captain America*

CAC: Captain America Comics

CBW: Captain Britain Weekly

PWJ: Punisher War Journal

S.H.I.E.L.D.: Supreme Headquarters, International Espionage, Law-Enforcement Division

ToS: Tales of Suspense

U.S.A.: United States of America

USA: USA Comics

This page intentionally left blank

Foreword by John Shelton Lawrence

If you seek an essential Captain America, a warrior dependably cheerful and as patriotic as the flag itself, this book will disappoint. The old Captain, now age sixty-seven, intermittently hibernated, and recently dead, has been an unstable character. Lacking the tightly wound core of a Mickey Mouse or Lone Ranger, Cap's identity changes as commercial rights to his name and likeness are shuttled around to dozens of production teams in series such as *Tales of Suspense*, *Sentinel of Liberty* or *Marvel Knights*. The Captain has even been rented to the Colgate-Palmolive Company for ads portraying his lethal brushes with the evil Sorcerer Plakula, a relentless enemy of children's teeth. Most recently, Captain America cologne hit the store shelves. Heightening his volatility, Cap often thinks critically about the facts of history in his time, the legitimacy of commands from superiors, and how his actions are seen by others. His behavior thus bears the marks of politics and policies of the moment.

The Captain's instability increased post–9/11, his attitudes prompting critics such as Michael Medved and Michael Lackner to ask whether he is a "traitor" and to call for a national boycott. They speak of "his betrayal" in becoming "a handy symbol for America-bashing" (1). The criticism does have a point, because the recent Cap consciously shuns the Fourth of July triumphal oratory that celebrates America's innocence and benevolent power. His demeanor in the war against terrorists is just the latest chapter for a hero who can disobediently drum his own beat.

The following paragraphs suggest a thread for connecting the endpoints of the protean Captain America narratives — from birth in 1941 to his most recent deaths in 2007 and 2008, first in *The Civil War* and later in *The Chosen*. The contributors to this fine volume lay out the nuances of the Captain's intervening life histories with a comprehensiveness that sets a new standard for the character's interpretation.

Birth

At the moment of Captain America's birth, in *Captain America Comics 1*, the sickly but smart draft reject is told that he will "become one of America's saviors." Steve Rogers welcomes his super-soldier-serum-pumped body, and gladly dons a disguise and shield that riff on Old Glory's stars and stripes (Simon 4). The Captain's flag branding is joined by standard attributes of the Golden Age comics superhero — secret identity (as a uniformed soldier who looks like a Scoutmaster) — isolation (no mom to fuss over his sudden need for bigger clothes) — selflessness (he owns nothing) — magic weapon (the shield) — and relentless physical stamina. Defined within the setting of a nearly impotent/incompetent U.S. government, this superhero becomes a wiser, more effective, embodiment of America's capacity for war.

Yet he is intensely political, as Cap's creator Joe Simon emphasized: "The opponents to the war were all quite well organized; we wanted to have our say too" (qtd in Wright 36). Reinforcing the call to action, the magazine's first issue advertised memberships for the "Sentinels of Liberty," urging children to "join Captain America in his war against the spies and enemies in our midst who threaten our very independence." By sending ten cents, the reader could buy a badge and membership card with a pledge to "assist Captain America in his war against spies in the U.S.A." (Simon 10).

Unlike passive fellow citizens and national leaders, in the months before Pearl Harbor, Cap seeks out and neutralizes national dangers: traitorous business leaders, Nazi saboteurs, and the monstrous, "ageless oriental giants" who, in Cap's second issue, overpower the U.S. Army. Disguised as a grandmother and her sweetly dressed grandson, Cap and Bucky even take a plane to "the Nazi stronghold," in Berlin, so that they can rescue Baldwin, an important British war financier (*CAC 2*). Back in America, the pair fights the Fifth Columnists, "to wipe out the dogs of dictatorships," by recruiting youthful Sentinels of Liberty, and their fathers, for a raid on the German American Bund's "Camp Reichland" (Simon *CAC 5* 1–10).

For such aggressive thrusts, which were initially out of step with isolationist U.S. policy, the comic book eventually earned official approval from the national consensus it helped create. The Captain America title made the cut of 189 magazines the War Department "distributed to troops without scrutiny of political content." This announcement indicated that the liberal, leftish "*New Republic*, *Nation*, and *New Masses* were not included because ... no preference for the magazine was indicated by the troops" (Shalett 8). Captain America appeared on posters selling "Back the Attack" war bonds, and the dimensions of his genesis lead many to believe that his character can be counted on to meld his will to U.S. government policy. Yet he sat out much of the Vietnam War, and in the post–Watergate period, he felt briefly shamed into stripping off his iconic uniform to become the disillusioned Nomad, a Man without a Country.

The Script for the Global War on Terror

Jump forward to 2007 when Captain was assassinated, after surrendering to the U.S. government amidst disputes about the Superhuman Registration Act. He had just wearily lamented to the Falcon, "We're not fighting for the people anymore ... we're just fighting." This death seemed a little untimely, in that there was a moment in 2005 when it seemed that this older Captain might finally be revived as America's iconic warrior. Marvel Comics collaborated with the Pentagon to host a patriotic marketing event for the *New Avengers* line, which would be distributed free to one million troops, as part of the "America Supports You" campaign. Donald Rumsfeld posed for photos with Spider-Man and Captain America. A child present was quoted as saying, "It's good for the superheroes to show support for the troops because some kids want to be like their favorite superheroes." Army Colonel Joe Mudd, from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, commended the appearance of Cap and Spidey, saying, "Any show of support is important, and people relate to comics.... We like the good guys to win, and we think we're the good guys too." He added that the narratives of popular comics "speak to what we strive for as individuals and as a nation" (Rhem).

Despite the warm atmosphere, an off-key note came from Marvel's own vice president

In a rare moment of harmony with higher command during the Global War on Terrorism, Spider-Man and Captain America appeared at the Pentagon as the honored guests of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, second from left. Flanking Rumsfeld are Allison Barber, deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, and Marvel Comics senior vice president Rob Steffens (U.S. Department of Defense, Tech Sgt. Cherie A. Thurlby, USAF).

of operations, Rob Steffens. Instead of citing supportive magazine content for the ongoing war, he twittered,

> I work for Marvel Enterprises—I have the privilege of doing something frivolous for a living.... At Marvel, we create comic books and movies and intellectual properties to entertain people. I'm thankful to live in a country where we have the freedom to produce something frivolous as a means of entertainment [Cramer].

Steffens' awkward praise of frivolity may have expressed a sense of humility in finding himself at the command center for U.S. military power. But he betrayed less confidence in Captain America than the trustful sentiments of the child or Colonel Mudd. Was there a problem with Captain America that prompted such a gratuitously self-effacing characterization? Given the well-known facts about the post 9/11 Cap, there should have been; before 2005 had ended, the first Marvel Zombies appeared, with "Colonel America" as an undead, ravenous flesh eater. But the darkest cloud hovering over this event was Captain America's eroding patriotism, which was related to America's ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The official script for the Global War on Terrorism was established on September 14, 2001, when George W. Bush announced that "our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil." He promised that the apocalyptic struggle "will end in a way, and at an hour, of our choosing" (Bush 2001). Less than a month later, Operation Enduring Freedom began in Afghanistan. The nation soldiered on there, and then added the Iraq front in 2003. Bush won a second term, and his bouyant 2005 inaugural address expanded the theme of world redemption, by "ending tyranny in our world." Refer-

ring to Iraq, he praised the results of his war leadership, saying, "By our efforts, we have lit a fire ... a fire in the minds of men. It warms those who feel its power, it burns those who fight its progress, and one day this untamed fire of freedom will reach the darkest corners of our world" (Bush 2005).

In this flame-filled invocation, some thought Bush was linking up with Richard Perle, who had served as chair of the U.S. Defense Policy Advisory Board, and David Frum, the White House speech writer who claimed credit for the "axis of evil" phrase. Their apocalyptical book, titled *An End to Evil* (2003), asserted a warrant to reform the world along American lines — invoking the correlative right of assassination. Of Iran's current Supreme Leader, they said,

> Ayatollah Khamenei has ... no more right to control ... Iran than any other criminal has to seize control of the persons and property of others. It's not always in our power to do something about such criminals, nor is it always in our interest, but when it is in our power and interest, we should toss dictators aside with no more compunction than a police sharpshooter feels when he downs a hostage-taker [114].

Despite expressing the will to kill the leaders of other countries, these authors continue to hold the stance that "we are fighting on behalf of the civilized world" (273).

Michael Ledeen of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., a fellow traveling world transformer and occasional consultant to the U.S. government, asserted in 2003 that the governments of Syria and Iran must fall through America's efforts:

> The radical transformation of several Middle Eastern countries from oppressive tyrannies is entirely in keeping with American character and the American tradition. Creative destruction is our middle name, both within our society and abroad.... Our enemies have always hated this whirlwind of energy and creativity. They must attack us in order to survive, just as we must destroy them to advance our historic mission [212–13].

The world-altering imperatives of all these men combine military preemption, moral utopianism and the comfortable assurance that we will later be loved for our "creative destruction."

A new hero-metric is needed to describe America's declared aims during this period. I propose the term "hyperheroic" as an indication that such goals go beyond any ever uttered by historical actors. Even the popes, when launching the crusades, focused on dangers to Christians, who were seeking passage to Jerusalem, and on the loss of Christian territories to Muslim conquest. Calling the world-transforming nation "superheroic" in this context would not reflect some of the comic book/graphic novel's most important conventions. Remember, from the Golden Age forward, superhero narratives steadily presented individuals or small teams who react to the aggressions of others.

Like the American nation itself, the superhero genre leans conservative, and not merely in defending and retrieving property. There is also a firm predisposition to leave the structure of society unchanged against the plans of Marvel Universe characters such as Victor von Doom, Baron Strucker, Baron Zemo and the Masters of Evil. As Danny Fingeroth, former writer and editor at Marvel, remarks of the superhero genre, "The hero's values are the society's values," and "They are not in favor of violent revolution to change political power" (160). He adds the implicit cautionary principle, "When superheroes try to change society proactively, things almost always end up worse than they were at the beginning" (161). Within that universe, the villains are scripted with grand schemes for destruction and domination — along with self-delusions about the utter rightness of their desires.

> Supervillains are right men. They are so sure of the correctness of their worldview that they have no *choice* but to act on it. Like missionaries of evil, they sow the seeds of their philosophies and obsessions. They *know* what their values are [164; Fingeroth's italics].

In Captain America's domain, the most persistent megalomaniac is Red Skull, the Hitler surrogate who acts as intimidator-in-chief for the entire world.

Since Captain America's writers traditionally compelled him to engage the discourses of power within his eras, consider the story implications of his playing a role in the Global War on Terrorism. Remaining true to his own character, as well as the genre conventions, how could he fight in this war? Unfortunately for the reenlistment of a fully committed Captain America, the rhetorics of the Global War on Terrorism clearly marked them, by the genre conventions of comics/graphic novels, as supervillains. Hence, some clashes between the Captain and official America-at-war were inevitable.

By the time Donald Rumsfeld hosted and toasted Captain America in 2005, those conflicts had already surfaced. Early in the campaign, the Captain distances himself from the nation's millennial fervor to take on enemies abroad. For example, a mere two months after 9/11, Cap appeared in *Spiderman 36*. Unspoken meditations appear against the background of the ruined World Trade Center. "What do we tell the children? Do we tell them evil is a foreign face? No, the evil is the thought behind the face, and it can look just like yours" (Stracznyski np). Encouraging critical reflection on the evil in oneself seemed to edge toward the ethos of "blame America," although the nation had been declared under attack because of its universal values. Cap also refuses Colonel Fury's order to take an assignment in Afghanistan as the "New Deal" series begins (Rieber *CA Vol. 4: 1*). On assigment at a coca field in Columbia, where a U.S.–assisted raid is directed at the workers, he is furious to protect the targets of the raid, saying, "They're peasant farmers. Desperate to feed their families.... The government soldiers will burn the field and many of these people will starve." Then reflecting on his own integrity, he says, "It's like having your principles crushed in a vise. I am here at the hubris of the government—I can't interfere with these soldiers ... as they cut these impoverished people to ribbons to make us look good on TV, to help us fight 'The War on Drugs'" (Priest/Divito np). Although the Captain America of the war on terrorists tries to evoke perspectives that make hostility toward the United States comprehensible, his stories still carry simplistic moral reductions of adversaries. In "Fight Terror," his opponent, aided by child warriors, bluntly announces, "I am Al-Tariq. I am hate. These are my shepherds" (Rieber, *CA Vol. 4: 2* np). Yet there is a steady impulse in the books toward a more finely grained picture of America's place in the world.

As to his military superiors, Captain America's titles that relate to the Global War on Terrorism, from 2002 to 2006, express anger about his military assignments, rooted in paranoia about their deceptions. Such behavior on his part makes it easy to measure the ideological distance between the older Captain and his post 9/11 incarnations. Private Steve Rogers of the 1940s endured (with good spirits) abuse from his stupid, but honest, sergeant. Steve's secret identity within the military unit means that he must be AWOL for his missions, and he is constantly yelled at as a meatheaded, goldbricking slacker who must be diverted to KP or the brig. But he is not alienated from the superiors who created him as a supersoldier. The post 9/11 Cap suspects the deepest kinds of perversions in the upper ranks of his command. In *Two Americas* (2004), he discovers that a U.S. Navy admiral has tried to create a more compliant, destructive "Anti-Cap" with whom he fights, while they debate the premises of the war. The more programmed Anti-Cap tells Steve, "America's enemies are everywhere ... this

war requires will ... whoever is the most committed wins." Cap replies, "And, that would be you?" to which the Anti-Cap taunts, "You are a product of America's hope. I am the sum of America's fear" (Priest/Sears np).

Several of the post–9/11 episodes symptomise the Captain's disintegration from the conflicting vectors that arc through his conscience. As superhero, he carries individualistic burdens of acute awareness and righteous moral judgment. As U.S. warrior, he has a duty of obedience to command. Unfortunately, the Global War on Terrorism premises echo the rhetorics of villainy that characterized his traditional foes. Steve Rogers was the nineteen-year-old weakling who took a risk of death at birth, a circumstance highlighted in Lee and Kirby's retelling of 1963: "Steve Rogers! Chosen from hundreds of volunteers because of his courage, his intelligence, and his willingness to risk death for his country if the experiment should fail" (*ToS 63*, 4).

Who would have thought that America's greatest warrior would die at the hands of an assassin, after surrendering to his own government? Did he die willingly, as an act of conscience, a political casualty of GWOT, or was it just a Marvel stroke of manic genius in selling more titles? Had he become an anachronism in tights, or is he still a self-conscious, larger than life figure, who tries to bear the full existential weight of what American military power has become? And how is his death, in the *Civil War,* to be reconciled with his second death, in Morrell and Breitweiser's *The Chosen* of 2007–2008, when he remotely projects to aid soldiers in Afghanistan, and then literally tears himself away from his life support system to protect the U.S. president from assassination? *Captain America and the Struggle of the Superhero* will bring such speculations into sharper focus. Above all it will increase the reader's appreciation of Captain America's versatility and the art of scholarship that aids our interpretation of it all.

References

Bendis, Brian Michael, and David Finch, et al. *The New Avengers 11.* New York: Marvel, 2005.

Brubaker, Ed, Steve Epting, et al. *Captain America 25.* New York: Marvel Comics, March 2007.

Bush, George W. "President Sworn in to Second Term." White House Press Release. 20 January 2005. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050120-1.html>.

_____. "President's Remarks at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance." White House Press Release. 14 September 2001. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010914-2.html>.

Cramer, Eric. "Spider-Man and Captain America help 'America Supports You' Campaign." ARNEWS, Army News Service. 28 April 2005. http://www4.army.mil/news/article.php?story=7250.

Fingeroth, Danny. *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us about Ourselves.* New York: Continuum, 2004.

Frum, David, and Richard Norman Perle. *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror*. New York: Random House, 2003.

"Global War on Terrorism: The First Hundred Days." White House Press Release. December 2001. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/12/100dayreport.html>.

Ledeen, Michael Arthur. *The War against the Terror Masters: Why It Happened, Where We Are Now, How We'll Win*. New York: St. Martin's, 2002.

Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, et al. *The Essential Captain America, Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel, 2001. *Tales of Suspense 63* taken from this volume.

Medved, Michael, and Michael Lackner. "The Betrayal of Captain America: A White Paper." *Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.* April 2003. <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=166189>. Accessed 22 June 2008.

Morrell, David, and Mitch Breitweiser. *Captain America: The Chosen 1–6*. New York: Marvel Comics, 2007–2008.

Priest, Bart Sears, et al. *Captain America and the Falcon: The Two Americas, Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel Comics, 2005.

Priest, Andrea Divito, et al. *Captain America and the Falcon: Brothers and Keepers, Vol. 2*. New York: Marvel Comics, 2005.
Rhem, Kathleen T. "America Supports You: Superheroes Step Up." U.S. Department of Defense, American Forces Press Service News Articles. 28 April 2005. http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=31325.
Rieber, John Ney, and John Cassady. *Captain America Vol. 4:1*. New York: Marvel, 2002.
_____. *Captain America: Vol. 4: 2*. New York: Marvel, 2002.
Shalett, Sidney. "189 Magazines Put on New Army List." *New York Times*. 20 July 1944, 8.
Simon, Joe, Jack Kirby, et al. *Captain America: The Classic Years. Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 1998. *Captain America Comics I, 2, 5* taken from this volume.
Stracznyski, J. Michael, John Romita, Jr., et al. *The Best of Spiderman: Volume One*. New York: Marvel, 2002. *Spiderman 36* taken from this volume.
Wright, Bradford. *Comic Book Nation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction by Robert G. Weiner

> Look Flag Smasher, this is a free country. Everyone has the right to express himself. But NO one has the right to force others to listen if they don't want to hear.
>
> — *Captain America*

> We the people; United by a power that no enemy of freedom could begin to understand; we share — We are — The American Dream.
>
> — *Captain America*

> Steve Rogers pledges his loyalty to America's political ideas rather than to America's political leaders.
>
> —*Thomas Forget*

For over 65 years, Captain America has been a mainstay in the superhero world. He is one of Marvel Comics' most recognizable characters, and, while he may not have the popular recognition of Batman, Superman, Hulk, or Spider-Man, Captain America is certainly among the top ten most important superheroes ever created. He was Marvel's first really big seller, at one point rivaling Superman and Batman in sales (Simon 45), and he was the first Marvel character to be showcased on film. Captain America is certainly one of the most noble and honest of superheroes, even when compared to Superman and the original Captain Marvel (Shazam). As longtime Cap writer Stan Lee told Jason Dittmer, "Captain America represents the best aspects of America, courage and honesty" (629). Joe Simon and Jack Kirby created him in 1940 for Marvel's predecessor, Timely Comics. The first issue of *CAC 1*[1] (which had a cover date of March 1941[2]) showed Captain America slugging it out with Hitler. This predicted the United States' eventual entry into World War II.

It is important to understand that Captain America was created to help enhance the patriotic spirit of young Americans. According to Jack Kirby, "Captain America was created for a time that needed noble figures" (Goulart 4). By dressing Steve Rogers in the American flag,[3] and giving him a real enemy to fight, Simon and Kirby created a character that, along with some other comic superheroes who were partisan to America and its Allies, helped boost the morale of servicemen throughout World War II.[4] These superheroes helped "rally Americans behind the war effort" by portraying not only the Axis powers, but also the American "Fifth Columnists"[5] and those "who tried to make a profit from the war," as the enemy (Haugen 16). These comics reflect a historical change in America, and as this book attests, they provide legitimate source material for studying American culture and history. David Haugen further states that comics showed that "self-sacrifice coupled with wise consumerism was the key to victory: and that successful strategy would show the nation's superiority, making America a model for global change as the war progressed" (Haugen 16). Comics were big business during the war years (1941–1945); between 10 million and 20 million copies were sold each

month, and as Ian Gordon points out, men between the ages of 18 and 30 read 41 percent of comics. This disproves the claim that comics were just funny books, designed for children. Indeed for overseas servicemen, "Comics were one of the most regular contacts ... [they] ... had with America" (Gordon 70–71).

This book is, in part, a result of Captain America's death. In some way, I regard killing off Steve Rogers and replacing him with Bucky Barnes, as the new Cap, a cheap shot. Both the *Winter Soldier* and the *Death of Captain America* were exceptionally well written stories, and Marvel brilliantly brought Bucky back from the dead, and then killed off the old warhorse, Rogers, but that seemed like an odd thing to do. Yet, some have argued that, in today's world of political problems, Cap's representation of true American ideals seems outmoded, and certainly for some outdated. I feel that this attitude is unfortunate; having a belief in one's country, its history, and American idealism is not necessarily a bad thing.

This book is also a response to those who made fun of my fascination with Captain America, seeing Cap solely as a "tool" for the U.S. government. But as this collection attests, there is more to the Cap; he is not just a government flunky. He often disobeys government directives, and this, of course, eventually resulted in the death of Steve Rogers. What my friends fail to realize is that Cap represents the best of what civilization has to offer, with the best of what America has to offer. Jason Dittmer has argued, "That Captain America is intended to represent the American ideal cannot be seen as simply recognition of ontological fact, but is instead a truth claim about American-ness" (629). He further states that "Captain America (and thus the American ideal) is patriotic, without being a government stooge; he is a self made, rugged individualist who still cares about his community and nation; he is willing to stand up for what he believes..." (633). He has all the best aspects of American romanticism rolled into one.

In one of my favorite graphic novels, *Man Without a Country*, Cap gets thrown out of the United States, and his citizenship is taken away. When he finally regains what he has lost, and President Clinton thanks Cap for the work he did, he tells the President, "Just doing my job, sir" (Waid np). This is no mere boast; even through this horrible ordeal, Cap remains true to the American ideals and the thought that these principles will see him through.

In the recent *Civil War* series (which ultimately resulted in the death of Steve Rogers), Cap goes against the government because he knows that what they are doing (i.e., the registration of enhanced humans) is against true American principles of democracy. Nevertheless, as Greg Garrett so aptly points out, "Captain America loved America enough to question it, and in the tradition of peaceful protest in America, truly honored its laws by taking responsibility for his opposition" (54). In taking this accountability, he ultimately signed his death warrant.

While Superman always strives to do what is what is right, the differences between Superman and Cap are twofold: Superman represents the immigrant who comes to America, and finds the American dream — Captain America is the American dream. Superman projects a kind of Boy Scout mentality and purity that Captain America does not have. Cap sometimes fails, and he knows it; he is not always the Boy Scout. As J.M. Cotzee points out, "Captain America's contest is not with crime, but with evil ... the law is inadequate to deal with evil" (109). Like another pop culture icon, James Bond, Cap goes after the big guns, the super-villains, who are behind the two-bit hoodlums who, in general, the police can deal with.

This book also represents an attempt to take comics scholarship a step further. There

are essays in this book that should please the general comic fan and please the academic. In some essays, the language is more scholarly, and oftentimes authors disagree in their interpretations. However, that is what the processes of free thought and academic honesty and integrity are all about: a flow of ideas that oftentimes contradict one another, but are open to discussion. There have been other scholarly collections related to comics including but not limited to: Jeff McLaughlin's *Comics as Philosophy*; David Haugen's *Comic Books: Examining Pop Culture*; Terrence R. Wandtke's *The Amazing Transforming Superhero*; Matthew McAlister's' *Comics and Ideology*; and B. J. Oropeza's *Gospel According to Superheroes*. There are even numerous books devoted to particular superheroes including but not limited to: *Batman Unmasked* by Will Booker; Mark White's *Batman and Philosophy*; Len Wein's *Unauthorized X-Men*; Glen Yeffeth's *Man From Krypton*; and Gerry Conway's *Webslinger*.

What makes this collection different from the abovementioned books is the scholarship and the range of backgrounds of the contributing authors: graduate students; historians and art and literary scholars; longtime PhDs; librarians and archivists; and *Captain America* writers. The authors published in this book have upped the ante, and provide various analyses that, I hope, will be used for decades to come in comic book and graphic novel studies. There are more and more universities recognizing comics and graphic novels as legitimate cultural inquiry, and theses and dissertations that reference comics are coming out in record numbers. As the superhero and comic characters become more and more ingrained in our popular culture, through movies, libraries, graphic novels, toys, and television, it is my hope that, like *Perspectives on the Grateful Dead* (Weiner), this book on Captain America will spawn other studies of comic characters (e.g., Spider-Man, Justice Society, Shazam, the Silver Surfer, Millie the Model, Green Lantern, the Watchmen, Iron Man, the Hulk, and Wonder Woman)—the list is practically endless. This book is not perfect. Like Steve Rogers, the book has flaws and contradictions, but it reflects the amazing breadth of ideas that one comic character, created over 67 years ago, can still generate.

Because of practical limitations, abbreviations for Captain America titles and terms that are used over and over again have been used. See the Key to Abbreviations at the beginning of this volume for clarification. Also, a possible point of contention among some scholars is the use of the name of the writer to designate a particular comic or book without including the artist. I understand that a comic story is created through a collaborative effort, and, usually, a comic book is created by a team of at least two people, if not more, but due to space considerations only one name is usually cited in the text. The others are listed in the works consulted list. This is not an oversight of or slight to the artists on my part; it is done just as a necessary practicality.

This volume is organized into eight sections. This Introduction does not include a rehash of what each of the essays states, as I prefer to let the readers delve into them on their own. However, I have included a brief characterization of each essay in this Introduction:

- The book begins with a highly charged foreword by John Shelton Lawrence;
- Christopher J. Hayton and David L. Albright provide a generalized history of Captain America;
- John E. Moser looks in detail at how Nazis have been portrayed in Cap comics from the 1940s to Cap's resurrection in the 1960s;
- Mark R. McDermott gives us a detailed look at Roy Thomas' "re-boot" of the All Win-

ners Squad as the Invaders, during the 1970s, and compares them to Thomas' JSA "reboot" as the All Star Squadron;

- Nicholas Yanes looks at Captain America's creation in light of the Jewish American experience;
- Ora C. McWilliams' essay looks at characters such as the Young Allies' Whitewash and the progressive use at the time of one of the very first African American superheroes, the Falcon;
- Brian E. Hack looks at the pseudoscience of eugenics ideals in the Cap comics;
- My essay deals with Captain America's guilt over the loss of Bucky, and traces it all the way up through the Winter Soldier storylines;
- And Shawn Gillen looks at post traumatic stress syndrome in light of Cap's lack of involvement in the Vietnam conflict.

By far the largest section in the book is the comparisons section, in which:

- Nicholas D. Molnar compares Captain America comics to the Haunted Tank series and also touches upon certain racial issues;
- Jackson Sutliff looks at the Ultimate Captain America, and finds him wanting in more ways than one;
- Cord Scott compares the ideals of Captain America with those of Frank Castle, the Punisher (who uses guns to kills criminals, while Cap prefers a less violent approach);
- Jason Dittmer provides a comparison that has been needed for a long time by looking at the relationship between Captain America and Captain Britain, two heroes who are in some ways nationalistic counterparts of each other. He looks at those rare United Kingdom–only Marvel comics that feature Captain Britain;
- And Mark R. McDermott returns to give us a detailed analysis of the recent Marvel Zombie series and Colonel America's role in them. Zombies are very popular at the moment, both in popular culture and academia. There are even some departments that offer "Zombie studies" courses.

This brings us to the essays on the controversial death of Steve Rogers, aka Captain America.

- David Walton provides a context for this by pointing out that throughout Cap's history, there have been various attempts to kill him;
- Phillip L. Cunningham looks at Captain America's view on guns and his reluctance to use one;
- Christian Steinmetz looks at the descent of evil, and Cap's role in nationalistic ideologies;
- And Mike S. DuBose provides a detailed analysis of Captain America prose novels, and analyzes whether Steve Rogers can ever exist outside his Cap persona.

There final section presents three annotated guides to additional Captain America material:

- Freedonia Paschall briefly looks at Captain America fan fiction,[6] and finds that many writers have chosen to give Cap a homosexual aspect;

- Cord Scott and I briefly look at a few of the movies and television shows featuring Captain America;
- Jason Dittmer and I have put together a selected list of Captain America articles and books that are related to research and academics;

And last, but certainly not least, Cap writer J.M. DeMatteis contributes an impressive afterword.

Ultimately, however, we don't have to mourn the death of Steve Rogers. A good character never truly dies. Just as with the *Daredevil Yellow*, *Punisher Born*, *Untold Stories of Spider-Man*, or *Many Armors of Iron Man* (anyone up for *Iron Man Gray?*) series, there are probably plenty of Steve Rogers/Captain America stories from the past that have yet to be told in retrospective continuity. I know that some writers have recently revisited early Avengers stories, featuring the Hulk as one of the original members. That still can be done with Cap and Rogers. The recent *Captain America: The Chosen* series is an example. As long as there are creative minds that want to write about Steve Rogers and Cap, and there are fans who will purchase the books, Rogers is not dead forever. Time will tell!

It is my hope that his book will inspire further discussion on how superheroes, as cultural icons, can be viewed historically, debated fiercely, and seen as more than just characters from the funny books. This book proves that, beyond of a shadow of a doubt, characters like Captain America do provide a legitimate mode of cultural study. Despite all the different writers who have expressed different views about Captain America, he has prevailed for nearly 70 years. And, perhaps more than any other hero, Captain America represents not just America, but the best of what humanity, as a whole, has to offer.

Notes

1. The first issue of Captain America sold over a million copies (Ro 20).
2. Captain America's creators Kirby and Simon both ended up serving in the military during World War II.
3. There are some in comic fandom who are critical of Captain America, calling him a stool pigeon for the U.S. government. While he does espouse the traditional ideals of American democracy (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness), is against tyranny and fascism in all forms, and has been known to get misty-eyed at the sight of the Statue of Liberty, what critics fail to realize is that there have been times when he has become disillusioned with the U.S. government and donned another costume. His costume has been taken away from him on occasion, and in the recent *Civil War* series, Captain America actually fought against the government registration of enhanced humans. His main virtue is doing the right thing, whether in line with the political structure of the government, or not.
4. There were titles like *USA Comics*, *Wings Comics*, *United States Marines*, *All Winners Squad*, *Boy Commandos*, *Young Allies* (which featured Captain America's sidekick, Bucky), *All American Comics*, and *All Star Comics*, among others. There were also other patriotic heroes like the Shield, the Seven Soldiers of Victory, and the Newsboy Legion.
5. "Fifth Column" was used to designate any anti–American activity or rhetoric. The term was also used for saboteurs. See Weiner.
6. Fan fiction, fan films, etc., while not a new phenomenon in popular culture, have exploded with the rise of Internet use.

References

Brooker, William. *Batman Unmasked: Analyzing a Cultural Icon*. New York: Continuum, 2001.
Brubaker Ed, Steve Epting, and Mike Perkins, ed. *Captain America Omnibus by Ed Brubaker*. New

York: Marvel, 2007. *Winter Soldier* and *Death of Captain America* graphic novels are reprinted in the volume.

Coetzee, J.M. "Captain America in American Mythology," in David Attwell, ed., *J. M. Coetzee Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992: 107–114

Conway, Gerry, and Leah Wilson, eds. *Webslinger: Essays on your Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man*. Dallas: Benbella, 2006.

Dittmer, Jason. "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post 9/11 Geopolitics." *Annuals of the Association of American Geographers* 95: 3 (2005): 626–643

Garrett, Greg. *Holy Superheroes! Exploring the Sacred I Comics, Graphic Novels, and Film*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008.

Gordon, Ian. "Comic Books During World War II: Defending the American Way of Life," in David Haugen, ed., *Comic Books: Examining Pop Culture*. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven, 2005: 69–81

Haugen, David. "Introduction: Reflections of a Changing Nation," in David Haugen, ed., *Comic Books: Examining Pop Culture*. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven, 2005: 13–30.

McAllister, Matthew P., Edward H. Sewell, and Ian Gordon, eds. *Comics & Ideology*. New York: Peter Lang, 2001.

McLaughlin, Jeff, ed. *Comics as Philosophy*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2005.

Oropeza, B.J., ed. *Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Pop Culture*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.

Ro, Ronin. *Tales To Astonish: Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, and the American Comic Book Revolution*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2004.

Waid, Mark, and Ron Garney, et al. *Captain America: Man Without a Country*. New York: Marvel, 1998.

Wandtke, Terrence, ed. *The Amazing Transforming Superhero! Essays on the Revision of Characters in Comic Books, Film and Television*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007.

Wein, Len, and Leah Wilson, ed. *The Unauthorized X-men: SF and Comic writers on Mutants, Prejudice, and Adamantium*. Dallas: Benbella, 2005.

Weiner, Robert G. "Okay Axis, Here We Come! Captain America and the Superhero Teams from World War II and the Cold War," in B.J. Oropeza, ed., *Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Pop Culture*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005: 83–101.

_____, ed. *Perspectives on the Grateful Dead: Critical Writings*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999.

White, Mark, and Robert Arp, eds. *Batman and Philosophy: the Dark Knight of the Soul*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

Yeffeth, Glen, ed. *Man From Krypton: A Closer Look at Superman*. Dallas: Benbella, 2006.

General History

O Captain! My Captain!

Christopher J. Hayton *and* David L. Albright

On an otherwise ordinary day in 2007, Marvel Comics dealt faithful readers of *Captain America* a blow to the gut. Unbelievably, they killed him off! Reading the demise of one of the most steadfast figures in American comic book mythology (Brubaker *CA 25* vol. 5), we asked how this could be allowed to happen to such an established symbol of American ideals. More importantly, what did it all mean? The best clues probably lie in his long history.

Propaganda, Social Commentary, and Ideological Symbolism

At the end of 1940, as comic books were first scaling the heights of popularity, a unique superhero character was created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, financed by Timely Comics' publisher, Martin Goodman. Simon wrote most of the dialogue for the original Captain America stories, with Kirby contributing his ground-breaking artistic style. Simon is quoted as saying America's "patriotic frenzy" of the times was the impetus for the creation of Captain America (Benton 49), times that also, according to Kirby, "needed noble figures" and "a super patriot" (Goulart 117). The subsequent departure of Simon and Kirby to DC in 1941 left a young Stan Lee in the role of Captain America's editor (McLaughlin 57, 135; Jones 202).

Captain America fully embodied the transcendent American ideals of liberty and justice so he instantly became a unique symbol of the values underpinning the republic. While Superman, created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster, arguably represents the rugged, individualistic immigrant American, complete with secret identity, succeeding by virtue of his work ethic (Fingeroth 73), Captain America suggests the ordinary man transformed into a superhero through injection of American ideals (the super-soldier serum). Superman, the ultimate immigrant, was willing to fight for American principles (Dittmer 631), but Captain America actually "represents the best aspects of America" (Dittmer 629). Simon and Kirby added "the passion of the immigrant ... Jew" to their creation, the secret identity of the hero reflecting the "wearing of masks" necessary for immigrants who wished to progress in the American system, while retaining their traditional roots when safe amongst their own cultural group (Jones 201).

The writers' and artists' immigrant Jewish roots are significant in the roles their creations played out in the festering global situation of the times. Although Kirby has claimed that his comics held no hidden meaning, Simon, Captain America's original writer, explained that their new comic book character, and the stories featuring him, intentionally mirrored con-

temporary government propaganda promoting American involvement in World War II (Simon and Simon 42). He relates quite alarming circumstances that evolved in reaction to Captain America from the Fifth Columnists, the German-American Bund and the "America First" fascists who supported Third Reich endeavors and spread anti-involvement messages. First hate mail, and then suspicious-looking characters hanging around outside the 42nd Street building where Simon and Kirby worked, began to worry the Timely crew, and eventually they had to call New York's finest. To Simon's surprise, he received a phone call from comic book reader Mayor LaGuardia himself, giving assurances that they would not be bothered again (Simon and Simon 45).

In *Stan Lee Conversations*, McLaughlin quotes Kirby as saying that he didn't put messages in his comic books (197), but comments that the comics themselves suggest otherwise. Lee rationalizes Kirby's reluctance to acknowledge the existence of messages in comics by explaining that comic stories are often based on things going on in real life, and in the case of Captain America this was World War II. Lee speculates that Kirby was referring to the primary purpose of comics being to entertain, and message content was a byproduct of the use of current events in story lines (McLaughlin 198). Elsewhere Lee acknowledged that Marvel's creative staff was "influenced and affected" by current events (Dittmer 632), and those events emerged through the creative process in the finished comic book, whether purposefully or subliminally. Steve Englehart, 1970s Captain America writer, like Kirby, was also reluctant to concede that his work contained conscious attempts to get specific political messages across to the reader. He admitted that when he did have "a *heavy* sociological message" he made it clear, and actually on some level everything he "did was a sociological message," but that the transparency of this would vary (Levitt 142, italics added).

Taking a look at the interior of *CAC 1*, the first story in the comic takes a very strong stance on Page 1, warning of ruthless European warmongers casting their gaze on peace-loving America and giving specific mention to the Fifth Columnist threat from within. In the story these Nazi operatives have infiltrated the United States military to the highest level. The "spies and enemies in our midst" are identified as "vicious elements who seek to overthrow the U.S. government" and "threaten our very independence" (Simon *CAC 1* "Case No. 1—Meet Captain America" 8). The third story in this first issue has an American Nazi spy leader, Rathcone, expecting to be the future dictator of the country, once the Third Reich has prevailed, playing a symbolic game of chess in which the pieces are U.S. Army officers who die once "taken" by the Nazi game pieces. Rathcone's blueprints of military and manufacturing locations throughout the country are uncovered by Captain America after the former is subdued.

Captain America's arch nemesis and most significant antagonist is the Red Skull, George Maxon, an American industrialist and supporter of Hitler and the Nazis. In return for his assistance, Hitler has promised Maxon the position of Minister of All American Industry once the United States is brought under the domination of the Third Reich (Simon *CAC 1* "Captain America and the Riddle of the Red Skull"). Apparently killed at the end of this story, the Red Skull is still alive and returns to menace America again (Simon *CAC 3* "The Return of the Red Skull").

It is tempting, because the Red Skull's mask and the large Nazi swastika rotated 45 degrees and positioned on his chest approximate the sign of a skull and crossbones, to associate the Red Skull with the Yale University Skull and Bones secret society, members of whom were, through business interests, involved with the Third Reich before and during World War

II. Captain America creator Joe Simon, however, states that this was not an intended reference (Jim Simon, personal communication). The Red Skull simply is what the authors state him to be in the story — an American businessman willing to collaborate with Hitler for personal gain.

In some ways worse than Hitler himself, the enemy of true American principles lurked within our own fold during that difficult time. The color red could also symbolize the economic involvement of American businessmen with the Bolsheviks: one version of the Red Skull was later described in these terms in Englehart's re-authoring of the 1950s anti-communist Captain America (*CA 155* 23).

The Commie Smasher Revival

Publication of most superhero comic books, including Captain America, was discontinued by the end of the 1940s due to decreased popularity of the genre and corresponding falling sales (Wright 57). However, Captain America stories, this time with a strong anti-communist flavor ("Captain America — Commie Smasher"), were published again between 1953 and 1955. This superhero revival failed because the awareness of the intended audience had outgrown the publisher's simplistic superhero propaganda model (Wright 123).

The McCarthy era version of Captain America would later be withdrawn by Marvel as a legitimate expression of American ideals. The resurrection of Captain America in 1964 alludes to no 1950s activity by the hero. Writer Steve Englehart subsequently formally dismissed the Commie Smasher as a phony Captain America, who arose in the absence of the real hero (Englehart *CA 155*) with a skillful piece of revisionist writing that integrated panels from the original "return" story of 1954 (Romita). The "false patriotism" of "McCarthyite Americanism" was embodied by the Captain America imposter (Dittmer 632). During the 1970s Americans had re-evaluated the 1950s interpretation of the meaning of American ideology, bringing it closer again to its philosophical roots.

The Return from the Dead

Captain America's reintroduction in *Avengers 4* involves a revised conclusion to his World War II exploits that eliminates the brief 1950s Commie Smasher comeback and creates continuity with the original 1940s concept. The Captain deduces that "by some fantastic stroke of fate" he "must have been frozen in an ice floe" (Lee 8) and placed in suspended animation. The character's revival also had a tragic timeliness attached to it, following as it did the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963; the comic hit the newsstands in the United States in December 1963 or January 1964.

The 1940s hero is brought into the 1960s Marvel universe exhibiting symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Returning to New York, "Cap" encounters a police officer who recognizes him as the icon of freedom he had seen as a boy. The officer remarks that Captain America has returned "just when the world has need of such a man ... just like fate planned it this way" (Lee *Avengers 4 10*). Captain America, symbol of the American ideals of freedom and justice that saw us through the righteous World War II, reemerged at another of the most critical moments in United States history. Having apparently disappeared from our conscious

awareness during the 1950s, it transpires that the symbol of American principles was present all along, reappearing in our new hour of need.

Vietnam: The Turning Point

The 10-page Captain America story in *ToS 61* begins significantly with the statement, "The last person the communist Viet Cong expected to see on the battlefield in Vietnam is Captain America!" (Lee 1). Although Vietnam received little treatment in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Marvel superhero comic books, this particular story indicates official American involvement in the Vietnam conflict early in 1965.

Captain America is in Vietnam ostensibly to rescue a downed U.S. helicopter pilot, the brother of a friend who had saved him in World War II (Lee 5). Significantly, the pilot is African American. African American characters were extremely rare in American comic books in this period. Lee and Kirby introduced Gabriel Jones, the African American Howling Commando, in May 1963 (Lee *Sgt. Fury 1*), and this was a ground-breaking move for the industry. Marvel Comics was revolutionary when it introduced a significant African (but not African American) character, the Black Panther, in the summer of 1966 (Lee, *Fantastic Four 52*).

African American depiction in 1940s Marvel comic books was limited to a heavily stereotyped, zoot-suited character (Whitewash Jones), a member of the Young Allies in the Timely comic of that name (Lee *Young Allies 1*; Weiner 88). Lee and Kirby's 1960s introduction of African American characters, in contrast, was respectful and avoided negative stereotyping. The African American comic book character was finally here to stay, and in fact in 1969, *CA* featured the Falcon, the first African American superhero in the history of the medium, saving Captain America from the Red Skull (Wright 237; Lee *CA 117–118*).

The eventual meeting between Captain America and the African American pilot, Jim Baker, is highly symbolic:

> CAPTAIN AMERICA: Jim Baker! I've found you at last!
> JIM: Cap! They've caught you too! I can't believe it!
> CAPTAIN AMERICA: I'm not caught, son! I've come to free you!
> (Captain America explains that they will find a way out of the predicament just as Jim's brother found a way to rescue him years ago.)
> CAPTAIN AMERICA: I owe this to him, Lieutenant ... and to you! And by all I hold dear, I swear to you that my debt will be paid!
> JIM: But the entire world needs you, Cap...!
> CAPTAIN AMERICA: It needs you too, Son! It needs ALL of us! [Lee *TOS 61* 10].

Captain America doesn't return to Vietnam for five years, until the story "Captured in Vietnam," and when he does so it is with a neutral stance (Lee *CA 125*). The published reader response to this story sets forth Marvel's position very clearly (Lee *CA 131*, "Let's Rap With Cap" 2). The editor fully endorses the sentiments set forth by one reader (Fez Toi of the University of California) in particular:

> Captain America is not a representative of America itself but of the American ideal — individual freedom, individual responsibility, moral sensitivity, integrity, and a willingness to fight for what is right (vs. wrong, not left).... Lately a lot of us have awakened to the fact that although we are still taught the ideal, living the ideal is far less prevalent than it should be, and some of our laws and institutions have fallen into aiding this hypocrisy ... for many of us, better conditions aren't good enough as long as we still aren't living up to our ideal. The fact that we retain such a high ideal is the best of signs, and I hope that we can maintain our zeal to try to bring reality closer to the ideal.

The editor's comments to another letter on the same page refer back to Toi's letter: "...we feel that it is our responsibility not to set forth personal opinion, but to expound those ideals set forth on this very page by reader Fez Toi" (Lee *CA 131* "Let's Rap With Cap" 2). In another issue, Captain America thwarts a Red Chinese plot to discredit American ideals, the Reds aided by Americans willing to sell out their country (Lee, *CA 106*), but there is no direct reference to Vietnam in this story.

Nazism and the Third Reich Revisited

To prepare readers for the 1960s relationship between Captain America and Nick Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D., Lee and Kirby retroactively produced a World War II meeting of the characters Captain America, Bucky and Fury (Lee, *Sgt. Fury 13*). This particular story reflects lingering public consciousness of World War II and fear of the return of the Reich. In it, Captain America's origin is re-presented, with details of how the partnership with Bucky came about in *ToS 63*. Issues *63–71* of *ToS* are a series of retold and embellished World War II Captain America stories. This sequence ultimately sets the stage for Issues *72–74*, in which the Nazi threat is brought up to date via the Red Skull's three Sleepers, a coordinated, integrated trio of large, destructive robots designed to awaken after 20 years and destroy the world, should the Third Reich fail in its 1940s attempt at world domination. Although Captain America destroys the Sleepers (Lee, *ToS 74*), the number of surviving Nazis in this story demonstrates their continued existence in the Marvel Universe.

Significantly, in 1965 Lee and Kirby re-wrote the Red Skull's origin. They made him an embittered European orphan taken under Hitler's wing, who killed and replaced his look-alike the American industrialist Maxon (Lee, *ToS 65*, 9), thus playing down Americans' real and known involvement with the Fuhrer, the subject of many original Captain America tales of the 1940s.

Jim Steranko began working in comics during the 1960s, coming to Marvel from Harvey Comics, where he had written and penciled on a short-running superhero series for editor Joe Simon (Steranko, *Spyman 2*). His first work at Marvel was as Kirby's protégé, drawing and inking over Kirby's layouts for Nick Fury, agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. in *Strange Tales* (Kirby, *Strange Tales 151*), a feature he soon assumed responsibility for. Steranko was highly innovative, quickly developing his own style from a variety of influences, extending Kirby's experimentations with photos and grey tones, and including op art and Dali surrealism. By the time he came to write and draw his defining but short run on Captain America, he was one of the most lauded artists in the medium.

Steranko's three issues of Captain America do not directly address the dichotomy that was developing in public consciousness between American ideals and American practice, a theme that Marvel would manifest repeatedly henceforth (Levitt 145; Dittmer 642). Instead, Steranko's issues represent the confusion of a time of transition and uncertainty. Steranko's stories address four key symbolic elements. First, there is Captain America himself, and a repositioning and redefinition of this symbol of American ideals. Second, there is an examination of the relationship between these ideals and American youth, in the person of Rick Jones. Third, this relationship is tested in the Cold War environment in battle with the Incredible Hulk, the radiation-born man-monster product of the nuclear age. Finally, the secret, global, supranational, non-aligned organization seeking total world domination (Hydra) is juxtaposed to the American ideal.

American Ideals Reaffirmed

In the short Steranko story arc, Captain America decides he was mistaken in revealing his secret identity to the world, endangering those near and dear to him. Captain America is embroiled in battle with Hydra, the secret megalomaniac group formed by Nick Fury's World War II Nazi nemesis Baron Strucker, with whom he had tangled alongside Fury in Steranko's *Strange Tales* run. The group seeks the Captain's demise, but he fakes his own death to dismiss the Steve Rogers identity as false in the eyes of the public (Steranko, *CA III*), then reemerges to rescue Rick and the Avengers in a graveyard showdown with Hydra's minions and their new leader, Madame Hydra (Steranko, *CA 113*).

With reference to the masked identity of Captain America, it is interesting to consider Fingeroth's opinion that "the secret identity accompanies the ability to know who needs punishing and just how much, and what type of punishing they need." The "fictional dispenser of justice" that is the masked superhero, represents "the real world vigilante" (Fingeroth 58). In Captain America's case, his secret identity is the ordinary American possessed of the power-enhancing attributes of the American ideals. Clothed in the American flag, he represents the principles of government by the people, employing such in the fight against oppression, totalitarianism, tyranny, and fascism.

When Timely Comics bought the idea of Captain America in 1941, the company took on the responsibility for what was to become an American cultural icon, a real, vibrant, and dynamic symbol of the American ideals, that had a life all of its own. That responsibility, as Marvel Comics discovered over time, was to ensure that the character continue to embody those principles in the stories written about him.

Separation of Captain and State

During the late 1960s Captain America became linked with the counterculture through the movie *Easy Rider* (Wright 230). As the comic book story unfolded, a subtle moving apart between Captain America and the U.S. government began to emerge. The official force of good became S.H.I.E.L.D., a covert, government-aligned, but independent hi-tech military organization headed by Nick Fury, Captain America's retroactively established World War II acquaintance. S.H.I.E.L.D. itself would have to grapple with the ethics of its allegiance to the government at times, but this was increasingly the job of Captain America.[1]

As early as 1970, Stan Lee was acknowledging that Captain America could not endorse 100 percent what the government was doing (McLaughlin 22), presumably at that time largely in reference to Vietnam. Instead of becoming involved in the conflict, Captain America entered the Civil Rights arena with the African American Falcon at his side, and tackled social issues at home until the Watergate scandal brought the government back into the spotlight (Wright 245).

Secret fascist groups seeking control of the American government is a theme that appears repeatedly in the Captain America saga. Wright (245) also references Englehart's Watergate-contemporary serial in which Captain America uncovers CRAP (Committee to Regain America's Principles), a right-wing front for a secret empire bent on appropriation of power by wresting control of the United States government from the American people. The American ideals posed a threat to the empire-building machinations of CRAP, whose activities mirrored

contemporary and later acts by those in power (MacDonald 252). In a not-too-cryptic finale, "Number One" the leader of this group, The Secret Empire (a Hydra splinter group), turns out to be Nixon (identified by circumstantial dialogue and the location of his demise), who symbolically commits suicide after admitting that the pinnacle of political office was insufficient satisfaction for his ambitions (Englehart, *CA 175*; Wright 245).

In response, Captain America becomes disillusioned — his faith in the very ideals he symbolizes has been deeply called into question. Captain America discards his flag-derived costume to embark upon the inwardly reflective phase of the "Nomad, the man without a country" (Wright 245), and emerges from the processing of these events with the conclusion that the American ideals, although imperfect, represent the best that we have available. With the purpose of reclaiming these ideals , Captain America reassumes his star spangled identity (Englehart, *CA 176*; Fingeroth 157; MacDonald 252; Wright 245), and overcomes the angst born of his realization that the government he served had really been self-serving (MacDonald 253). Marvel's ability to maintain a valid symbol of America, in keeping with trends in American thought, is acknowledged by MacDonald and MacDonald, who pose a question for the future: will we be permitted "to recognize the right if we see it" now that Captain America has to doubt his "very perceptions" (MacDonald 244).

Furthermore, the hero is forced to accept that the very freedom enshrined in the principles of America has given birth to multiple interpretations of what America really means. On this basis it is understood that a "single symbol no longer serves to represent American patriotism" (MacDonald 252). What certainly ensued was the "divergence between American ideals and American practice" (Dittmer 642) as a contentious issue that repeatedly resurfaced in the Captain America narrative from the 1970s onward.

Where It All Ends

According to the historical record, when Benjamin Franklin "at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention was asked, 'What have you wrought?' he answered, '...a Republic, if you can keep it'" (The Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution).

Marvel's massive Civil War crossover story arc of 2007 pits superhero against superhero over the issue of the Superhuman Registration Act, which Marvel admits "was intentionally written as an allegory to current real-life issues like the Patriot Act, the War on Terror, and the September 11 attacks" (Holmes). Iron Man (industrialist Tony Stark) not only falls in line with government edicts, but leads the fight against Captain America's rebel group. Eventually, to prevent further destruction, Captain America turns himself in to the authorities. Shackled, he is led to a hearing that he never reaches, being gunned down on the courthouse steps, ironically by Crossbones, who is working for the Skull. But the final, mortal wound is inflicted by his S.H.I.E.L.D. sweetheart, who has been brainwashed by the Red Skull's accomplice, Dr. Faustus (Brubaker *CA 25*, Vol. 5). Marvel premiere Joe Quesada is quoted in an interview as saying he expects people to make their own interpretations of Captain America's death — the company is not going to put words into anyone's mouth in that respect, but he acknowledges that there are plenty of meanings that can be drawn from the story (Holmes).

In the last panel of another battle with the Red Skull, Captain America utters, in response

to being hailed as a hero, an alternate expression of the principles he represents (Lee *ToS 91* 10):

> I'm no more a hero than any man who fights for justice, and freedom, and brotherhood. So long as we cherish liberty — so long as the bitter weed of tyranny can never take root upon our shores — then all of us are heroes, and the dream which is America will long endure.

Note

1. The rough, tough, cigar-chomping Fury from World War II, as a character, is certainly reminiscent of Kirby himself.

References

Benton, Mike. *The Illustrated History: Superhero Comics of the Golden Age*. Dallas: Taylor, 1992.

Brubaker, Ed, and Steve Epting, et al. *Captain America 25*, Vol. 5. New York: Marvel Comics (April 2007).

Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. The Constitution of the United States. 18th ed. Washington, DC: 1992.

Dittmer, Jason. "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post–9/11 Geopolitics." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95 (2005): 626–643.

Englehart, Steve, Sal Buscema, and Frank McLaughlin, et al. *Captain America 155*. New York: Marvel Comics (November 1972).

Englehart, Steve, Sal Buscema, and Vince Colletta, et al. *Captain America 175–176* (July 1974). New York: Marvel Comics (July–August 1974).

Fingeroth, Danny. *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell us About Ourselves and our Society*. New York: Continuum, 2004.

Goulart, Ron. *Great American Comic Books*. Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International, 2001.

Holmes, Larry, Jonathan O'Beirne, and Glenn Perreira. "Shocking Event for Captain America." *Cable News Network*. 7 March 2007 <http://www.cnn.com/2007/SHOWBIZ/books/03/07/captain.america/index.html>.

Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book*. New York: Basic, 2004.

Kirby, Jack, Stan Lee, and Jim Steranko, et al. *Strange Tales 151*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1966).

Lee, Stan. "Let's Rap With Cap" [letters pages]. *Captain America #131*. New York: Marvel Comics (November 1970).

Lee, Stan, and Charles Nicholas, et al. *Young Allies 1*. New York: Marvel/Timely Comics (Summer 1941).

Lee, Stan, Gene Colan, and Frank Giacoia, et al. *Captain America 125*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1970).

Lee, Stan, Gene Colan, and Joe Sinnott, et al. *Captain America 117–118*. New York: Marvel Comics (September–October 1969).

Lee, Stan, Gil Kane, and Joe Sinnott, et al. *Tales of Suspense 91*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 1967).

Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Chic Stone, et al. *Sgt. Fury 13*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1964).

_____. *Tales of Suspense 61*. New York: Marvel Comics (January 1965).

_____. *Tales of Suspense 65*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1965)

Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Dick Ayers, et al. *Sgt. Fury 1*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1963).

Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Frank Giacoia, et al. *Captain America 106*. New York: Marvel Comics (October 1968).

_____. *Tales of Suspense 63*. New York: Marvel Comics (March 1965).

Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and George Roussos, et al. *Avengers 4*. New York: Marvel Comics (March 1964).

Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and George Tuska, et al. *Tales of Suspense 74*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1966).

Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Joe Sinnott, et al. *Fantastic Four 52*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 1966).

Levitt Lanyi, Ronald. "Comic Books and Authority: An Interview with "Stainless" Steve Englehart." *Journal of Popular Culture* 18.2 (1984): 139–148.

MacDonald, Andrew, and Virginia MacDonald. "Sold American: The Metamorphosis of Captain America." *Journal of Popular Culture* 10.1 (1976): 249–258.

McLaughlin, Jeff, ed. *Stan Lee Conversations*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007.

Romita, John, et al. *Young Men 24*. New York: Marvel/Atlas Comics (December 1953).
Simon, Joe, Jack Kirby, et al. *Captain America Comics 1*. New York: Marvel/Timely Comics (March 1941).
_____. *Captain America Comics 3*. New York: Marvel/Timely Comics (May 1941).
Simon, Joe, and Jim Simon. *The Comic Book Makers*, rev. ed. Lebanon, NJ: Vanguard, 2003.
Steranko, Jim, and Dick Ayers. *Spyman 2*. New York: Harvey Comics (December 1966).
Steranko, Jim, and Joe Sinnott, et al. *Captain America 113*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1969).
_____. "Tomorrow You Live, Tonight I Die." *Captain America 110–111*. New York: Marvel Comics (February–March 1969).
Weiner, Robert G. "Okay, Axis, Here We Come! Captain America and Superhero Teams from World War II and the Cold War." *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture*. Ed. B. J. Oropeza. New York: Peter Lang, 2005: 83–101.
Wright, B. W. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001.

World War II

Madmen, Morons, and Monocles

The Portrayal of the Nazis in *Captain America*

John E. Moser

In any genre of literature, the antagonist plays as important a role as the protagonist. Not only does the villain provide the tension that fuels a story, but, by way of contrast, he illustrates the characteristics that make the leading character heroic. The world of comics is no exception; where would Spider-Man be without the Green Goblin, the Fantastic Four without Doctor Doom, or Thor without Loki?

No examination of Captain America, therefore, would be complete without some attention to those villains who figured most prominently in his comics during the Golden and Silver Ages — namely, the Nazis. Indeed, it might even be argued that the Nazis were more important to the success of the publication than Cap himself; as writer and creator Joe Simon put it, "Villains were the whole thing" (Gustines). Hired by Martin Goodman's Timely Comics in 1940 to invent new superheroes, Simon sought to create a character capable of taking on Hitler and his minions. "America was in a patriotic frenzy," Simon recalled, and one red, white, and blue uniform and shield later, Captain America was born (Benton 49).

The choice of the Nazis as villains is not terribly surprising given that by the middle of 1940 Hitler's legions had managed to conquer nearly all of Europe, and it remained far from clear during that summer and fall whether Great Britain would be able to hold out alone. Moreover, the Nazis had an undeniable theatricality about them. Their rallies and torchlight parades were grand visual spectacles, their banners and uniforms eye-catching, their ambitions seemingly unlimited, their use of media unparalleled. It was easy to see why young German men — suffering from a sense of powerlessness in the wake of the humiliating Treaty of Versailles and the economic crises of the interwar period — were attracted to the Nazis. Americans, meanwhile, were simultaneously repelled and fascinated by it; the ideas were too alien, of course, to be embraced by any significant sector of the public, but, like a horrific automobile accident, they found it impossible not to watch.

Moreover, the ethnic and social origins of those who dominated the comic book industry also made it likely that, sooner or later, superheroes would start fighting Nazis. Jewish-American businessmen, artists, and writers — in most cases the children or grandchildren of Eastern European immigrants — provided much of the talent in the business, in large part because discrimination limited their opportunities in more mainstream publishing firms. They had been born into an America in which they felt marginalized, but Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal helped to change that. For the first time Jews were achieving positions of prominence in the federal government, and urban ethnic groups — not only Jews, but Italians, Poles, Germans, and Irish — emerged as critical players in the Roosevelt coalition. This

newfound sense of belonging may be seen in Simon's collaborator, the legendary Jack Kirby. Born Jacob Kurtzberg, the son of immigrants from the former Austria-Hungary, he changed his name in 1939 "because he wanted to be an American" (B. Wright 35; Jones 195–197).

If the New Deal had made Jews feel like Americans, it was Hitler who made them feel like patriots. Given the well-known Nazi hatred of Jews, it surprised nobody that the Jewish community in America would find Hitler despicable. But one hardly needed to be a Jew to find reasons to dislike the Nazis, with their grandiose aims at conquest and their denunciations of democracy. By denouncing Hitler's Germany, then, they were taking a stand both as good Jews and as loyal Americans. "Captain America was an outpouring of my own patriotism," Kirby would recall. "I found myself doing with Captain America what I would do myself" (N. Wright 76).

Given all this, a more interesting question than why comic-book heroes started taking on Nazis is why they waited so long to do so. After all, Hitler had come to power in Germany in 1933, yet it was not until the end of the decade that he and his goons began showing up in the pages of comic books. In 1939 some publications featured generic representations of the Nazis; for example, showing thugs wearing red armbands, but not openly identifying them as Nazis, or portraying warplanes attacking civilians, but without Luftwaffe insignia (Goulart 165). Only in February 1940, in the fourth issue of *Marvel Mystery Comics*, a publication of Martin Goodman's Timely Comics, did an overt mention of the Nazis appear, with the cover portraying the undersea hero Sub-Mariner taking on the crew of a German submarine (Goulart 171; B. Wright 40).

Part of the reason for this reluctance involved publishers' fears of being sued for defamation. The team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, in fact, had in 1939 created a hero called Marvel Boy, who fought an archenemy that resembled Hitler; however, to avoid a lawsuit, the villain was named Hiller (12). There were, no doubt, also concerns that targeting the Nazis would unnecessarily antagonize German-Americans, one of the largest ethnic groups in the nation. Most importantly, however, the comics had from their inception been intended as escapist fare, shying away from politics and other real-world matters. Comic books were generally written and drawn some four months before they appeared on newsstands, so there was a good chance that current events would lose their relevance before they reached the public. It was much safer, then, to find villains among the timeless and traditional line-up of mobsters, mad scientists and space aliens. By late 1940, however, Hitler's forces had overrun most of Europe, and many believed that America's own security was at risk. Not content to portray anonymous Nazis, Simon and Kirby made sure that the cover of *CAC 1* showed their new hero punching out Hitler himself—despite Goodman's fears that the *Fuehrer* might be dead before the issue went on sale (Simon; Ro 16).

As one might expect, there was nothing subtle about the manner in which the Nazis were portrayed in Captain America. Historians in recent years have taken note of how, after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese were depicted in American popular culture—not as humans but as beasts, with fangs and claws (Dower; McDougall). While the Nazis did not appear in quite such an unflattering light, it is true that, physically, they are unrelentingly ugly, drawing to a large extent on caricatures of Germans from World War I-era propaganda (Donald). The average Fifth Columnist or soldier appears as a scrawny, monkey-like creature with a low brow. Most are virtually indistinguishable from one another, a visual portrayal of their alleged "herd mentality," but in any given group, there is likely to be one larger, more powerful Nazi, more closely resembling a gorilla. And, of course, no group of Nazis would be complete without

its commander, almost without exception fat, bald, and sporting a monocle, often with suggestive names such as "von Broot" and "von Savage" (Lee, "The Saboteur of Death," *CAC 30* 4; Lee, "The General of Death," *CAC 36* 5).

Their behavior is equally predictable. They continually spout certain bromides of Nazi ideology, although, significantly, there is never mention of Jews. Instead there are constant denunciations of democracy, going back to the very first issue. In a story detailing Captain America's origins, a Nazi agent leaps from the shadows and kills the scientist who has invented the "super soldier" formula, vowing "death to the dogs of democracy!" (Simon, "Meet Captain America," *CA 1* 6).[1] Also common in their dialogue are assertions of their status as the "Master Race," invariably delivered in over-the-top German accents, and in clear contradistinction to their almost sub-human appearance. Indeed, Robert G. Weiner has pointed out that Captain America himself far more closely resembled the Aryan ideal than did those he fought (Weiner 86).

The Nazis, unsurprisingly, are also depicted as terribly cruel, although it must be said that the writers seriously underestimated the enemy in this regard. On several occasions Captain America and Bucky enter concentration camps to rescue inmates, but the worst punishment that seems to be inflicted on prisoners there is flogging or branding (Lee, "Captain America Goes on to Berlin," *CAC 19* 17; Lee, "The Talons of the Vulture," *CAC 32* 12). There is no mention whatever of gas chambers or crematoria, or the attempt to exterminate whole categories of Europe's population. Of course, the writers of *CAC* would have had no more information about these horrors than the average American, at least until the liberation of the camps in the final months of the war, but it is worth mentioning that even the imagination of comic book writers was incapable of plumbing the true depths of Nazi cruelty.

Moreover, nearly all of the Nazis that filled the pages of *CAC* in the early 1940s were hopelessly inept. Although they snap to attention at the first sound of their commander's voice, they inevitably bungle whichever task they have been assigned. It goes without saying that they were no match for Captain America's mind or fighting prowess. "These super guys are a pushover, Bucky — Just like swatting mosquitoes," quips Cap as he thrashes Nazi soldiers in "Invasion Mission" (Lee *CAC 34* 9). When the enemy does momentarily gain the upper hand over Cap and his teenage sidekick Bucky, as happens in nearly every story at some point, it is either the result of overwhelming numbers or "a treacherous blow from behind" (Lee, "The General of Death," *CAC 36* 5). On the other hand, when the Nazis are forced to meet the heroes on more or less even terms, they immediately throw up their hands and surrender, oftentimes groveling for mercy. In "Killers of the Bund," for example, the enemy agents "cower in fear," leading Cap to comment, "You're pretty brave until someone really stands up to you and fights!" (Simon *CAC 5* 5).

Why depict the enemy in such a fashion? To some extent this was a reflection of popular stereotypes of the Germans from World War I; as Winston Churchill liked to say, "The Hun is either at your throat or at your feet." Just after the 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union the British prime minister spoke in a radio broadcast of the "dull, drilled, docile brutish masses of the Hun soldiery," commanded by "heel-clicking, dandified Prussian officers" (Churchill). However, there was a more compelling reason for this portrayal. Such a portrayal made good sense at the time, since the crushing German victories of 1939–1941 had helped to create a popular impression that the *Wehrmacht* was unbeatable. There was, therefore, a certain military necessity in demonstrating how they could be defeated by an American who was physically fit and trained for combat (it must be remembered that unlike, say, Superman,

Captain America had no superpowers, but merely represented a human being at the peak of athletic and mental ability) (Weiner 86). Indeed, to portray the Nazis in such a light could even suggest that the war would be easy; for example, in "Invasion Mission" Cap and Bucky are assigned to scout the coast of southern Italy in advance of an American landing there. After the heroes find and destroy a German artillery battery hidden in a nearby castle the Allied invasion proceeds, incredibly, "without casualties" (Lee *CAC 34* 12).

Did Americans come to believe what they read about the essentially bumbling nature of their opponents? It is clear that comic books were widely read by U.S. military personnel. At training camps in the United States comics were extremely popular, outselling the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, and *Reader's Digest* (the three most popular magazines in the country during World War II) combined by a ratio of nearly ten to one. Moreover, soldiers and sailors continued to read comic books while posted overseas; by 1944 one out of every four magazines shipped to the European or Pacific Theaters was a comic book (Benton 53). At the same time, there is ample evidence that American GIs went into battle with a high degree of confidence — what their British allies, in fact, regarded as overconfidence. British soldiers, most of whom had already faced German soldiers in Norway, France, Greece, or North Africa, and therefore knew how tough they really were, reported amazement at the attitudes of their inexperienced American counterparts, who seemed to believe that the enemy would surrender as soon as the GIs arrived (Keegan 381). British civilians noticed something similar; when asked in a 1942 public opinion poll what they most disliked about the Americans, 48 percent of those surveyed mentioned their "boastfulness" (Gardiner 61). While it is impossible to determine to what extent their overconfidence was the result of years of reading about Captain America and other heroes beating up hordes of Nazis, it is at least plausible to suggest that there was some connection between the two.

There were, however, certain exceptions to the rule of Nazi ineptitude — arch-villains who commanded Nazi troops and agents. There were a large number of these, going by names such as Netman (Simon, "Hotel of Horror," *CAC 10* 18), the Looter (Lee, "The Lighthouse of Terror," *CAC 13* 25), the Creeper (Lee, "The Creeper and the 3 Rubies of Doom," *CAC 21* 4), the Reaper (Lee, "Captain America Battles the Reaper," *CAC 22* 2), the Mad Torso (Lee, "The Challenge of the Mad Torso," *CAC 28* 17), Fungi (Lee, "The Terror of the Green Mist," *CAC 31* 7), and Dr. Agony (Lee, "The Chambers of Dr. Agony," *CAC 37* 6). Nearly all of them were killed off in the issue in which they first appeared. Only one showed some staying power: the Red Skull, who debuted in a story in the very first issue. Although he, too, appeared to die at the end of that story (Simon, "The Riddle of the Red Skull," *CAC 1* 13), he was brought back in issue *3*, and would return on no fewer than four subsequent occasions during the wartime run of the series. He would also, as we will see, become Captain America's most persistent enemy during the 1960s (Scott 334–335).

Unlike most of the Nazis Cap faced, the Red Skull had a distinctive appearance. Rather than the standard-issue monocle and military uniform, the Skull wore a green jumpsuit emblazoned with a swastika,[2] while a red skull mask covered his face. In fact, in the first issue it was revealed that he was not even German — his secret identity was Mr. George Maxon, the owner of an American aircraft corporation who promised to sabotage the U.S. war effort in exchange for Hitler's promise that after the war he would receive the post of "Minister of All American Industry" (Simon, "The Riddle of the Red Skull," *CAC 1* 14). It is perhaps this fact that explains why the Red Skull was so much more competent than the other Nazi villains. At one point, in fact, he even learns that Captain America's true identity is Steve Rogers. It

appears, however, that he takes this information to his grave with him at the end of the story (when he falls from a plane), and when he returns twenty-one issues later there is no evidence that he knows Cap's secret (Lee, "Red Skull's Deadly Revenge," *CAC 16* 46, 55; Lee, "Frozen Death," *CAC 37* 2).

Although Captain America and Bucky fought their share of German soldiers and sailors — particularly after the United States became an active participant in World War II — they more commonly encountered Nazis in the form of spies and saboteurs operating within the country's borders. This, it would appear, was truly the Nazi strong suit, as the pages of *CAC* seem to suggest that German agents were capable of infiltrating virtually any American institution. The motion picture industry (Simon, "The Hunchback of Hollywood and the Movie Murder," *CAC* 3 10), the Civil Defense Administration (Lee, "The Mystery of the 100 Corpses," *CAC 23* 8), even the Treasury Department (Lee, "The Case of the Horror Money," *CAC 35* 12) all prove vulnerable to espionage. In addition, the enemy makes numerous attempts to undermine morale through bombings of factories, assassination of government and military leaders, and propaganda campaigns in which Americans are called upon to "abolish your laws" (Lee, "Captain America Battles the Reaper," *CAC 22* 4) and to demand an end to the war against Germany (Lee, "The League of Hate," *CAC 49* 3).

A few aspects of this emphasis on domestic subversion are worth exploring further. For one, there is a clear contradiction between the enemy's apparent ability to create such an extensive underground network, and their equally apparent inability to bring their plans to fruition. In the end, Nazi agents are laughably easy to identify, thanks to their heavy German accents and (in the case of the leaders) their monocles. Cap and Bucky regularly uncover conspiracies simply by keeping their eyes and ears open. In "The Tunnel of Terror," for instance, they overhear some sailors expressing defeatist sentiments. The duo promptly label them as "Un-American" and proceed to beat them up, informing them, "This is what you deserve, traitors!" Sure enough, it turns out that they are enemy agents (Lee, "The Tunnel of Terror," *CAC 15* 5–6).

Indeed, in issue after issue of *CAC*, readers are called upon to participate in the effort to identify fifth-column activities in their own communities. For ten cents readers could join the "Sentinels of Liberty," an organization dedicated to exposing "the spies and saboteurs in our midst who threaten our very independence" (Simon 8). Apparently the campaign was a success, for soon police stations were reporting being deluged with hundreds of calls from young people reporting "suspicious neighbors and relatives as potential fifth columnists and traitors" (Benton 84). Historian Leo Ribuffo has claimed that, years before the House Un-American Activities Committee and Joseph McCarthy were making headlines for uprooting Communist subversives, there was a "Brown Scare" in which anti-interventionists, German-Americans, and conservative critics of the Roosevelt administration were accused of being Nazi agents (Ribuffo). A study of *Captain America Comics* during this period suggests that comic books may have played a considerable role in this. Moreover, in helping to encourage a generation of young people that American institutions are subject to infiltration by enemy agents, the comics, it must be said, bear some share of responsibility for the Red Scare of the late 1940s and early 1950s (MacDonnell 133–134, 187–191).

As mentioned earlier, several historians have compared the treatment of Germans in American wartime culture favorably to the portrayal of the Japanese. The most significant difference generally cited is that there were sharp distinctions drawn between Germans and Nazis, while "Japs" were depicted as an undifferentiated horde. While this is generally true,

it is possible to overstate the emphasis on this distinction, particularly in the wartime issues of *CAC*. In the forty-nine issues of that publication appearing between March 1941 and August 1945 there are only two depictions of "good Germans." The first is Professor Reinstein, the inventor of the "super-soldier serum" that transforms scrawny Steve Rogers into Captain America, but he is immediately killed off by a Nazi agent (Simon, "Meet Captain America," *CAC 1* 6). The second appears in the fifth issue; in "Killers of the Bund" we are introduced to Heinrich Shmidt, who has been targeted by the pro–Nazi German-American Bund for refusing to join the organization.[3] "I am of German descent, yes," he tells the Bundists, "but I'm also a good American citizen! I'll have nothing to do with an organization that aims to destroy the country that protects me and mine from creeds like yours." (Significantly, unlike his tormenters, Shmidt does not speak with a German accent.) In that same story, Cap informs Bucky that he's "found German-American people to be very nice" (Simon, "Killers of the Bund," *CAC 5* 2). Thereafter, however, the reader never encounters another German who is not portrayed as a Nazi; indeed, on several occasions a German accent is sufficient to rouse the heroes' suspicions that someone is an enemy agent (see, for example, Lee, "The King of the Dinosaurs," *CAC 29* 3; Lee, "The Monster of the Morgue," *CAC 47* 5).

The Nazis were, of course, Captain America's primary foes in the early 1940s; as mentioned earlier, Joe Simon originally created the character for the purpose of fighting them. This continued to be the case even after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor; once in a while Cap and Bucky would go into action against the Japanese, but Hitler's men remained their primary focus. Hardly an issue would go by without at least one story in which the Nazis were the main enemy.[4] However, in late 1944 this emphasis became less pronounced: In fact, between issues *43* (November 1944) and *49* (August 1945) the Nazis appeared in only three stories, and thereafter vanished altogether from the pages of *CAC*.

What happened to the Nazis, the villains that Cap was created to fight? The answer, it would appear, lies in the question of relevance. Issue *43* would have largely been written and drawn in the summer of 1944, after the Normandy invasion. It is likely that the writers and artists who produced the book learned of the liberation of Paris and the rapid retreat of the *Wehrmacht* toward the German border while they were producing that issue. Of course, we know in retrospect that the Allies would face nearly an entire year of hard fighting before the war in Europe came to a close, but this would not have been apparent to the producers of *CAC*. Their reaction to these events was probably not much different from that of Americans in general; they believed that the war was now practically finished, and that Germany would surrender before the end of the year. At that point the Nazis would be old news; therefore it was time for Captain America to use his fists on other villains — the Japanese, perhaps, or American-born gangsters.

Issue #49 — which would have been written in April 1945 — reflected the dying gasp of the Nazi regime. There were still enemy agents in the United States, but now their aim was different. No longer were they destroying factories or assassinating American leaders; now they were trying to (in the words of Hitler himself) "spread propaganda for a soft peace" — a peace that would give Germany time to prepare for the next war (Lee, "The League of Hate," *CAC 49* 15).

Of course, Captain America and Bucky managed to foil this plot like all the others, and the Nazi menace faded forever from the pages of *CAC*. However, the series itself did not last much longer; issues began appearing more sporadically in 1946, and publication stopped in 1948. In fact, superheroes in general experienced a swift drop in popularity in the postwar

era, and demographics were the main culprit. The young men who had been the primary consumers of comic books, now released back into the civilian world, were increasingly focused on families and careers, and the low birth rate of the Depression era meant that the up-and-coming generation of readers would be a considerably smaller one. But it is also likely that the disappearance of the Nazi threat had something to do with the decline of Captain America as well. Simply put, there were no villains at the time that could compare to the Nazis, both in terms of evil and theatricality. Martin Goodman's publishing company — now calling itself Atlas Comics — attempted to bring the hero back in the 1950s as "Captain America — Commie Smasher," but this, too, was a dud, and it ceased publication after only three issues (Ro 51).

It was not until the early 1960s that Captain America would return to the pages of what was by now being consistently called Marvel Comics. Back in 1941, after Joe Simon and Jack Kirby had left Timely over a financial dispute, Martin Goodman had tapped Stan Lee to edit Marvel, and Lee, now editor-in-chief, had a personal interest in Captain America. Although Lee had turned the series over to others, while he was serving in the military, he presided over its final issues in the postwar era, and was the major force behind his abortive comeback in the early 1950s.

By 1964, however, superheroes had made a comeback, thanks largely to the fact that the baby boom generation had entered its late teens. However, this new generation of young men was quite a bit different from the one that had so eagerly devoured the superhero comics of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Far more of them were college students, and they expected more character and plot development than had been offered in wartime comics. They wanted ongoing storylines rather than simple plots that were resolved in a few pages. More importantly, they wanted more depth in the characters, heroes and villains alike, with more attention paid to their psychological motivations. Lee and Kirby — who had returned to Marvel in the late 1950s — responded with a set of new, more complex heroes; for example, the most popular among them was Spider-Man, who struggled in his private life with the fact that he was an unpopular, bookish high school student. Another fan favorite was the Hulk, the alter ego of a scientist who could not control his metamorphosis into the monstrous green character of the title. Fans responded enthusiastically to these characters, so that by the middle of the decade Marvel was one of the country's leading comic publishers. By 1967 nearly 50,000 college students belonged to Marvel's official fan club, the Merry Marvel Marching Society, and Lee himself became a regular speaker at colleges and universities. Students informed Esquire magazine that "Stan was their Homer, and Spider-Man and Hulk were more relevant than Sartre, Camus, Dostoevsky, and Marx" (B. Wright 223; Ro 114–115).

This meant that if Captain America were to return he had to be given some complexity as well, and Stan Lee and Jack Kirby did so in several different ways. First, they chose to ignore all developments in the life of the character that took place after *CAC 10*, the last on which Simon and Kirby worked. This freed the new writers to fashion a new history for Cap, one in which, during the final days of the war, Bucky was killed in an explosion and Cap himself was frozen in a block of ice for nearly twenty years. The "new" Captain America would be constantly wracked with guilt over his inability to save his young partner, while at the same time forced to grapple with a society that was far different from that of the 1940s. One running theme of the 1960s-era Captain America is his discomfort with the technology of the age; for instance, in one issue we learn that Tony Stark (a.k.a. Iron Man) has installed "magnetic impulses" in Cap's shield. However, Cap has chosen to remove them, preferring to rely on his own skills (Lee, *ToS 62* 5, 7).

Of course, even to consider the return of Captain America immediately raised the question of whom he would fight. Given that the world was in the midst of the Cold War, the Communists were likely villains, and, indeed, in one of Cap's first appearances he travels to Vietnam to rescue an American helicopter pilot from the Viet Cong (Lee, *ToS 61* 2). However, the excesses of the McCarthy era had made it politically incorrect to focus too much on the Red Menace, and the years following the Cuban Missile Crisis even saw some improvement in relations with the Soviet Union. This, combined with memories of the debacle of "Captain America — Commie Smasher" suggested that Lee and Kirby should look elsewhere for villains. Fortunately, the country in the mid–1960s was experiencing a wave of nostalgia for World War II, as evidenced in the popularity of television programs such as *Combat* and *The Rat Patrol*, and by war comics such as *Foxhole*, *Warfront*, and *Battle*. Therefore, Lee and Kirby decided to bring back the Nazis as Cap's most persistent enemies (Ro 78).

But this posed a problem — how were the Nazis to be made relevant to the world of the 1960s? Lee and Kirby solved this in two ways. First, there would be numerous flashbacks to Cap's wartime service. Some of these would be entirely new stories, while others would involve the simple retelling of tales that had originally appeared in the first ten issues of *CAC* (Lee, *ToS 63*–65), although with some minor changes.[5] All of the flashbacks would serve the purpose of developing the bond between Captain America and Bucky, thus helping to explain the mental anguish suffered by the 1960s-era Cap over his partner's death. The other method for keeping the Nazis relevant was to pit Cap against attempts to reestablish the Third Reich; hence, in the 1960s, Captain America battled a seemingly endless stream of middle-aged Nazis bent on world conquest.

Chief among these was the Red Skull, who assumed a far more important role than he had played during the war. Lee and Kirby paved the way for this early on by establishing the origins of the arch-villain (Lee, *ToS 66,* 3–6). Here the readers learn that the Skull was not actually John Maxon (his name was inexplicably changed from George); an ordinary Nazi agent had taken the place of Maxon, who then in turn took on the identity of the Skull. The real Red Skull was Johann Schmidt, a "nameless orphan" whom Hitler discovered and turned into "evil personified." Readers are also informed that the Skull's own loyalty to Hitler had been questionable, and that he had managed to build up his own personal empire in the midst of the Third Reich. In fact, it turns out that Hitler himself had come to fear his creation, telling him that you "haff become too powerful!" (Lee, *ToS 67* 5).

This development is an important one, because it freed the Red Skull to become a far more interesting character in the postwar era. In the original series the Skull had been much like any other Nazi, aside from being somewhat more competent. He was fanatically dedicated to Hitler, and was entrusted with resources and small groups of henchmen for the purpose of carrying out fairly small-scale operations — the assassination of particular Americans, the theft of secret plans, or simply the carrying out of random crimes (Simon, "The Riddle of the Red Skull," *CAC 1* 2–4; Simon, "The Return of the Red Skull," *CAC 3* 2; Simon, "Captain America and the Red Skull," *CAC 7* 3; Lee "Red Skull's Deadly Revenge," *CAC 16* 39). Now, however, his ambitions became far grander, and he would have colossal resources at his disposal. Moreover, the move freed the writers from having to resort to constant flashbacks in order to have Captain America fight Nazis; there were plenty of opportunities for him in the present to prevent the rise of a Fourth Reich under the Red Skull's command.

Just as Captain America had to change to meet the demands of a new generation of readers, so did his enemies. The Nazis that Cap battled in the Silver Age of comics (roughly

defined as the early 1960s until the early 1970s) differ from those of the wartime books in several important respects. The fact that the country was no longer fighting Germans eliminated the need to portray them as pushovers. Their appearance, therefore, although still somewhat beastlike — lantern-jawed, saddle-nosed and low-browed — tends to emphasize unthinking power and brutality. Monocles still seem to be a required accessory for officers, but the officers themselves are less likely to be bald and flabby. And while they are, needless to say, beaten by Captain America at every turn, they are far more formidable than the hordes of nincompoops who faced him and Bucky in the early 1940s. This is particularly the case with the Exiles, a gang of gaudily-costumed war criminals gathered by the Red Skull (Lee, *CA 102–104*, *117–118*).

They are, if anything, more cruel as well. Although the 1960s-era comics still made no reference to the Holocaust — nor would there be one until *CA 237*, which appeared in 1979 — the mass murder of Jews and other minorities in Nazi Germany was by this time common knowledge. Therefore soldiers are shown in flashbacks beating and shooting innocent civilians, while prison guards inflict torture on camp inmates (Lee, *ToS 66*, 4; *67* 3; *71* 6). In the final days of the German occupation of Paris, moreover, the Nazis machine gun hostages, including women, en masse (Lee, *ToS 77* 6–7). In the postwar era, the Red Skull and his Exiles force a group of captives to fight one another for their amusement (Lee, *CA 103* 5–6).

At the same time, however, the Silver Age comics show greater sensitivity to the distinction between Nazis and "good Germans." Now that West Germany was one of America's most valuable allies, of course, such a distinction is wholly understandable from a political standpoint. During one flashback a German P.O.W. demonstrates an unwillingness to go along with the plans of his more fanatical comrades (although he finally submits when threatened with deadly force) (Lee, *ToS 68* 4). Meanwhile, in stories set in the 1960s most Germans are depicted as having little willingness to return to the past. When a former Nazi official shows up in one German town to hatch a scheme for a Fourth Reich, a shopkeeper denounces him, and hordes of ordinary Germans are shown fleeing rather than facing a return of the Nazis to power (Lee, *ToS 72* 7–8; Lee, *ToS 73* 9; Lee, *ToS 74* 3–4).

But the most significant difference in the portrayal of Nazis in the 1960s involves their use of technology. The wartime comics gave little reason to think that the Third Reich possessed highly advanced technology. The legions of soldiers and agents that Cap fought were armed almost exclusively with standard military hardware, while the gadgetry employed by villains like the Red Skull was fairly basic — his "touch of death," for example, was nothing more than an electric charge running through his costume (Simon, "The Return of the Red Skull," *CAC 3* 16). Even when it appeared that the Germans possessed some war-winning device, Cap and Bucky ultimately revealed it to be mundane; for example, shells apparently fired from Germany that strike American cities turn out to be fired from offshore submarines (Lee, "Rockets of Doom," *CAC 39* 10); explosions in London from what seem to be super-accurate *Luftwaffe* bombs turn out to have been planted underground by fifth-columnists (Lee, "The Menace of the Murderous Mole-Man," *CAC 32* 9). In the old comics, indeed, it was the Allies who had the technological advantage, as evidenced by repeated attempts by Nazi spies to steal plans for such fantastic inventions as "the amazing new power drill" which tunnels under the earth (Simon, "The Return of the Red Skull," *CAC 3* 2), or America's "new rapid-fire grenade gun" (Simon, "Spy Ambush," *CAC 10* 8).

By the 1960s, however, the Nazis suddenly have access to a wide range of technological marvels. Apparently near the end of the war they had constructed a series of giant robots — sleepers — that were programmed to be released twenty years later to wreak havoc on the earth

(Lee, *ToS 72–74*; Lee, *CA 101*–102; Lee, *CA 148*). The Red Skull had also been able to build a series of hidden bases around the world, defended by state-of-the-art weaponry, leading one to wonder why, if Hitler had possessed such wonders, he did not use them to win the war.

The theme of high-tech Nazis fits in well with the nature of the Silver Age Captain America. Cap in the 1960s is portrayed as a man outside his own time, out of place in the world of the space age. In a sense he is a sort of modern-day Luddite, distrustful of advanced technology and more likely to win using old-fashioned common sense and his unparalleled fighting skill. That he continues to defeat his more "advanced" enemies time and again suggests a sense of nostalgia for the allegedly simpler virtues of what would come to be called in the 1990s "the greatest generation." Captain America, in other words, represented a comforting island of stability in a society of rapid change.

Yet the Nazis gradually faded from the pages of *CA*, just as they had disappeared from *CAC* more than twenty years before. It must be said that at no time during the Silver Age manifestation of the hero were the Nazis Cap's only concern. After an initial series of flashbacks, designed to introduce the hero to the baby-boomer generation, and some battles with the Red Skull, the Nazis were just one of a number of enemies. There were plenty of modern-day villains to occupy Cap's attention — MODOK, Batroc, the Grey Gargoyle, and criminal organizations, like Advanced Idea Mechanics (A.I.M.) and Hydra, to name only a few. By the end of the decade the Nazis were hardly appearing at all, particularly after the final defeat of the Exiles in *CA 118* (Lee 14–20). The Red Skull would continue to bedevil Cap, but he gradually came to be associated less with Nazism than with hatred and megalomania in general. In fact, when he returned in issue *143*, his costume bore not the swastika, but the raised black fist — the symbol of the Black Power movement (Lee 27).

What happened to the Nazis? Most likely they faded into the background because it was difficult to keep them relevant in the eyes of younger readers. The wave of World War II nostalgia that had swept the nation in the early to middle part of the decade had long faded by 1969, as the eyes of the nation were locked on domestic unrest and the war in Vietnam. Moreover, as the World War II generation grew older it was becoming difficult to suggest convincingly that holdovers from the Third Reich could — at least physically — pose a real challenge to Captain America (Cap, after all, had not physically aged during his nearly twenty years encased in ice).

Most importantly, Captain America himself was changing with the times. He had originally been conceived as a star-spangled patriot, taking on the country's foreign enemies. However, by the late 1960s it was not only his dislike of modern technology that made him seem out of step with the times. The college-age baby boomers who devoured Marvel Comics were now the least likely to respond to old-fashioned patriotism. While some readers demanded the Cap go to Vietnam to take on the Communists, many more suggested that the character was becoming dated. Rather than have him fighting foreign enemies, they asked, why not show him taking on the country's domestic problems — "poverty, racism, pollution, and political corruption"? (B. Wright 244–245; Ro 114–115).

In 1969 Stan Lee (Kirby had by this time stopped drawing Captain America, and would leave Marvel altogether in 1970) chose to follow the advice of the critics. Fittingly, the very issue that featured the final defeat of the Exiles also saw the premiere of The Falcon, Marvel's first African American superhero, who would go on to become Cap's partner (Lee, *CA 118* 20). Soon the hero was dealing with issues at home, such as campus unrest (Lee, *CA 120*), organized crime (Lee, *CA 123*), and urban violence (Lee, *CA 143–144*). Now and again hints

of Cap's Nazi-fighting past would emerge. Occasionally there would still be flashbacks to the war years (Lee, *CA 107* 9–10; Lee, *CA 109* 1–6; Lee, *CA 112* 4–9), and the subversive organization Hydra possessed strikingly Nazi-like characteristics (such as a desire for global conquest, and a tendency for its agents to greet one another by shouting "Hail Hydra!"). However, by and large the hero's days of battling the Third Reich were over; those who wanted to see their favorite Marvel heroes beating up Hitler's minions would have to turn instead to *The Invaders*, a new series created by Roy Thomas, which debuted in 1975.

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that there would ever have been a Captain America had it not been for the Nazis. Via contrast, they highlighted the hero's virtues at various stages in his career — as the brave, patriotic American soldier in World War II, and later as the equally heroic, semi–Luddite man-out-of-time in the 1960s. Moreover, their theatricality and sheer evil make them consistently interesting, even fun to watch, as long as we are assured that they will meet inevitable defeat. If it can be said that Hitler and his followers made a single lasting contribution to Western Civilization, it is that they have provided American popular culture with a set of appropriately despicable villains.

Notes

1. Because each issue of *Captain America Comics* contained multiple stories, and were paginated by story rather than by issue, the names of the stories are included in the citations.
2. Oddly, in the first couple of frames of "The Red Skull's Deadly Revenge," his uniform bears a Japanese Rising Sun, but it inexplicably becomes a swastika through the rest of the story.
3. In fact, the German-American Bund was a real organization, and objected to the way in which it was portrayed in *Captain America Comics*, and the staff at Timely Comics began receiving death threats by mail and telephone. There were no acts of violence directed at the creators of the comic, however, because Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia assigned extra police protection, telling Joe Simon, "You boys over there are doing a good job" (Ro 21).
4. The average issue contained four stories, but Captain America usually did not appear in more than two of them. Comic books of the time normally showcased a wide number of characters; it was, in fact, rare for a book even to be named for a single hero. The Human Torch frequently appeared on the pages of *Captain America Comics*, as did now-forgotten figures such as Tuk — Cave Boy, Hurricane — Master of Speed, Father Time, The Imp, Secret Stamp, and The Dippy Diplomat (Jones 200).
5. For example, in the issue that reiterated the story of Captain America's origins, the name of the inventor of the super-soldier serum was inexplicably changed from Doctor Reinstein to Doctor Erskine (Lee, *Tales of Suspense* 63 in *Essential Captain America*, Vol. I).

References

Benton, Mike. *Superhero Comics of the Golden Age: The Illustrated History*. Dallas: Taylor, 1992.

Churchill, Winston. Broadcast on the Soviet-German War (22 June 1941). *http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/410622d.html* (accessed 10 June 2008).

Donald, Ralph R. "Savages, Swine, and Buffoons: Hollywood's Selected Stereotypical Characterizations of the Japanese, Germans, and Italians in Films Produced During World War II." *Images: A Journal of Film and Popular Culture* 8 (May 1999). *http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue08/features/wwii/default-yes.htm* (accessed 6 June 2008).

Dower, John W. *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon, 1986.

Gardiner, Juliet. "*Overpaid, Oversexed, and Over Here": The American GI in World War II Britain*. New York: Canopy, 1992.

Goulart, Ron. *Comic Book Culture: An Illustrated History*. Portland: Collectors, 2000.

Gustines, George Gene. "A Creator of Captain America, Fighting On." *New York Times*, April 16, 2008. *http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/16/books/16gust.html* (accessed 20 April 2008).

Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters and the Birth of the Comic Book*. New York: Basic, 2004.
Keegan, John. *The Second World War*. New York: Penguin, 1990.
Lee, Stan, Al Avison, and Syd Shores, et al. *Captain America Comics*, #11–49. New York: Marvel Comics, 1942–1946.
Lee, Stan, and Jack Kirby, et al. *The Essential Captain America*, Volume I. New York: Marvel, 2000. (*Tales of Suspense 61–68*, *71–74*, *77* come from this volume.)
_____. *The Essential Captain America*, Volume II. New York: Marvel, 2002. (*Captain America 100–104*, *107*, *109*, *112*, *117–118*, *120–121*, *123* come from this volume.)
_____. *The Essential Captain America*, Volume III. New York: Marvel, 2006. (*Captain America 143–144*, *148* come from this volume.)
MacDonnell, Francis. *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
McDougall, Robert. "Red, Brown and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy in the 1940s and 1950s." *Journal of Popular Culture* 32:4 (Spring 1999), pp. 59–75.
Ribuffo, Leo. *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988.
Ro, Ronin. *Tales to Astonish: Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, and the American Comic Book Revolution*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2004.
Scott, Cord. "Written in Red, White, and Blue: A Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda from World War II and September 11." *Journal of Popular Culture* 40:2 (2007), pp. 325–343.
Simon, Joe, and Jack Kirby. *Captain America: The Classic Years*, Volume I. New York: Marvel, 2000. (*Captain America Comics 1*, *3*, *5* come from this volume.)
_____. *Captain America: The Classic Years*, Volume II. New York: Marvel, 2000. (*Captain America Comics 7*, *10* come from this volume.)
Weiner, Robert G. "Okay, Axis, Here We Come! Captain America and the Superhero Teams from World War II and the Cold War." In Oropeza, B.J., ed., *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.
Wright, Bradford W. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
Wright, Nicky. *The Classic Era of American Comics*. Chicago: Contemporary, 2000.

The Invaders and the All-Star Squadron

Roy Thomas Revisits the Golden Age

Mark R. McDermott

Introduction

By the mid–1970s, many fans of the "Golden Age" of comic books had grown up to become writers and ultimately editors for the comics publishers, sometimes setting the narrative histories for their favorite childhood characters themselves. Many of these fans-turned-pro produced comics series that attempted to recapture the Golden Age's excitement, patriotic fervor and whiz-bang attitude. The most successful of these titles were produced by Roy Thomas, who fashioned a coherent history of costumed heroes during World War II, and reconciled the wildly inconsistent stories of the 1940s with tightly patrolled continuity initiated with the "Silver Age" of the 1960s. With *The Invaders* (1975–1979), Thomas focused on the hitherto unrevealed wartime exploits of Marvel Comics' early mainstays Captain America, the Human Torch, and Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner. In 1980, he moved to DC Comics and launched *All-Star Squadron,* which juggled the histories of the Justice Society of America and nearly a hundred secondary characters. Thomas "kept 'em flying" even as DC made a series of revamps to its super-hero "universe" that invalidated most of what he had written, finally giving up in his successor title, *Young All-Stars,* in 1989.

In order to understand Thomas' achievement as an energetic synthesizer of the past, we should first review the common themes of the Golden Age of Comic Books in the 1940s.

"Let's give Adolf the Bum's Rush!"[1] *World War II and The Golden Age*

Even before the United States entered World War II, her comic book agents had begun duking it out with thinly disguised overseas dictators and saboteurs. Many of the comics' artists and writers were highly sensitive to the situation in Europe; they were immigrant or second-generation European Jews with relatives being ground further each day under the heel of Nazi repression. If America would not yet act on behalf of those oppressed peoples, perhaps the symbols of America could be employed instead. Superman, whose red and blue costume had been compared to an American flag, already had run-ins with tin pot European dictators. But the most popular patriotic superhero was co-authored by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. In 2007, Simon reflected, "... I thought to myself: 'Why don't we use a real villain instead of trying to

make one up?' I put Hitler as the villain and that came across great, so it was just a matter of getting a hero to fight him" (Morse). Jack Kirby had simply declared, "Drape the flag on anything and it looks good!" (Steranko 53).

Almost a year before America was drawn into the conflict, the inaugural cover of Timely's[2] *CAC 1* (March 1941) portrayed Hitler's headquarters, in which "Sabotage Plans for U.S.A." were being studied, and a television showed a saboteur dynamiting a "U.S. Munitions Works" building. Meanwhile, Captain America burst in to sock Der Führer in the mush. Of all the flag-waving heroes, Captain America's context best summarized the American self-image; Cap's defensive shield protected him against enemy fire, until he gained the opportunity to strike back with his fists. The emblematic cover to *CAC 13*, the first produced after Pearl Harbor, showed Cap and his sidekick Bucky as colossi striding across the Pacific Ocean to smack down a fanged Japanese soldier, as Cap vows, "You started it, now we'll finish it!" (Avison).

Timely/Marvel's two other main stars had appeared before Cap, in *Marvel Comics 1* (Oct.–Nov. 1939). Despite his name, the Human Torch was an android, with the ability to burst into flame, fly, and throw fireballs. The Sub-Mariner, Namor, was the half-human prince of the undersea kingdom of Atlantis. When the "surface world's" depredations endangered his home, Namor engaged in a campaign to wipe out all air-breathers. As war clouds drew closer, Namor decided that, for now, the Nazis represented the greatest threat to his people. He and the Torch turned to incinerating armies and spies, or flooding transoceanic invasion tunnels. The Torch acquired his own sidekick, a boy named Toro, who had similar flaming powers.

The youthful enthusiasm with which the writers and artists of the Golden Age sent their characters through their paces could only have come about in the atmosphere of a world war. The battles against Nazi villains and fifth columnists were written at a time when victory in the war was not certain, lending urgency to each adventure. This atmosphere could not be matched after the war, even when Timely/Atlas brought back its headline characters to fight the Red Menace.

Although Cap, Namor and the Torch appeared together on the covers of several Timely comics, the three never actually teamed up until the post-war *All-Winners Comics.* The first true team of heroes met in the pages of DC Comics'[3] *All Star Comics,* home to the Justice Society of America (JSA). *All Star* had started as an anthology title for characters who didn't have solo titles yet. Issue *3* (Winter 1940) saw the first meeting of JSA, with the Flash, Hawkman, Green Lantern, Spectre, Hourman, Doctor Fate, the Atom and Sandman. Later, as members gained their individual titles, they acquired honorary status, and were replaced by other second string characters. Wonder Woman, the champion for gender equality, was allowed to join as their "recording secretary."

The JSA did their part for the war effort by raising millions for war orphans (7, Oct.–Nov. 1941), time-traveling to the far future to find a defense against aerial bombardment (*10*, April–May 1942), or briefly enlisting in their civilian identities (*11*, June–July 1942). The JSA never squabbled like Namor and Torch did.

Despite the power marshaled by the wartime costumed heroes, they never were able to take on the matter of the war itself. Why couldn't Superman just fly to Berlin and bring back Hitler's head on a pike? Before the war, the Sub-Mariner's battle against the Human Torch (in *Marvel Mystery Comics 8–10* [June–Aug. 1940]) saw him raise a tidal wave to destroy Manhattan; an event acknowledged as canon in the 1994 mini-series *Marvels.* Why didn't he do the same for the Japanese islands? Steve Rogers and Bucky did ship out to the front; in fact, *CAC* had Cap fighting in Europe, the Pacific and the home front in different stories in the

same issue. But even a one-man army was just one man. The 2007 miniseries, *Captain America: The Chosen*, had Cap explaining that the "Project: Rebirth" that created him had already been breached by the Nazis, so Steve Rogers was hidden in plain sight at Fort Lehigh: "The government knew I wasn't immortal. They were afraid of losing a one-of-a-kind weapon that they'd spent millions to develop. So they turned me into a freak show" (Morrell 15).

The costumed contingent could have ended the war in their fictional world, but in our reality, the real war was still going on.

"Got Any Back Issues?" The Birth of Comics Fandom and the Silver Age

The near collapse of the comic book industry during the 1950s coincided with the start of organized comics' fandom. The fan movement can be said to have started with the "E.C. Fan-Addict" clubs, which organized chapters and called for members in the letters pages of E.C. Comics' horror and science-fiction books. The collapse of the E.C. line in late 1954 (with their humor comic, *Mad,* surviving in magazine format), was followed less than a year later by the debut of the first "Silver Age" character, DC's Martian Manhunter, as a backup feature, in Batman's *Detective Comics 225*, Nov. 1955, and then in an update of the Flash, in *Showcase 4*, Sept.–Oct. 1956. Urged on by sales figures and a contingent of letter-writing fans, editor Julius Schwartz revived other Golden Age characters with new Atomic Age back-stories, and in 1959 banded them together as the Justice League of America (JLA).

The letters columns in comics featuring the new characters changed from kids asking what was in Batman's utility belt, to teens and adults asking for more Golden Age revivals. Roy Thomas (b. Nov. 22, 1940) was one of that generation of comic fandom. In 1960, while a senior at Southeast Missouri State College, he wrote a fan letter to Schwartz and JLA writer Gardner F. Fox. Schwartz put Thomas in touch with Dr. Jerry G. Bails, an assistant professor of Natural History at Wayne State University. Bails had founded the Academy of Comic-Book Fans and Collectors, and had begun documenting the early history of comics by interviewing their creators. Thomas contributed humor pieces to Bails' first issue of *Alter Ego* (1961), the first all-comics fanzine.

Bails and Thomas were among many fans asking DC to revive its original Golden Age heroes. Schwartz obliged them in "Flash of Two Worlds" (*Flash 123*, Sept. 1961). The modern Flash found himself on an alternate world he christened Earth-2, where he encountered his Golden Age counterpart, a little grayer but still active. A later team-up (*129*, June 1962) included a cameo of the Justice Society taking their costumes out of mothballs; and in 1963, they guest-starred in *JLA 21* and *22*, inaugurating an annual crossover tradition whose titles derived from the "Crisis on Earth-1" pattern.

The success of *JLA* was noted by Stan Lee, editor and head writer for Atlas/Marvel Comics. After struggling with weird science fiction, teen humor, and other genres of the moment, Lee got back into the superhero field, and, with Jack Kirby, produced the Fantastic Four, a fractious, dysfunctional superhero team. Their ranks included a new Human Torch, the hot-headed teenager, Johnny Storm. In *Fantastic Four 4* (May 1962), he discovered the Sub-Mariner, an amnesiac derelict in a Bowery flophouse. Later, Namor regained his senses, and, finding his old kingdom devastated by atomic testing, renewed his war against the surface world. The "Marvel Age" was underway.

Marvel expanded its pantheon of new heroes with the likes of the Amazing Spider-Man, Doctor Strange, Iron Man, the Incredible Hulk, Thor and Ant-Man, the latter four of which teamed in 1963 as the Avengers. In the fourth issue of *their* book (March 1964), the Avengers found Captain America, encased in an iceberg in suspended animation. He had been caught in the explosion of a booby-trapped experimental plane, that also killed Bucky, making him Marvel's first hero-martyr.[4] The original Human Torch was accounted for in *Fantastic Four Annual 4* (1966), where he battled Johnny Storm, under the control of the Mad Thinker, and nobly sacrificed his existence to save the youngster.

The world at large was becoming aware that grown men were collecting and analyzing comic books. The first fan conventions, in 1964, were profiled in the *New York Times. Village Voice* cartoonist Jules Feiffer, who had started as an assistant on Will Eisner's *Spirit* comic, recalled his experiences as a fan and young comics artist in *The Great Comic Book Heroes* (1965), which reprinted several key Golden Age stories. This was the first book in almost any public library on the topic of comic books. *Newsweek* covered the fan phenomenon in the "Life and Leisure" section of its February 15, 1965, issue, asserting that serious collectors would pay the outlandish sum of $100 for a copy of *Action Comics 1* (Superfans).

"With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility": Thomas' Marvel Career

Roy Thomas, at the time, had become one of the first comic fans to turn "pro." In 1964, while teaching high school, he began free-lancing scripts to Charlton Comics' *Son of Vulcan* and *Blue Beetle* series. His correspondence with Schwartz, Fox, and Superman writer, Otto Binder, led them to arrange a job for him at DC Comics, but it lasted all of two weeks. Common wisdom was that he didn't get along with Superman editor Mort Weisinger. Marvel then offered him a job, and Thomas quickly established himself as their "second writer." When Stan Lee gave up writing chores on each of his growing stable of titles, Thomas was usually the person to take over the book.

In *Doctor Strange, Fantastic Four, Sub-Mariner*, and others, Thomas expanded on Lee's formula of "heroes with problems." Whereas Stan and Steve Ditko might get a one-panel gag out of Spider-Man getting a head cold, Thomas would inflict him with a chronic duodenal ulcer, and have him swing into action wearing a cheap Halloween Spidey mask because his real one was tacked on J. Jonah Jameson's bulletin board (*Amazing Spider-Man #113*, Oct 1972).

Thomas' most popular work in the Marvel hero genre was his stint as writer on *The Avengers,* from *35–102* (Dec. 1966 — Sept. 1972), and as editor, with Steve Englehart as scripter, through *132* (Feb. 1975). Roy kept the team's revolving roster balanced between powerful, confident characters and the second stringers. He maintained the readers' identification with lesser characters (like Ant-Man, or trick archer Hawkeye) unsure of their worthiness to stand beside Iron Man or the mythical gods, Thor and Hercules. He also fleshed out Captain America's character as the team's longstanding leader. While the Lee-Kirby run, in *ToS*, dwelled largely on Cap as a man out of his own time, Thomas' Cap, in *The Avengers*, was automatically accorded respect even by the non-member guest characters. It was this characterization of Cap that would later be acknowledged as the "moral center" of the Marvel hero community.

The Golden Age was never far from Thomas' writing. In *Sub-Mariner 14* (June 1969), he finally introduced the now-grown Toro, brainwashed into believing himself the original Human Torch. Toro battled Namor before regaining his senses and sacrificing his life, as his mentor had. In *Avengers 71* (Dec. 1969), Thomas sent the team back to 1941 as pawns of meddling cosmic games-men, to encounter the Golden Age Captain America, Namor and Human Torch. For the proto–Invaders, Thomas coined the battle cry, "Okay, Axis, Here We Come!"[5] This was from the title of Don Thompson's essay on the wartime Timely heroes in *All in Color for a Dime*. This series ran in the science fiction fanzine, *Xero*, from 1960 to 1963, and was collected in book form in 1970 (Lupoff).

During this time, Thomas also had taken on management duties at Marvel, gaining the title of associate editor. In 1970, he convinced Marvel to purchase adaptation rights to *Conan the Barbarian,* and went on to write the popular *Conan* series for ten years (Thompson 9).

In 1972, Stan Lee was named Publisher of Marvel Comics, and Roy succeeded him as editor-in-chief. Thomas resigned after two years; some reports claimed Marvel's corporate structure was unresponsive to his ideas. Four other editors took the job and resigned within eighteen months. To keep Thomas on salary, Marvel created the position of writer/editor for him. Thomas would choose and work with the artists directly, write letters columns, and keep his books on schedule, answerable only to Lee (Thompson 10).

Now, Thomas could propose the series he'd always wanted to do: a comic set during World War II, starring Captain America, the Human Torch, the Sub-Mariner, and their kid sidekicks. Thomas had wanted to call his team the All-Winners Squad, after the postwar team the group had formed for two adventures in *All-Winners Comics* in 1946. Stan Lee lobbied for "The Invaders," in keeping with the action-oriented nomenclature of their other teams, Avengers and Defenders, which coincidentally were the titles of popular 1960s television shows. *The Invaders* was launched with a *Giant-Size Invaders* special, dated June 1975.

"Okay, Axis, Here We Come!" The Invaders

Giant-Size Invaders' cover, which was labeled with a swastika and the words "Fortress Europa," showed the team symbolically striding over the Earth, brushing off machine gun fire as Captain America sets foot on Nazi territory. The series opened in the weeks just after Pearl Harbor, as Cap and Bucky encountered the Human Torch and Toro. The pair had learned that a Nazi cyborg named Brain Drain had captured one of the scientists involved in creating Cap's Super-Soldier formula, and extracted enough information to create his own Aryan super-soldier, Master Man. The four rushed to thwart Master Man's attack on British ships in Chesapeake Bay, where they encountered the Sub-Mariner guarding Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Winnie convinced the group to form a team to help defend his beleaguered country until America's armed forces could be built up. The heroes agreed, accepting Churchill's suggestion of "Invaders" as their name.

The regular *Invaders* series ran 41 issues through 1979. It featured the team based in London, getting around in Namor's submersible jet flagship, Atlantean, making forays into Germany, returning to America several times, and fighting Rommel's army in Egypt.

Thomas often used *The Invaders'* letter column to spell out his plans for the book. One goal was to capture the thrill of the wartime comics he had enjoyed as a kid. He also wanted to come up with stories to match the action portrayed on many Golden Age covers. Stories

in which, together, Cap, Namor and the Torch rescued Bucky and Toro from fiendish death traps. The covers almost never matched the stories inside, so Thomas would write stories to match those cover scenes, even if they were factually deficient. For instance, the cover of *All-Select 1* (Fall 1943) showed the heroes storming a medieval castle with a banner identifying it as "Hitler's Berchtesgaden." Although the real Berchtesgaden was a 20th century villa, Thomas had it drawn to match the old cover, explaining his rationale in the letters column of *20* (Sept. 1977).

Primarily, Thomas used *The Invaders* to craft a definitive history of the Marvel Universe in World War II. He declared that the stories published during the war should be viewed as apocryphal, only "based" on the characters' "actual" classified wartime adventures, unless conformed as part of Marvel canon in *The Invaders.* In 1965, Lee and Kirby had tried to codify Captain America's wartime history (*ToS 63–71*), re-telling Cap and Bucky's origins and some of their wartime exploits, which included the origin of the Red Skull.

Freed from the constraints of old histories, Thomas mapped out the Invaders' exploits in Europe. The team crossed paths with the Red Skull only once, in Issues *5–6* (March–May 1976), which showed that, while stateside, the team was captured by the Skull and brainwashed into committing public acts of sabotage. Bucky, left behind by the Skull as not being "worth the bother," sought out other Golden Age Timely heroes: the Whizzer, Miss America, Jack Frost, the Blue Diamond, Red Raven and the Patriot. They banded together as the Liberty Legion to rescue the Invaders, and stayed together as a home front defense group. The Liberty Legion had been intended as a spin-off series. When that failed to get off the ground, the story that would have launched their Liberty Legion's comic was recycled into an Invaders case. The Liberty Legion also established a relationship between the Whizzer and Miss America, who during the Marvel Age had been named the parents of Avengers Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch.

In *Invaders 7* (July 1976), they became guests of Lord Montgomery Falsworth, a patriarch of British super nobility; he had been a hero named Union Jack during World War I, working with an international fighting group named Freedom's Five. The Five's few flashback panels represented the first major extension of Marvel's hero history before its 1940s roots — discounting its many masked Western characters. Thomas was building the foundation for a world in which it was natural to put on a costume to confront society's fears. Union Jack is, incidentally, one of Thomas' most brilliant creations and, along with Captain Britain, can be seen as a British Captain America invoking the same patriotic undercurrent.

Union Jack got back into costume when London was being terrorized by his old enemy Baron Blood, a vampire now working for the Nazis. Blood was destroyed after being revealed as Falsworth's brother John, but not before irreparably crushing Union Jack's legs and draining the blood from his daughter Jacqueline. She was saved by a blood transfusion from the Human Torch, which gave her super speed, and let her join the Invaders as Spitfire (*12*, Jan. 1977). A later story introduced Jacqueline's brother Brian, a former Nazi collaborationist disowned by their father. Brian ended up confined in a German prison, where he met a dissident scientist who possessed yet another version of the Super-Soldier formula. Brian had become the Mighty Destroyer, one of Timely's few Golden Age heroes to work behind enemy lines (*18–19*; July–Aug. 1977). He would later succeed his father as Union Jack.

The Invaders carried many touches bordering on self-referential clues to comics fans; none more so than Issues *14–15* (Mar.–Apr. 77). Here, the team encountered the Crusaders, a group that resembled the Freedom Fighters, a team of former Quality Comics characters, which

was being published by DC at the time. Simultaneously, DC's *Freedom Fighters* comic had them facing another set of Crusaders, who were analogues of the Invaders. It was a goof hatched by Thomas and *Freedom Fighters* writer Martin Pasko, but when it was over, Thomas found a role for Crusader Dyna-mite, who would become the second Destroyer, and the Spirit of '76, about whom more will be mentioned later.

Roy did not neglect his trademark Marvel-style characterization of his heroes, either. In his original wartime stories, Captain America may not have carried a gun, but he jumped behind any handy machine gun to mow down hordes of Japanese. In *The Invaders,* Cap became pensive about his life of constant battle, and in Issue *10*, an offhand reference to the Grim Reaper had him pondering that death is "... always looking over our shoulders ... mine, even a lad like Bucky's," as he glanced significantly at the doomed youngster (Thomas 2). During the 1940s, the android origins of the Human Torch had been forgotten completely. Now, he and his teammates knew he was an artificial man, and in private moments he pined for Jacqueline Falsworth, wondered if he could ever truly fit in with the world. Namor was still Prince Namor, and though he fought for the Allies, he made it clear that he had only temporarily called off his war against all air-breathers. He questioned the wisdom of his colleagues who brought child sidekicks along to face deadly danger, but he was more than cooperative when the enemy was in sight.

As *The Invaders* revisited the wartime years, it also reviewed some of the 1940s attitudes through the filter of the 1970s. In Issues *12–13* (Jan.–Feb. 1977), the Invaders went to the Warsaw ghetto to rescue a rabbi, Jacob Goldstein, whom the Nazis held prisoner to blackmail his scientist brother in England. When a Panzer division took the Invaders captive, Goldstein built a golem to rescue them. He refused the Invaders' offer of sanctuary in England, hoping, as other ghetto residents might have, that things couldn't possibly get any worse for them.

The confrontation with America's wartime prejudices was part of a long story arc, starting in Issue *16* (May 1977). It began with the abduction, in London, of American soldier Biljo White, named after a fanzine artist who was a friend of Thomas. The fictional White was the writer of a comic book character, "Major Victory," who gained his power from a "Super-Soldier Formula," and the Nazis presumed he had some knowledge of the real formula.

In trying to rescue White, the Invaders were captured by Master Man, and brought before Hitler at the "castle" Berchtesgaden. Hitler made the mistake of many melodrama villains: instead of having them killed immediately, he ordered the Invaders shipped to Berlin to be paraded through the streets, before their public execution. The Invaders, of course, made their escape, but not before Toro was mortally wounded by gunfire. The Torch incinerated the shooter on the spot, something he did often in the 1940s adventures, but here it was a rare occurrence that demonstrated the desperate situation of the war.

This plotline took six issues to get this far, and Toro would remain at "death's door" for six more issues. This was partly due to the "Dreaded Deadline Doom," an affliction striking several Marvel comics in the 1970s. The company had been adding titles faster than its editors, writers and artists could keep on schedule. Rather than skip a month, many *Invaders* issues surprised readers with a reprint.

Some of these reprints were welcomed by Golden Age fans, especially the one in *20* (Sept. 1977). The first "Sub-Mariner" story in *Marvel Comics 1* had never been clearly reprinted because the artwork was altered to create underwater effects, leaving the pages too murky to copy. But artist Bill Everett had originally drawn the story for *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly,* an attempted movie theatre premium. Everett's studio re-used the Sub-Mariner story when

they were contracted by Timely to produce *Marvel Comics*. The existence of *MPFW* was unconfirmed until six copies turned up in 1974. The story was photostatted from that comic for reprint in *The Invaders*.

Bucky flew Toro to the "only surgeon in the world who could save him," while the Human Torch told the adult Invaders Toro's "secret origin" (*22*, Nov. 1977). We learned that Toro was in fact a mutant, a fashionable thing to be in a Marvel comic at that time. The adults then went to Egypt (*23*, Dec. 1977) to help the British war effort there. They encountered the Scarlet Scarab, an Egyptian superhero who saw no difference between Nazi invasion and continued British imperialism in his country. To the dismay of British members Spitfire and Union Jack, Sub-Mariner agreed with this assessment, and even Captain America admitted that the Scarab had a point. The Scarab did help the Invaders after Rommel's troops callously destroyed an Egyptian village, but he had served notice that the Allied cause was not necessarily his own, and the Invaders found themselves in political disagreement for the first time.

When Bucky arrived in California (*26*, March 1978), he discovered that Dr. Sabuki, the surgeon Toro needed, had just been caught up by the presidential order interning Japanese-Americans in relocation camps. Thomas spared no details in representing the American attitude toward the Nisei. A camp's commander questioned Captain America's loyalty when he expressed his outrage that such a thing could happen, and a "100% American" chortled to Bucky that he'd purchased a "traitor's" house for a song. Before Sabuki could finally save Toro's life, Bucky, his daughter Gwenny-Lou, and Davy Mitchell, a black delivery boy who happened to be in Toro's hospital room, were abducted by Agent Axis, three agents from each Axis country who'd been fused into a single body.

By the end of the adventure, Davy and Gwenny-Lou had gained super-powers and took the names the Human Top and Golden Girl. These were two more Golden Age characters recast by Thomas. The original, blonde Golden Girl, Betty Ross, a supporting character from that start of *CAC*, had replaced Bucky at Captain America's side after the war. As to the Human Top, Thomas had often expressed a desire to rectify the seeming coincidence that those magic bolts of lightning had always struck white people. Bucky and Toro decided to stay stateside with their new friends, and form the Kid Commandos. This group supplanted the Young Allies, a kid group that had their own title during the war.

Roy had avoided bringing in younger versions of later Marvel characters as guest stars. Even though many heroes in the 1960s had been established as war veterans, he reasoned that during the 1942 period of his book, none of them had gone into combat yet (Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos made a cameo in Times Square, before shipping out to the ETO). He finally broke his rule in *Issue #32* (Sept. 1978). Hitler, theorizing that Wagner's Ring operas seemed echoes from another world, commissioned a scientist and his mysterious, bandaged assistant to construct a viewer to show him this mythic realm. With this viewer tuned to an Asgard already familiar to Marvel fans, Der Führer was able to summon the mighty Thor to Earth.

Solely through his persuasive abilities, Hitler convinced Thor that his people were in a holy war against barbarians on all sides. Did not Germany's most powerful foes call themselves "the Invaders?" Thor flew to Russia to battle his future comrades, who were accompanying Josef Stalin. When Thor appeared to have killed Stalin, Hitler prepared to bring armies of Asgardians to Earth, but he was stopped by the inventor's assistant, who destroyed the televiewer and only let Hitler live because, "I recognized you as one who will bring down the

wrath of a planet upon your own head." This assistant was revealed to the reader as young Victor von Doom (*33* 27). Thor, who had been able to mystically overhear Hitler's ranting, decided this was not his fight, and returned to Asgard, taking away all memories of this encounter.

For the 1977 *Invaders Annual,* Golden Age artists Don Rico and Alex Schomburg returned to draw the characters they had worked on in the 1940s. In the story, Thomas told the Invaders' side of their encounter with his Avengers in the story he had written years ago. He contrived a story to explain why Cap had his original triangular shield in that story, and the Sub-Mariner had his original black trunks, instead of his green ones.

Thomas elaborated on Marvel history in *What If?* in 1977. This was a series edited by Thomas in which alternate Marvel histories were presented, based on turning points in a character's career. However, Issue *4* was presented as Marvel canon, filling in Timely's post-war history. "What If the Invaders Had Stayed Together After World War Two?" opened at the war's end, just after Captain America and Bucky disappeared. Thomas wrote how Hitler died in the Marvel Universe: the Human Torch burned into Hitler's bunker, offering him a chance to surrender to the Americans rather than face the tender mercies of the Soviet army. In the ensuing confusion, the Torch accidentally incinerated Adolf and Eva. Later, learning of Cap's disappearance, the Torch and Namor flew to Washington, where President Truman urged them and the Liberty Legion to remain together, validating the two "All-Winners Squad" stories published in 1946. Cap's apparent death was to be kept a secret, with the Crusaders' Spirit of '76 substituting for him. The Squad's casebook eventually took them to Boston, where another android, created by the Torch's "father," planned to abduct a young war hero who was running for Congress, John Kennedy, and replace him with an android. In the ensuing battle, Captain America II was killed, to be replaced by former Liberty Legion member the Patriot. This Cap retired some time after the war.[6]

The Invaders soldiered on, but sales had begun eroding. Thomas convinced Marvel to license a comics tie-in to a little-promoted movie called *Star Wars.* The adaptation became one of the best-selling comics in Marvel history, and Roy scripted the ongoing *Star Wars* series, bringing in other writers on titles he edited, including Don Glut on *Invaders* (Decker).

In the midst of a return battle with Baron Blood (*40*, May 1979), Roy announced in the letters column that the series had been cancelled. He was allowed to wrap up the loose threads in a final issue four months later, in which *The Invaders* fought a group of their Axis foes in Chicago. The fight was highlighted when the Sub-Mariner extinguished a brainwashed Torch by filling the Petrillo Bandshell with water, and with a climactic battle at Riverside Park.

The Invaders was not without its detractors during its run, much of which centered on the artwork. Thomas' extensive historical research was aided by veteran penciler Frank Robbins, a onetime partner of Kirby, who had drawn the aviation strip *Scorchy Smith* and who created the similar *Johnny Hazard* (Horn 584). Thomas valued Robbins' experience and historical knowledge, but many readers were too used to Marvel's slicker house art style. Robbins' idiosyncratic art looked to some like a series of Milton Caniff swipes, and inker Frank Springer's heavy black spots suffered in the letterpress printing used for 70s comics. Robbins left after Issue *28*, and penciling chores fell to Paul Kupperberg and others. Jack Kirby did draw many *Invaders* covers, but no story pages.

As noted, Thomas' books often fell victim to the Dreaded Deadline Doom. Editors joked about "DDD" in their editorials, but it was a serious problem, caused by Marvel adding more

titles to capture more retail display space. When Jim Shooter took over as editor-in-chief, in 1978, he worked to halt the reprints by pushing editors to build up story inventory. He then eliminated the writer/editor job title. After Thomas, every editor-in-chief had taken the title as compensation, including Marv Wolfman, Gerry Conway and Archie Goodwin. Jack Kirby got the title because he was, well, Jack Kirby. As the writer/editors' contracts expired, Shooter offered them new contracts as writers only. Thomas quit, accepting a similar job title at DC, to produce 100 comics pages a month (Thompson, 11).

Thomas occasionally scripted other *Invaders* adventures in later years. A 1993 mini-series featured the Battle-Axis, whose members Thomas drew from defunct publishers' characters now in public domain. These borrowed characters were American heroes who were motivated to turn against their country (e.g., Fox Publishing's Spider-Queen's scientist husband had been murdered by Soviet spies, and Harvey Comics' Human Meteor's Irish heritage set him against anyone who was allied with the British). In 2005, Thomas wrote a story for *Giant-Size Invaders* #2 to bookend a collection of *Invaders* and Golden Age reprints. In this adventure the Invaders stopped Nazi agents, who had taken a formula to become powerful giants, in an attempt to assassinate Churchill and FDR. Their mission thwarted, the agents' formula caused them to self-destruct. Speaking from the author's post–9/11 perspective, Captain America remarked, presciently, "If those two were aware they'd die within moments of killing the Allied leaders, that's bad news. That kind of assassin's a lot harder to stop than one who hopes to survive his mission: If the day ever comes when America confronts a horde of suicidal fanatics — it's liable to find them even harder to defeat than an army" (2005, 16).

As of this writing, popular artist Alex Ross, is co-plotting, with Jim Krueger, an *Avengers/Invaders* miniseries that will see the *Invaders* of 1942 time-traveling to the post–*Civil War* America of 2008.

"Just Imagine! All Your Favorite Heroes Together!" The Secret Origin of The All-Star Squadron

There had been several developments in the DC line that laid the background for Thomas' next nostalgia book. The Justice League/Justice Society team-ups had greatly expanded what would become known as the DC Multiverse. Especially in the 1970s, DC began re-introducing characters they'd purchased from defunct publishers, to be used during the JLA/JSA crossovers in their own universes. In *JLA 107–108* (Sept./Oct.–Nov./Dec. 1973), Quality Comic heroes Uncle Sam, Doll Man, Phantom Lady, Black Condor, the Ray, and the Human Bomb were found on Earth-X, where the Nazis had won World War II. In 1976, the JLA/JSA met Captain Marvel and his Fawcett Comics cohort on Earth-S (for Shazam!) (*JLA 135–137)*.

DC had revived *All-Star Comics* in 1975, with the Justice Society. The first issue's letters column carried letters from longtime JSA supporters, Jerry Bails and Roy Thomas (*All-Star 58* 32). Thomas had earlier proposed the revival to writer Gerry Conway, and later turned down an offer to ghost-write a few stories. The series ran 17 issues before its abrupt cancellation in the 1978 "DC Implosion" (needing to raise their 35-cent cover prices, DC decided to jump to 50 cents, adding eight pages of art and promoting it as the "DC Explosion"). Three months later, DC's corporate parent, Warner Communications, ordered them to cut costs by canceling half their titles, losing the extra pages, and pricing the books at 40 cents. The remaining inventory of *All-Star* stories moved to the anthology *Adventure Comics.*

An important part of Earth-2 history, which Thomas would later expand upon, appeared in the anthology *DC Special 29*, Aug.–Sept. 1977. In "The Untold Origin of the Justice Society," Paul Levitz wrote how, in 1940, Hitler had acquired the "Spear of Destiny," the Roman centurion's lance that had pierced Christ's side at his crucifixion (this was years before the *Indiana Jones* movies featured similar relics in Nazi hands).[7] With it, Hitler summoned a host of Valkyries and sent them to assassinate President Roosevelt. Mystic heroes, the Spectre and Dr. Fate, summoned American heroes to battle the Valkyries; they succeeded only when the Atom took a spear aimed at FDR. The heroes then decided to organize into the Justice Society.

"We Did It Before and We Can Do It Again!" The All-Stars Join the Battle

Among the conditions offered to Roy Thomas when he moved to DC was that he would be in charge of Earth-2 continuity. Thomas had wanted to work with the Justice Society, but considering the recent cancellation of the series in *All-Star Comics*, he decided to revisit the Golden Age. Thomas later wrote, in his revived *Alter Ego* magazine:

> Whereas at Marvel in the mid–'70s I'd had *The Invaders* commence some weeks after Pearl Harbor, I wanted to start *All-Star Squadron* on the night before the sneak attack, and provide the answer to what would have to be a real mystery to anyone who ever tried to take 1940s comic books seriously: Why the hell didn't America's super-heroes defend our base at Hawaii on Dec. 7, 1941— or at least unleash a terrible vengeance on Japan a few hours or days later?
>
> The War years had been a time of greatness as much as of infamy — of heroism as much as horror — and I wanted to turn the JSA loose in those green/Golden pastures.
>
> No — not just the JSA.
>
> All the fine young heroes of DC Comics [Autumn 2000].

By the end of 1941, DC had established dozens of characters that Thomas could draft into his new history. Quality Comics characters like Plastic Man and Blackhawk, and the heroes who would later become the Freedom Fighters, were drafted into service on Earth-2. Rights to the Fawcett characters were being renegotiated at the time, so Captain Marvel wouldn't appear for a few years. The membership for the All-Star Squadron was simple: every person who put on a costume to fight crime or evil was drafted into the Squadron, under the direct command of President Roosevelt.

The All-Star Squadron was "teased" with a preview in *JLA 193* (August 1981). Its splash page featured Wonder Woman, Flash, and Green Lantern in a charity race on December 6, 1941 (again, Thomas was writing a story to match an old comic cover — in this case, *Comic Cavalcade).* Afterward, they, and other members of the Justice Society, were kidnapped, and this interlude set the stage for *All-Star Squadron 1* (September 1981). *All-Star Squadron*'s debut demonstrated that the plotting would be much more complicated than on *The Invaders.* The three-issue story opened with Hawkman, Atom, and Dr. Mid-Nite being summoned to the White House on the morning of the Pearl Harbor attack. President Roosevelt had called in Plastic Man, here an FBI agent, to brief the heroes on their missing comrades. Also attending were non–JSA members Johnny Quick (a Flash clone), Liberty Belle, and Robotman. FDR asked the group to mobilize an "All-Star Squadron" of every "mystery man" available to bolster the country's defense.

The abductor of the JSA members was Per Degaton, a time-traveling villain from 1947,

who recruited foes of the JSA and brought them to 1941, before any of them had met their nemeses, to abduct the heroes. With a fleet of museum-piece Zeros, he planned to fake a Japanese attack on the West Coast, forcing the U.S. to abandon its secret treaties to aid its European allies, and deplete its forces in the Pacific. This would allow Degaton to take over with weapons from the 1980s. The Squadron stopped the attack on California, freed the captive Justice Society, and defeated Degaton and his allies, which caused them to automatically return to their own times, taking the memory of their encounter with them.

The first *Squadron* narrative featured many elements that Thomas would employ throughout his run. Several of his stories involved complex time-travel paradoxes and jumps to other dimensions — the Quality hero Uncle Sam would twice recruit heroes, who happened to be Quality characters, to go to Earth-X, where the Allies were nearing defeat. These threads worked out at first, as they helped Thomas' narrative for DC's history.

Thomas had resolved the "Home Front dilemma" in the Squadron's next adventure (*4*, Dec. 1981). The assembled All-Stars surveyed the devastation at Pearl Harbor, and vowed to exact revenge on the Japanese fleet. As the heroes flew into occupied seas, the narrative shifted to a villain named the Dragon King, who revealed that along with the Spear of Destiny, Hitler also had acquired the Holy Grail, and sent it to General Tojo. The two Axis leaders performed a rite on the artifacts, creating a mystic sphere of protection around their territory. Any hero who had magic powers — or was susceptible to magic, like Superman — and entered the sphere would be instantly converted to the Axis cause. Thus the most powerful members of the Squadron were required to stay at home, fighting spies and leading scrap paper drives.

The narrative touched on the Justice Society's adventures as reported in the original *All Star Comics,* and then filled in what was going on with the Squadron in the meantime. In the weeks after Pearl Harbor, the Justice Society officially disbanded so its members could enlist in the military, under their civilian identities, echoing the "Justice Society Joins the War on Japan!" story from *All Star Comics II*. With the JSA in the background (except for Hawkman, who Thomas kept active because he was the only JSA member to appear in every issue of *All Star Comics*), the All-Star Squadron established its reputation. They added Liberty Belle and Firebrand, the sister of the original Quality character Firebrand, to their distaff numbers. Firebrand had been injured at Pearl Harbor. The All-Stars set up headquarters in the Perisphere of the New York World's Fair grounds. Thomas created an African American hero, Amazing-Man, whose first adventure with the All-Stars placed them amidst the Detroit race riots of February, 1942 (*38–39*, Oct.–Nov. 1984).

With dozens of characters on every page of the series, it was hard to draw a bead on their personalities. Thomas later wrote that he had toyed with drawing up horoscopes for each character, just to give him some traits to work with (*Alter Ego,* 2000). Unlike the hot-headed Human Torch or the arrogant Sub-Mariner, the DC heroes were, at their best, always a swell bunch of guys. At their worst, they were bland. By creating a team with dozens of admitted second-string characters, Thomas differentiated between the group's "leaders" and "soldiers." For some characters, it was enough to rely on dialogue, as with Uncle Sam's Will Rogers-styled aphorisms, or the Shining Knight, a displaced member of King Arthur's court, who talked like Thor. Some of his regular characters had been allowed to advance in their personal lives; Johnny Quick and Liberty Belle got married in *All-Star Squadron 50* (Oct. 1985). Not coincidentally, the happy couple matched powers and themes with the Liberty Legion's Whizzer and Miss America. The DC couple would have their own offspring, Jesse Quick, the second generation Liberty Belle.

All-Star Squadron had been popular enough that Thomas was allowed to start another series set in the modern day. Rather than focus on the JSA at two different times in their history, he created *Infinity, Inc,* a team comprised of the JSA's junior members, former sidekicks, and hitherto unrevealed sons and daughters. This team tried to operate as a for-profit business, supporting their world-saving activities through work for hire. Some of the "Infinitors" later joined their parents in the current *Justice Society of America* series, giving the JSA its focus as the keepers of superhero "legacies." *Infinity, Inc.* was the first regular series drawn by Todd McFarlane, who would later create *Spawn,* a character he owned outright, to become the most successful independent creator in comics.

Thomas recycled some of his *Invaders* plots in *All-Star Squadron.* In *33* (May 1984), the Squadron visited the Japanese internment camps, fighting another young Japanese-American character, Tsunami, before convincing her she could better help her people as an ally. Captain Marvel entered the series when Hitler transported him from Earth-S, and, as he had done to Thor in *Invaders,* he brainwashed him into fighting against Superman, Batman, and other heavyweights (*36*, Aug. 1984).

"Worlds Will Live! World Will Die!" Surviving the Crisis

Thomas' carefully reconstructed wartime history of Earth-2 was mostly accepted by both old-time and new fans. But it was suddenly and almost completely undone by the Crisis on Infinite Earths.

DC's management had become concerned that the plenitude of alternate Earths was too confusing for new readers. A decision was made, in 1982, to perform the first "reboot" of a comic book universe with *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. This was a twelve-issue series that started in 1985, after three years of clues dropped in almost every DC series. Heroes from Earths past, present, and future (including several All-Star Squadron members) were gathered to fight the Anti-Monitor, who plotted to destroy the entire Multiverse, and remake it in his image.

By the time the "maxi-series" had ended, all of DC's Earths had merged into a single dimension. Earth-2 characters with direct Earth-1 counterparts, like Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, were erased from continuity, while Supergirl and the Silver Age Flash sacrificed their lives to save reality. Superman and Wonder Woman were started over with new origins in new, Number Ones of their respective titles.

Initially, plans were to reduce the infinite dimensions to just five, leaving *All-Star Squadron's* Earth-2 narrative intact. This was shown in the "Crisis Cross-Over," *All-Star Squadron 50* (Oct. 1985), when the remaining Quality Comics heroes made the journey to Earth-X. While this story was in production, DC decided to end the Crisis with just one universe.

Thomas' Earth-2 continuity persisted for three more months, until *All-Star Squadron 58–60* (June–Aug. 1986). This story arc, borrowing from the *Star Trek* episode "City on the Edge of Forever," involved Mekanique, a robot from the future. Mekanique helped some of the All-Stars save a young girl from being hit by a car, which assured that her future history would come about. Mekanique was revealed to be the robot, Maria, from Fritz Lang's movie,*Metropolis.* Her presence in 1942 "held back" the full effects of the Crisis. Once Mekanique returned to the future, the Golden Age Superman, Batman and Robin, Wonder Woman, and Aquaman disappeared.

All-Star Squadron continued for just six more months. Issue *64* (Dec. 1986) recycled "The Case of the Funny Paper Crimes" from *Superman 19* (Nov.–Dec. 1942), with the All-Stars taking Superman's place, in an attempt to re-canonize a Golden Age story. But the rest of the series was filled with various characters relating their origins, until ending with Issue *66* (January 1987). Thomas also had written a post–Crisis one-shot, *Last Days of the Justice Society* (1986), in which Hitler's incantations over the Spear of Destiny caused the loosening of Ragnarok, the doomsday of Norse myth. Still mourning their dead from the *Crisis*, the surviving current-day JSA members went off to fight Ragnarok, in a battle to repeat through all eternity. This was to be the JSA's final ending, at least until they were freed in another crossover series, 1992s *Armageddon: Inferno*.

Thomas was back five months later with *Young All-Stars*. This series opened in April 1942, just a few days after *All-Star Squadron's* narrative had ended. It brought together Tsunami and other obscure Golden Agers: Neptune Perkins, Dyna-Mite, Tigress, and the Sandman's sidekick, Sandy. Three new characters, Arn "Iron" Monro, Flying Fox, and Fury, were introduced to fill the continuity gap left by Earth-2's Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, respectively. They most notably substituted for Superman and Wonder Woman in retelling a team-up that had first appeared in the oversized series *All-New Collector's Edition* (C-54, 1978).

Young All-Stars was one of DC's early "New Format" books. It was printed on better quality paper, at a higher price, sold only at comic book retail stores, and not submitted for Comics Code Authority approval. Thomas would only sparingly venture into "adult" themes. Arn Monroe and Fury would become romantically involved, until Arn discovered he had a venereal disease, and Fury learned from her namesakes, the Greek Eumenides, that she retained her powers only so long as she remained a virgin.

The Young All-Stars also went off on literary tangents. Arn Munro discovered that his father was Hugo Danner, the title character of Philip Wylie's 1930 novel *The Gladiator*, one of the first stories about a "super-man." Neptune Perkins' grandfather was the "A. Gordon Pym" of Edgar Allan Poe's narrative. And, in the last story arc of the series, Arn met the granddaughter of Prof. Edward Challenger from Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World,* took a trip to that novel's dinosaur-infested White Maple Land. Due either to declining sales, or Thomas' unhappiness with editorial mangling of his history, *Young All-Stars* ended with Issue #31 (Nov. 1989), in which the team was absorbed into the All-Star Squadron. As with *The Invaders,* Thomas' wartime DC Comics' narrative had ended in the middle of 1942.

Conclusions

As someone who had been a youngster during World War II, Thomas was probably the last of a generation who could muster any nostalgia for the wartime hero comic books. By the end of his run on *Young All-Stars,* there were fewer fans who could relate to his favorite comics from over 50 years earlier. Any treatment of a character from the childhoods of its writers was too suffused with irony to stand on its own.

People reading Thomas' body of writing today would be struck by the reliance on genre clichés and recurring plots. Heroes were constantly brainwashed into fighting for the Nazis, partly to maintain the Marvel tradition of heroes fighting each other at the drop of a hat. Many time-travel crossovers would end with the crossover guest returning home, and the

heroes losing all memory of the encounter. Many non-powered characters would gain their own super-powers, by hanging around long enough (e.g., Union Jack got clobbered by Thor's hammer, and somehow gained electrical powers; the female Firebrand had flame powers her brother never had; and Liberty Belle got surges of super-strength whenever the real Liberty Bell was rung).

The villains in Thomas' series tended to rely heavily on the Evil Overlords handbook. Since many of the heroes were unarmed, and would surrender whenever the villain threatened innocent bystanders, a contrivance was needed to keep the heroes from being shot dead on the spot. This involved the villain exclaiming, "Wait! I have a better idea," discarding the least-powered member of the hero group as "no threat to my plans," and putting the rest into an Easily Escapable Death Trap™. Villains from Hitler down to Mr. Mind could be counted on to "monologue"[8] for as much exposition as was needed to explain what had happened the issue before, and to give the sidekick time to help the heroes escape.

Yet, for his faults, Thomas had carefully crafted a historical background for both of the major superhero comic publishers. His backstory for the Marvel Universe still informs current storylines. In a 1980 *Comics Journal* interview, *CA's* then-artist John Byrne proclaimed, "Bless Roy Thomas for saying, 'Marvel Universe stories start with F[antastic] F[our] *1*. Here are the Invaders stories. These took place too. Nothing else took place unless it fits and we say it does'" (Maynerd 73).

Most fans have preferred DC history as organized in *All-Star Squadron* to the complex mess left by later writers. Neither should today's comics fans forget Thomas' instrumental role in the birth of the fan movement, and in researching comics history and scholarship, while preserving the sense of fun that drew kids to read comics in the first place.

Thomas would relinquish his editorial position at DC to write on a free-lance basis. He assisted his wife, Dannette, with her writing career, wrote mini-series and one-shot projects for Marvel and DC, and contributed introductions to reprint books of classic stories. He even returned to the sword-and-sorcery genre, in 1997, by scripting the comics adaptation of *Xena: Warrior Princess*. In the 2000s, he revived his *Alter Ego* fanzine, and compiled coffee-table book projects on Marvel history, like *The Marvel Vault* (2007) and *Amazing Marvel Universe* (2006).

If comic books by Roy Thomas and his contemporaries leaned heavily on their roots in World War II, they were by no means the only popular entertainments to do so. The war story has persisted as a motion picture genre. The heroes of the 1950s comics may have failed to find an audience as fighters against Communism, but this period was one of declining sales for all comics. A few war comics, set in Vietnam, were tried, but sales figures preferred the more distant perspectives of World War II heroes, Sgt. Rock and Sgt. Nick Fury.

The Invaders was by no means the only Golden Age comic revival; DC had been publishing *Shazam!*, starring the original Captain Marvel, which was illustrated at first by original artist C.C. Beck, since 1972. But concurrent with these clean-cut Golden Age heroics was the emergence of the "grim and gritty" hero. Before *The Invaders* debuted in 1975, the morally ambiguous Punisher and Wolverine had already bowed. The increasing popularity of these anti-heroes (joined by the assassin, Elektra, and Frank Miller's "Dark Knight" interpretation of Batman) indicated that dedicated comics fans preferred the darker, more cynical heroes who led the medium in the 1980s and 90s.

In his wartime comics, Captain America needed only to smile as he mowed down faceless Japanazis. With *The Invaders,* Thomas added depth and conflict to the character. *The*

Invaders served as a prequel to Cap as the "moral center" of Marvel's superhero community. He rebuilt the Avengers, after its founding members departed, giving ex-villains Hawkeye, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch a chance to make good. Cap partnered with the Falcon, Marvel's first African American hero, in 1969, and often gave up his commission, starting in the 1970s, over various government chicaneries. In the 1980s, Steve Rogers had a gay neighbor and a Jewish girlfriend, a supporting cast that would revolt his unreconstructed Nazi foes. By revisiting World War II from a contemporary perspective, Thomas was able to have Captain America face some of the more controversial aspects of wartime society, even if history showed he could have done little to change it. But the Captain America who witnessed the beginnings of the Holocaust, and the internment of Japanese-Americans, in Thomas' narratives was the same Cap who stood against the Super Human Registration Act in 2007's *Civil War* event.

Notes

1. Cover copy from *Boy Commandos* #2 (Spring 1943) by Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, National Periodical Publications (DC Comics).

2. The twisted nomenclature of the publisher now known as Marvel Entertainment can be daunting to the casual reader. Fans generally refer to the comics of World War II as Timely Comics and the postwar period as Atlas, with *Fantastic Four 1* inaugurating the Age of Marvel Comics in 1961. Marvel merely followed standard business practice of using pseudonymous publisher names for different titles. The *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* lists 59 names used by the company that became Marvel in the introduction to its annual editions.

3. Today's DC Comics was National Periodical Publications in the 1940s. They were divided into two groups: Detective Comics (DC), home of the Superman and Batman titles; and All-American Comics, edited by M.C. Gaines, home of Wonder Woman, the Flash and others. The two shops were combined in 1944. National officially became DC Comics, Inc., in 1976.

4. Since Bucky's body was never recovered in 1945, his recent return as the Soviet agent Winter Soldier was one of the more plausible comic book resurrections. But Bucky-as-martyr served as an important aspect of Cap's character for over 40 years. And no one had to make a deal with Mephisto or get retcon punched.

5. A bit more difficult to shout out than the Timely-era Cap and Bucky's cry of "Wahoo!" or "Yahoo!"

6. Steve Englehart previously reconciled the Captain America that fought the Red Menace in the 1950s. In *Captain America* #153–156 (September–December 1972), it was learned that an unnamed man had discovered the notes for the Nazi version of the Super-Soldier Formula. The U.S. government allowed him to play the role of Captain America, letting him undergo plastic surgery to assume Steve Rogers' identity, complete with a new Bucky. He resurfaced in 1972 as the Neo-Nazi leader the grand director.

7. The best known of the artifacts believed to be the Spear was in the Hofburg Museum in Vienna. After annexing Austria to Germany in 1938, the historical Hitler had ordered the Spear sent to Nuremburg. It was returned to Austria by General George Patton.

8. Thanks to the Pixar movie *The Incredibles* for giving the perfect name to this plot device.

References

Avison, Al (art). *Captain America Comics 13*. New York: Timely/Marvel (April 1942), cover.

Batroc. "SSS: Character Profiles." *Star-Spangled Site.* 3 June 2002. *www.medinnus.com/winghead/cast/invaders.html*.

Busiek, Kurt, and Alex Ross, et al. *Marvels*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1999.

Conway, Gerry, et al. "Superman vs. Wonder Woman." *All-New Collectors' Edition C-54*. New York: DC Comics, 1978.

_____. *Amazing Spider-Man 113*. New York: Marvel Comics (October 1972).

Conway, Gerry, and Paul Levitz, et al. *All-Star Comics 58–74*. New York: DC Comics (November/December 1976–September/October 1978).

Decker, Dwight R. "When Falls the Axe." *The Comics Journal 47* (July 1979): 62.

Feiffer, Jules. *The Great Comic Book Heroes*. New York: Dial, 1965.

Frank, Harry. *Comic Cavalcade 1.* New York: All-American Comics/DC Comics (Winter 1942/43), cover.
Gough, Bob. "Interview with Roy Thomas." *Mile High Comics.* 3 June 2002. *www.milehighcomics.com/interviews/roythomas.html.*
Goulart, Ron. *The Comic Book Reader's Companion.* New York: HarperCollins, 1993
Harrington, Wallace. "Superman and the War Years." *Superman Homepage.* 25 February 2008. supermanhomepage.com/comics/articles/supes-war.php.
Hatton, Ed. "Review — Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine." *Ultrazine 2000.* 5 September 2002. *www.vwcom.com/ultrazine2000/uz-misc.html.*
Horn, Maurice, ed. *The World Encyclopedia of Comics.* New York: Chelsea House, 1976.
Lee, Stan, and Roy Thomas. *Stan Lee's Amazing Marvel Universe.* New York: Sterling, 2006.
Levitz, Paul. *Adventure Comics 461–466.* New York: DC Comics (Justice Society series), (Jan./Feb.–Nov./Dec. 1979).
_____. "The Untold Origin of the Justice Society." *DC Special 29.* New York: DC Comics (August–September 1977).
Lupoff, Dick, and Don Thompson, eds. *All in Color for a Dime*, New York: Ace, 1970.
Maynerd, Franklin W., ed. "John Byrne: An X-tra Special, Four-Star, Flag-Waving Talk with the Artist of The X-Men and Captain America!" *The Comics Journal, 57* (Summer 1980): 57–82.
Morrell, David. "The Crucible." *Captain America: The Chosen 5.* New York: Marvel Comics (February 2008).
Morse, Ben, and Wizard staff. "The Wizard Retrospective: Captain America." April 18, 2007. Wizard Universe, December 1, 2007. *http://www.wizarduniverse.com/magazine/wizard/004313669.cfm.*
Ostrander, John. "The Gathering of Heroes." *Armageddon: Inferno 4.* New York: DC Comics (July 1992).
Pasko, Martin, Gerry Conway, and Jack C. Harris, et al. *Wonder Woman vol. 228–243.* New York: DC Comics (February 1977–May 1978).
Sanderson, Peter, and Roy Thomas. *The Marvel Vault: A Museum-in-a-book With Rare Collectibles from the World of Marvel.* New York: Marvel Comics, 2007.
Schomburg, Alex (art). *All Select Comics 1.* New York: Timely Comics/Marvel (Fall 1943), cover.
Simon, Joe, and Jack Kirby. *Captain America: The Classic Years, Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel Comics. 1998. [Reprints *Captain America Comics* #1–5 (March–July 1941)].
_____. *Captain America: The Classic Years, Vol. 2.* New York: Marvel Comics. 1998. [Reprints *Captain America Comics* #6–10 (August–December 1941)].
Steranko, James. *The Steranko History of Comics*, Vol. 1–2. Reading, PA: Supergraphics, 1970.
"Superfans and Batmaniacs." *Newsweek,* Feb. 15, 1965. Reprinted with commentary in *Alter Ego Vol. 3 12* (Jan. 2002): 18.
Thomas, Roy. *All-Star Comics,* Vol. 2, 58 New York: DC Comics 32 (January–February 1976) (letters column).
_____. "All-Star Squadron." *Justice League of America 193.* New York: DC Comics (August 1981), 16-page insert.
_____. *All-Star Squadron 1–67.* New York: DC Comics (September 1981–March 1987).
_____. *The Avengers 35–103.* New York: Marvel Comics (December 1966–September 1972).
_____. "Burn, Namor, Burn." *The Sub-Mariner 14.* New York: Marvel Comics (June 1969).
_____. "A Drive in the Country." *Giant-Size Invaders 2.* New York: Marvel Comics (December 2005).
_____. "Hail, Hail, Now The Gang's Really All Here!" *Alter Ego*, Vol. 3,2 (January 2002). *http://twomorrows.com/alterego/articles/12a-ss.html.*
_____. *The Invaders Annual 1.* New York: Marvel Comics (1977).
_____. *The Invaders Vol. 2 1–4.* New York: Marvel Comics (May–August 1993).
_____. "Lo! The Liberty Legion" *Marvel Premiere 29.* "Hey, Ma! They're Blitzin' the Bronx!" *Marvel Premiere 30.* New York: Marvel Comics (April 1976–June 1976).
_____. "More (All-) Stars Than There Are in Heaven." *Alter Ego*, Vol. 3, 6 (Autumn 2000). *http://twomorrows.com/alterego/articles/06allstar.html.*
_____. "Okay, Axis, Here We Come ... Again!" *Alter Ego*, Vol. 3, 2 (Autumn 1999): 42–44.
_____. "What If The Invaders Had Stayed Together After World War Two?" *What If? 4.* New York: Marvel Comics (August 1977).
_____. *Young All-Stars 1–31.* New York: DC Comics (June 1987–November 1989).
Thomas, Roy, and Dann Thomas. *Last Days of the Justice Society Special 1.* New York: DC Comics (1986).
Thomas, Roy, Frank Robbins, and Don Glut, et al. *The Invaders 1–41.* New York: Marvel Comics (August 1975–September 1979).
Thompson, Kim. "Newswatch: Roy Thomas Leaves Marvel." *The Comics Journal* #56 (May 1980), 9–12.
Wolfman, Marv, Len Wein, and Robert Greenberger. *Crisis on Infinite Earths 1–12.* New York: DC Comics (April 1985–March 1986).

Graphic Imagery

Jewish American Comic Book Creators' Depictions of Class, Race, Patriotism and the Birth of the Good Captain

Nicholas Yanes

> We do not have to become heroes overnight.... Just a step at a time, meeting each thing that comes up, seeing it is not as dreadful as it appears, discovering that we have the strength to stare it down.... The thing always to remember ... you must do the thing you think you cannot do.
> — *Eleanor Roosevelt*

Captain America is unquestionably the most patriotic comic book character. Captain America's first appearance was so monumental, that he, as Roy Thomas writes, "spawn[ed] more imitators than any hero but Superman himself" (Thomas 5). Captain America — "a flag with rock hard abs," as he was once described by Stephen Colbert — quickly became a top selling character and the meridian example of pro-war attitudes in World War II era comic books. However, to fully understand Captain America's ascension to the avatar of U.S. patriotism, it is important to know that World War II propaganda reflected more than pro–American sentiment. Comic books uniquely pushed for the U.S. to enter the war because the Jewish Americans who created the American comic book industry had personal stakes in a U.S. victory, and they understood that patriotism was synonymous with sacrifice.

Jewish Americans in the Early Comic Industry and War Effort

Prior to the Great Depression, "Jews ... [found that] the quickest route to fame was along the edges of mass entertainment" (Jones 52), one of the most popular areas being magazine publishing. However, while the Great Depression impeded this path to wealth, it led to many Jews entering and dominating the comic book industry. The Depression, combined with Anti-Semitism, created an environment that led to Jewish-Americans having a large impact on comic books. As Arie Kaplan writes in "A Brief History of Jews in Comic Books," "The easiest way to fill the demand for new comic book features was for publishers to tap writers and artists who couldn't get work anywhere else, either because they were too young, too inexperienced, or Jewish — in most cases, all three."

Distaining big business and inactive government, FDR's New Deal unprecedentedly unified the American people. However, a conflict would soon emerge. War was on the horizon, and those who celebrated the New Deal condemned America's militarization, while those who opposed the New Deal encouraged intervention. Doris Goodwin writes: "The president's

enemies on domestic issues were his friends in foreign policy, and vice versa. Most conservative[s] ... supported the president's moves to aid the Allies, while many liberals and ... progressives, fearing ... war would bring an end to social reform, ... [were] isolationists" (43–44).

Though the country was not at war, the U.S. was strengthening domestic defenses and shipping weapons to allies. With anxiety overcoming the country in regards to Europe's expanding conflict, it seemed that Americans would chose security over labor rights. However, as Keith E. Eiler states in *Mobilizing America*, "Labor was in no mood to sacrifice its hard-won privileges ... on the altar of national defense" (154).

The draft, which was started prior to December 7, 1941, was "the first peacetime draft in American history" (139), and was be met with strong opposition. As Eiler writes, there were those who feared "that freedom could be lost as easily by surrender at home as through conquest from abroad ... and charge[d] that the administration was 'adopting Hitler's methods to oppose Hitler'" (69). Standing in opposition to conscription were "isolationists, pacifists, liberals, gold-star mothers, educators, and youth groups." Due to the large amount of opposition to the draft and because elections were nearing, many believed that Roosevelt would avoid commenting on the draft. However, "Roosevelt the president took precedence over ... Roosevelt the candidate," and in the summer of 1940 he "unequivocally endorsed selective service and urged adoption of the legislation as 'essential to national defense'" (Goodwin 139–140).

Though, by 1941, there were a number of Americans who believed in the New Deal and (O'Neil 10), the first people to support both FDR's New Deal and the war effort were economically impoverished Jews. They not only benefited from the New Deal's economic initiatives, but from Roosevelt placing many Jews into high-ranking positions (Jones 128). As FDR moved from New Deal politics to war politics, Jewish-Americans continued to support the president. Anti-Semitism had a powerful presence in the United States, yet, many Jews saw themselves as both Jewish and American; willing to fight for both heritage and nation. As a result, Jews were not only willing to support America's entry into World War II, they were prepared to enlist. As Ronald Takaki states in *Double Victory*, "550,000 Jewish Americans ... fought against ... Nazism by serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, proportionately more than Americans as a whole" (182).

Many Americans saw entry into the war as inevitable, which lead much of the country's popular culture to discuss the war's upcoming arrival. In the introduction to *U.S.A. Comics* collection, Dr. Michael J. Vassallo, points out, "U.S.A. Comics! Could a title be any more patriotic? Well, I suppose *Captain America* would place a tie, but the effect was the same, that being a country nervously watching the gathering dark war clouds while still on the sidelines in early 1941" (vi).

However, Vassallo generalizes a connection between comic books and American culture. Comic Books in the late 1930s and early 1940s did not just reflect the U.S.'s anxiety about World War II, they contained propaganda in clear support for America's entry into combat. The reason being that Jewish Americans were the first to see the danger Hitler represented. With the majority of the comic book creators being Jewish, writers and artists used their medium to champion the war effort.

Placing patriotic propaganda into comic books was not simply the result of publishers responding to consumer demands. The war "was good for the business of comics" (Jones 213), but a sheer economic reductionism argument is undermined by two critical facts.

First, comic book creators who placed anti–Nazi sentiment into their work risked death. There were people upset with Captain America. Among them was the homegrown Nazi group, the German American Bund, a New York–based group that supported and dressed like Hitler. The Bund objected to Simon and Kirby depicting their Fuhrer and their own group as punching bags. They inundated Timely's mostly Jewish staff with hate mail and telephoned death threats (Ro 21).

Second, unlike contemporary creative individuals and celebrities, comic book creators not only supported the war effort, they enlisted. Stan Lee enlisted in the Army (Kraft 8); Will Eisner, though he initially resisted the draft, became "imbued with a sense of patriotism" (Andelman 75); and other comics book artists and writers like Chuck Mazoujian, Bill Everett, and Bernie Klein did their part to help in the war effort. Jack Kirby even assisted in a concentration camp liberation (Ro 37). In the documentary film *Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked*, Stan Lee states, "We were fighting Hitler, before our Government." They were not fighting for economic reasons, but because as Americans, they felt morally obligated to fight.

Early Patriotic Heroes Before Captain America

One of the first comic books to feature pro-war language was *Blue Bolt*. First published in 1940, and created by Joe Simon, the story focuses on "Fred Parrish, a Harvard gridiron champion, who is struck by lightning twice in a single day! Parish is then kidnapped by a scientist only to be transformed into a superhero ... with electrical powers!" Though the story was set "in a futuristic subterranean civilization," Blue Bolt speaks negatively of the Axis. Using a tele-screen, Blue Bolt sees images of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Further, Blue Bolt witnesses Axis airplanes shooting refugees (Simon and Simon 37–39).

World War II was also the background against which the Shield was created. Appearing in January 1940 *Pep Comics 1*, the Shield is considered "the comic book industry's first patriotic hero who battled the villainous Axis powers" (Branch). The first page of the Shield's first appearance states that after his father was killed in the famous Black Tom explosion, set off by foreign spies during the war, "He ... swore to devote his life to shielding the U.S. Government and its people from ... harm.... The four white stars on [his uniform] signify to what he has devoted his life — truth, justice, patriotism and courage" (Novick, *Pep Comics 1* 9).

Explained months after his first appearance, the Shield's origin is typical among superhero origins. In order to redeem his father's name and decipher his father's secret formula, Joe Higgins went to college to become a chemist and figure out S.H.I.E.L.D. Eventually Joe succeeds, and when he exposes himself to the chemical he gains superpowers. While trying out his new abilities the Shield overhears J.E. Hoover state, "For years I've worked to clear Tom Higgins' name.... I'm convinced that Hans Fritz was the espionage agent responsible for that explosion." Working with Hoover, the Shield sets a trap for Fritz. The Shield captures Fritz, scares a confession out of him, and turns him over to the police. Joe then reports back to Hoover's office where he agrees to work for the F.B.I., becoming "a byword for Americanism and a constant source of terror for those gangster forces ever conspiring against society" (Novick 70–78).

The creation of the Shield by exposure to a foreign substance is nothing new and is unimportant to the character's relationship to World War II; the aspect of the story which

comments on the upcoming war is the use of foreign infiltrators as villains. By the late 1930s, fear of Nazi agents permeating America was common. Based on rumors stemming from Germany's invasion of Norway and Holland, many Americans feared that "thousands of Nazi agents, camouflaged as lecturers, refugees, newspapermen, and diplomatic attaches, [would] infiltrate the country in the months before an invasion" (Goodwin 103), and that "fifth columnists [would] figure prominently in the Germans' successful parachute landings ... and then providing the sky troops with ... police uniforms when they landed" (103).

As the drums of war became louder, more patriotically themed characters were published. After the Shield came Uncle Sam in Quality Comics' July 1940 *National Comics 1.* Additionally, established characters were patriotically revamped. One significant example is Tex Thomson, who shared his first appearance with Superman in *Action Comics 1* (Baily). Tex Thomson was originally portrayed as a cowboy. However, by 1941, support for war had grown so much that Tex Thomson lost his western clothing, began wearing red, white, and blue, and called himself Mister America (*Action Comics 33*). A more significant example of this is seen in Timely Comics' Namor, the Sub-Mariner. Originally depicted as an Atlantean, dedicated to battling all surface dwellers, by 1940 "the Sub-Mariner leaped off the cover of his first issue tossing a U-boat out of the water" (Buhle 186).

This allowed Timely to produce a story in which Namor and another hero, the Human Torch, fight each other. However, by March of 1941, war was so inevitable that the publishers turned Namor into a champion of America against the Nazi threat. One issue shows Namor teaming up with the Human Torch so that they can fight against a secret Nazi invasion (Everett). Namor's actions become so pro–American that the president of the United States says, "Namor, as President of the United States, I thank you for all you have done for us! There is no award high enough to honor you as you deserve — but you have the everlasting love of every American!" (Everett 130).

Captain America's Birth and Role

Captain America is the greatest example of patriotism infused into comic books. He made his first appearance in his very own comic book, and was introduced to the world punching Adolf Hitler in the face. In *CAC 1,* published in March 1941, months before the December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor, Captain America not only "anticipated the United States entry into the war..., [but] grew to be the very personification of our nation's values during [World War II]" (Orto).

Captain America's significance is more than the colors he wears, but how he was first introduced to the American public. The story begins with fifth columnists, who have infiltrated the U.S. military by using forged papers, blowing up munitions factories. Military officials then tell President Roosevelt that foreign agents are "so firmly entrenched in our ranks that [one] hesitate[s] to give a confidential report to even [the] most trusted aide." Roosevelt informs the general that J. Arthur Grover "head of the [F.B.I]," is overseeing a project that will combat this growing threat, and Grover takes the military general to a top secret laboratory (Simon *CAC 1* 2, 4). Once in the laboratory, the officials watch Professor Reinstein — a name that intentionally alludes to the Jewish Albert Einstein — inject a young man with a strange chemical. Immediately after the injection the young man begins to grow and Reinstein states,

> Observe this young man closely ... today he volunteered for army service, and was refused because of his unfit condition! His chance to serve his country seemed gone! ... Little does he realize that the serum coursing through his blood is rapidly building his body and brain tissues, until his stature and intelligence increase to an amazing degree! [Simon *CAC 1* 6].

As the weak young man transforms in front of the military officials, Reinstein hails him as

> the Crowing achievement of all my years of hard Work! The first of a corps of super-agents whose mental and physical ability will make them a terror to spies and saboteurs! ... We shall call you Captain America, son! Because, like you — America shall gain the strength and the will to safeguard our shores! [6].

Unfortunately, one of the military officials watching Captain America's birth is a Nazi spy who shoots Reinstein. The spy then shoots the vial containing the serum and a member of the military, before he is stopped by Captain America. The issue then shows news captions about Captain America stopping spies and preventing disasters (6–9).

At first glance it is difficult to see why Captain America was so important. After all, he was similar to the Shield, who debuted a full year prior to Captain America, in that both characters gained their powers after being exposed to a secret formulas; both were attacked by foreign agents; the original creators of both chemicals were killed by spies; and both men, upon gaining powers, found themselves working for the government. The similarities between the characters, especially Captain America's shield and the imprint on the Shield's chest, were a source of controversy between MLJ Comics (now known as Archie Comics) and Timely Comics. Timely Comics owner Martin Goodman feared being sued by MLJ Comics, and, to resolve the tension, Captain America's triangular shield was replaced with a round one (Simon and Simon 52).

The reason why Captain America was so important to comic books during World War II, while the Shield was not, is seen in their first introduction to the public: the covers of their first issues. The Shield, wearing a red, white and blue costume, is seen fighting robots against a generic yellow background. Though this image evokes the spirit of a patriotic fighting American, his opponents fail to resonate with the real world. Captain America's first cover, however, inundates the reader with not only patriotic pro-war imagery, but with imagery clearly showing that Nazis are America's enemies. The central image is Captain America punching Hitler in the face, while being shot at by three Nazis. In addition to seeing five Nazi swastikas, the reader sees a map of the United States with a paper underneath it reading "sabotage plans for U.S.A.," and the background shows a television screen with a person blowing up an American munitions factory (Simon *CAC 1* cover).

The message is clear; America needs to prepare for war. Not because the country might have to get involved, but because the nation is being actively targeted by the enemy; an enemy who is not a vague foreign threat, but the Nazi regime and its allies. In *The Comic Book Makers*, Joe Simon, one of Captain America's Jewish creators, says, "Captain America was the first major comic book hero to take a political stand. Other heroes were in the business of fighting crime, but the war in Europe was of far greater significance" (Simon and Simon 44). Comics historian and artist Jim Steranko mentions the fact that after Captain America's immediate popularity,

> There came a platoon of red, white, and blue spangled superheroes: American Avenger, American Crusader, American Eagle, Commando Yank, Fighting Yank..., Captain Flag, Captain Freedom, Captain Courageous, Captain glory, Captain Red Cross, Captain Valiant, Captain Victory [Harvey 65–66].

Additionally, Timely created "such Cap clones as The Patriot, The Defender, Major Liberty, American Avenger" (Thomas 5), and two companies created a character called Miss

America. These characters did little to diminish Captain America's popularity; his first appearance branded him into the American consciousness. More than just a new archetype, Captain America's success, and his pastiches, came from continually invoking FDR's pro-war politics, which were supported by Americans of all backgrounds.

Sentinels of Liberty and Patriotic Advertising

As the nation accepted conscription as a war necessity and linked it with patriotism, the comic book industry used patriotic enlistment language to advertise fan clubs. A significant fan club was Captain America's "Sentinels of Liberty." Appearing in Captain America's debut was an advertisement for the Sentinels, asking readers to "join Captain America in his war against the spies and enemies in our midst who threaten our very independence" (Simon *CAC 1* 9). The Sentinels of Liberty proved to be so popular that they appeared in *CAC*'s stories, first in Issue *5*, "Captain America and Killers of the Bund." Most amazing about this group of children is that, though four out of the six are white males, one is a white female, and one is an African American boy in a zoot suit named Whitewash Jones.

A similar advertisement appears in *CAC 6*. This ad asks readers to "enlist now in Captain America's Great young army of spy-fighters, and help free our country of its traitors!" (Simon 43). The bottom of the page is a panel claiming that "every red-blooded young American boy and girl will be proud to be a member of this club!" Next to this panel is a coupon urging readers to send in a dime, and informing them that if they join Captain America's Sentinels of Liberty it is because they want to "fight spies and traitors to the U.S.A." (43). A similar page appears at the end of Issue *9*. Published in December 1941, this ad features Captain America personally thanking the Sentinels of Liberty for helping to rid the U.S.A. "of the traitors who wish to destroy it" (Simon *CAC* 171). Another ad for the Sentinels of Liberty invokes James Montgomery Flagg's "I Want You" Uncle Sam recruitment poster. It features Captain America pointing towards the reader and the statement "Captain America Wants You" (*Golden Age U.S.A. Comics,* Vol. 1, 49).

However, the merchandising of patriotism quickly changed in the shadow of the Pearl Harbor attack. In *CAC 10*, for sale in January 1942, there are no promotions for the Sentinels of Liberty. In its place is a piece of propaganda new to Captain America. At the end of the issue's second story, Captain America is telling a crowd that, when the enemies come to the United States, Americans will be ready to fight them. Inserted into the scene is a sign stating "Buy a U.S. Defense Bond" (Simon 196). The significance of this sign is that, in the wake of Pearl Harbor, claiming to be patriotic would not be enough. In order for the United States to victoriously engage the enemy, every one would have to sacrifice more than expected. Furthermore, the inclusion of an African American, though still offensive in presentation, projects what Bradford Wright describes as a "desirable national fantasy," the presentation of "American society as a great melting pot, free of racial, ethnic, and class conflict" (35). Moreover, Whitewash Jones is a message that all Americans, regardless of race, will have to be willing to fight for the country to win.

Personal Sacrifice

The necessity of sacrifice in the lead up to and during World War II extends past advertisements, and deeply influences several stories. An example of this is seen in a story featuring

the American Crusader, in the December 1941 issue of *Thrilling Comics*. In this story "an ignorant old man ... vows that America must never again wage any war" after losing his son in World War I. The old man "insists that it is 'far better that we submit to the dictators!'" and "helps Nazi agents sabotage U.S. Army bases until the American Crusader apprehends him" (Wright 44). While losing a loved one in combat is tragic, it is a necessary evil that all Americans must risk for the good of the nation.

The willingness to sacrifice was paramount, and comic books reflected and reinforced the common American's attitude towards helping the war effort. Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen write, in *A Patriot's History of the Unities States,* "Farmers pushed their productivity up 30 percent, and average citizens added 8 million more tons of food to the effort through backyard 'victory' gardens. Scrap drives became outlets for patriotic frenzy" (602).

Incredibly, surveys showed that the majority of Americans were willing to train one day a week for national security, pay higher taxes, and use less gasoline; yet, many Americans felt that "they had not made any 'real sacrifice' for the war," and many felt that "the government had not gone 'far enough' in asking people to make sacrifices for the war" (602). Jim Steranko reinforces this mindset when he states, "Captain America requested kids not to spend a dime for the membership card and tin badge, but to spend the dime for war bonds. Every dime you spend may be the dime that puts a bullet in the last Jap in the war" (*Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked*).

In the narratives, a significant way that comic books showed support for the war effort was the inclusion of real world people and places. The first example is "The Gruesome Secret of the Dragon of Death!," a Captain America story that appears in CAC 5, and tells how the Hawaiian Islands are saved from enemy attacks. This story begins with what is believed to be a sea dragon swallowing navy vessels. It is revealed that the sea dragon is a submarine belonging to an Asian nation. The soldiers on board the sea dragon submarine are under orders to attack the fictional "Kunoa Island" in order to wipe out America's pacific fleet (Simon 204). This story was printed long before the attack on Pearl Harbor, and it signifies that comic book creators, and the average American, knew the Hawaiian naval bases were central to the American Pacific fleet, and an attack on them would be disastrous for the United States (Keegan 190).

Another non-fictional entity to appear in comic books to promote the war effort was General MacArthur. Appearing in the Captain America story in *AW 8*, General MacArthur is the focus of an attack by Prince Kuhomi, the son of the Japanese General Kuhomi, who MacArthur defeated at Bataan (Fisk 221). The general was a key figure in the public's perception of the military after he appeared on the *Life* magazine's December 8, 1941, cover, next to the statement, "If war should come he leads the army that would fight Japan" (Slotkin 319). The inclusion of MacArthur indicates his importance as a military leader and the veneration the public gave him. Further, by bringing MacArthur into the realm of superheroes, this tale displays the importance of the general's accomplishments, as well as those of the troops in the Pacific theater.

Jewish Identities

Although Jewish writers found comic books to be an outlet for their stance on the war, there were cultural insensitivities that they promoted. Comic book historians often paint the

1930s and 40s as an unprecedented progressive period for the medium. As a result, comic book historians and fans often forgive the creators for racist depictions. As stated in an introduction for a collection of *CAC*'s first five issues,

> While enjoying the artistry, power and excitement of the tales that follow, please keep in mind that these stories were created at a time when racial and ethnic stereotypes in the entertainment media were both more common and much cruder than they are today. Furthermore, Captain America [as well as other characters were] created to fight the Axis powers, and the enemy was portrayed as broadly and unflatteringly as possible. As time passed, Simon and Kirby, along with the rest of us, increasingly abandoned these types of characterizations [Orto].

The history of American Judaism is the history of persecution. Prior to coming to the United States "Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century and first decades of the new century had left behind communities already in turmoil and crisis" (Buhle 24). After escaping from Kishinev pogroms and similar riots throughout Russian and Europe, Jews in America dealt with anti–Semitism from figures like Henry Ford and Father Coughlin (Fingeroth 34). American Jews understood the sting of discrimination. Yet, their comic works fail to capture the open mindedness associated with a lifetime of intolerance.

The reason is simple; Jewish American comic book creators shared similar political ideals, and news of Jewish persecution in Europe, at the hands of the Nazis, forced them to encourage the United States to enter the war. As people in need for America to fight in Europe, Jewish comic book creators used their industry to advance their political interest. More importantly, they realized that success depended on appealing not to like minded Jews, but to those in power, which resulted in minorities being portrayed offensively by Jewish comic book just as those in power would have portrayed them.

Asian Depictions

Though African Americans were negatively depicted, Asians, especially Japanese, were presented as demonic sub-humans. Asians had never been portrayed positively in comic books. An Asian who was not the villain was usually portrayed as being incompetent. A significant example of this appears on the cover of the first issue of *Detective Comics*, which announced "itself loudly on the newsstands with a sinister Oriental face leering from the cover" (Wright 5). This portrayal was based on inherent xenophobia combined with the real world savagery of the Japanese military, the most significant example being the rape of Nanking. In *Choices Under Fire*, Michael Bess writes,

> On December 13, 1937, Japanese forces occupied Nanking. Evidently, the Japanese army leaders decided that they stood a good chance of terrifying the Chinese into surrender.... So their troops went after the civilian population. At least twenty thousand Chinese noncombatant men were ... massacred. They were used as living targets for bayonet practice ... they were doused with gasoline and burned to death.... [I]nside the city, Japanese troops were gang-raping every Chinese woman they could get their hands on.... The orgy of ... violence went on for six weeks ... and ... Tokyo did nothing to stop it [50–51].

This display of inhumane behavior dominated American perceptions of Japanese. Due to this atrocity, American attitudes towards Japanese would only become even more acrimonious after December 7, 1941.

An early story depicting Asians as monsters appears in the April 1941 issue of *CAC 2*,

"Captain America and the Ageless Orientals Who Wouldn't Die." While the war is not touched upon in this story, it is significant in that the villains are giant Orientals from Tibet's mountains. The story's end reveals that the Orientals serve a bank executive, who uses them to rob other banks, and that the Orientals only follow his orders because he knows how to kill them. Although Captain America knows they have been coerced into committing crimes, the story ends with him killing the bank executive and the Orientals, thus displaying disregard for Asian life (Simon 58). Additionally, though the bank executive is responsible for the crimes in the story, he is depicted as a normal adult male. While white–American villains are presented as well-dressed, normal-looking humans, the Orientals are tall, mostly hairless, skeletally skinny with oversized heads; and they wear nothing more than loin cloths. The depiction of the Orientals is an early indicator of how comic books would present Asians — humanoid, but not human.

The most offensive and common depiction of Asians to appear in comic books appears in the *CAC 6* story "Meet the Fang" (Simon). This story's significance is that it presents Asians as fang-toothed, clawed monsters. Another Captain America story that features a fang-toothed Japanese man is *AW 6*'s "The Mock Mikado Strikes!" In this story, the second son of the Japanese emperor invades America by crossing the U.S./Mexican border with his army (Bell 97–109). This not only enforces the depiction of the Japanese as subhuman, but it exemplifies the belief that Japanese on U.S. soil are a threat.

As racist depictions of the Japanese increased after the attack on Pearl Harbor, American comic book writers "coined epithets like 'ratzi' and 'Japanazi'" (Savage Jr 10), and their stories went from defeating Asians to specially killing Japanese. One story that particularly exemplifies this is "The Vampire Strikes!" This 1942 Captain America story begins with Steve Rogers receiving news that the Japanese are practicing germ warfare (*AW 5* 17), leading to the deaths of thousands of Chinese. The story then shows a buck-toothed Japanese scientist who has developed a serum that transforms him into a vampire. After Captain America defeats the vampire, Japanese leaders receive a letter and shout out, "I shall commit Hari-Kari at once!" (27). The letter states,

> Dear Saps,
>
> Your vampire ... has been taken care of! This is just to let you know that 130,000,000 Americans are beginning to march toward Tokyo! We'll be seeing you soon! Our slogan for Japs: Keep 'em dying!
>
> Captain American and Bucky [27].

The slogan "Keep 'em dying" is strikingly similar to a sign "at fleet headquarters in the South Pacific that urged 'KILL JAPS, KILL JAPS, KILL MORE JAPS!'" (Slotkin 325).

German Depictions

Jewish American comic book creators encountered a creative barrier. Though the country was going to war with Germany, Americans knew they were not going to war against all Germans or people of German descent. This caused comic books to develop German archetypes that encouraged war with Germany without vilifying potentially pro–American Germans.

One such character is the German American who is deeply loyal to the United States who is seen in "Captain America and Killers of the Bund." In this story, fifth columnists ask

a German American to join them. The German American refuses, showing that he is loyal to the United States (Simon 216), and is brutally attacked by the fifth columnists. Once Captain America learns about the attack, he finds the bund's headquarters and defeats the members. After the columnists are defeated, Captain America states, "I guess they won't beat up any more loyal German American citizens!" (224).

Even some non–German Americans were presented in a positive light. For instance, the Destroyer, Stan Lee's first character, not only befriends a young German woman named Florence Von Ward, he rescues her from a concentration camp (Lee 97). A similar theme is repeated in the *AW 5* story "The Demons' Deadly Secret," where the Destroyer saves an anti–Nazi German artist from execution (Forte 53–64). However, while German Americans could be depicted in a favorable manner, Nazis were always villains.

Paradoxically though, comic books avoided showing the Third Reich's anti–Semitic practices. As Will Eisner said in the documentary *Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked*, "Certainly it was an opportunity to talk about the holocaust, which everybody knew was beginning to happen, but no one in comics would attempt because ... [they felt the] audience wouldn't be interested in that, they wouldn't understand it."

Though the term "concentration camp" did appear in some comic books, such as in *AW 2* (Lee 100), and many stories featured rooms in which Nazi's tortured innocent people, they were only dungeon room clichés. Unable to truly vilify Nazis, or discuss the Holocaust, writers and artists presented Hitler as pathetically humorous. As Joe Simon states, "Hitler was a marvelous foil: a ranting maniac. It was difficult to place him [as a] cunning, reasoning villains who foxed the heroes throughout the ... story before being ... defeated.... No matter how hard we tried to make him ... threatening..., Adolf invariably wound up as a buffoon" (Simon and Simon 44).

Though Simon claims "this infuriated a lot of Nazi sympathizers" (44), the magnitude of their anger would have been exponentially greater if Hitler has been depicted as an inhuman monster.

An example of this is seen in the *CAC* 2 story "Trapped in the Nazi Stronghold." The first panel of this story features Captain America and Bucky assaulting Hitler. However, instead of this assault being a traditional attack, it shows Captain America pushing Hitler backwards over Bucky, who is kneeling behind the dictator, into a waste bin (Simon 63). However, the most significant example of Hitler depicted in a comedic, yet villainous, fashion appears in a Destroyer story from spring 1943 *AW 8*. The story informs the reader that the Devil is behind Hitler's coming to power, and because he is deeply disappointed by Hitler's failures on the Russian front, he sends Madame Satan to assist Hitler. Oddly, though the story shows Hitler in league with pure evil, his presence and actions in the story inspire laughter, not fear. For instance, when Madame Satan visits Hitler, his expressions become humorously exaggerated, and sweat flies off his head. Feeling disrespected by Hitler's attitude, Madame Satan pulls his ear. Then, after she shows him a magic gas that will turn human beings into stone, unless a heat source thaws them, Hitler is shown exclaiming his happiness in a silly manner. Later in the story, Hitler uses the gas on the Destroyer. Yet, knowing that it has turned the hero into a statue, Hitler punches the Destroyer, and hurts his hand. He reacts in a manner clearly reminiscent of vaudeville comedies, and causes Madame Satan to laugh at his foolishness. The story ends with the Destroyer freeing himself, and attempting to use the gaser on Hitler (Leav 241–247). Hitler only gets away after he cowardly and comically runs away from the Destroy while screaming, "No ... no ... no ... not dot ... anything but dot!" Followed by, "Eek! No! No!" (251).

Hitler was finally vilified in comic books, but not because comic book creators could capitalize on American sympathy towards Germany's victims; anti–Semitism still permeated the country. In December of 1942 the Nazi minister of propaganda, Josef Goebbels, wrote in his diary, "The question of Jewish persecution in Europe is being given top news priority by the Americans ... however, I believe ... the Americans are happy that we are exterminating the Jewish riff raff" (Goodwin 397). Knowledge of Hitler's "Final Solution" had become public knowledge by December 1942. However, Roosevelt continued his "rescue-through-victory strategy" (Takaki 200–203), which argued that the best way to save Jews was to stop Hitler. Modern historians know that Roosevelt knew that Jewish-specific rescue missions would not impede the war effort, but, unfortunately, Roosevelt and his Jewish advisor, Sam Rosenman, felt that if the government engaged in rescue missions specifically aimed at saving Jews "American anti–Semitism would increase" (Goodwin 455), and undermine the war effort. This attitude continued until 1944, when Roosevelt, fearing a scandal, finally signed an executive order establishing the War Refuge Board. This order established a government agency that would be responsible for "the development of plans and programs, and the inauguration of effective measures for ... the rescue ... of the victims of enemy oppression, and ... the establishment of havens..." (Takaki 207–08).

Anti-Semitism would only begin to evanesce once Americans discovered the true horrors of the Holocaust. As a result, Jewish comic book creators never had the opportunity to use their medium as a means to directly rally support for European Jews, leaving Captain America and his pastiches silent about the Holocaust.

While the World War II years contained shades of grey, these ambiguities were restricted to a thin line in a largely black and white world. Jewish American comic book creators were philosophically united under FDR's presidency because of his desire to bring the country into World War II. Consequently, comic books in the late 30s and early 40s motivated America's entry into the war effort. Comic book creators supported the war because they had heard rumors of the Holocaust, and because they believed that the war would come to U.S. soil if America did not interfere soon. However, as Americans, they felt that these actions would improve the country, and help create a better future. So, they used an artistic medium they had largely created to tell the country that in order to win the war Americans had to make financial sacrifices; Americans had to be willing to give up years of their lives, and many times give their lives to the war. Nevertheless, mistakes occurred. In their zealousness to be patriotic and to use their medium as a political soapbox, all Japanese were unfairly seen as evil, while monstrosities of the Third Reich were never fully depicted. Magnificently though, Jewish American comic book creators — the cultural outsiders, working in a despised industry — captured and propagandized for the spirit of the war effort — defining patriotism by sacrifice.

References

Action Comics 33. New York: National Publications/DC (February 1941).

All-Winners Comics 8. Spring 1943. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age All-Winners Vol. 2*. New York: Marvel Entertainment, Inc., 2006.

Andelman, Bob. *Will Eisner: A Spirited Life*. Milwaukee: M, 2005.

Baily, Bernard, and Tex Thomson. *Action Comics 1*. New York: National Publications/DC (June 1938).

Bell, Fred. "The Mock Mikado Strikes!" *All-Winners Comics 6*. Fall 1942. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age All-Winners Vol. 2.* New York: Marvel Entertainment, 2006.

Bess, Michael. *Choices under Fire: Moral Dimensions of World War II*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

Branch, Jeffrey C. *The Inside Scoop.* "Part One: Birth of an Icon (1941–1949)." <*http://www.archiecomics.com/acpaco_offices/inside_scoop/inside_scoop_1.html*> 26 December 2007.
Brown, Gary. "The Spirit Within Will Eisner." *Palm Beach Post*. January 16, 2005.
Buhle, Paul. *From the Lower East Side to Hollywood: Jews in American Popular Culture*. New York: Verso, 2004.
Burgos, Carl, and Bill Everett. "The Human Torch and Sub-Mariner Fighting Side by Side." *Marvel Mystery Comics 17*. March 1941. Rpt. *The Golden Age of Marvel Comics.* New York: Marvel Comics, 1997.
Castiglia, Paul, and Joe Pep, eds. *The Shield: America's First Patriotic Comic Book Hero.* Mamaroneck, NY: Archie Comic, 2002. (*Pep Comics*, *Pep Comics 4* and *Shield-Wizard*, come from this volume.)
Cameron, Don (words), and Sam Citron (art). "America's Secret Weapon." *Superman 23*. July–August 1943. Rpt. *Superman in the Forties*. New York: DC Comics, 2005.
Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked. DVD. A&E Television Networks/The History Channel, dist. New Video, 2005.
Eiler, Keith E. *Mobilizing America: Robert P. Patterson and the War Effort, 1940–1945*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1997.
Everett, Bill. "The Sub-Mariner." *Human Torch 3*. Winter 1940. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age Human Torch Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel Comics, 2005.
Fingeroth, Danny. *Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero*. New York: Continuum, 2007.
Fisk, Harry, and Edd Ashe. "Invasion by Ice." *All-Winners Comics 8*. Spring 1943. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age All-Winners Vol. 2*. New York: Marvel Entertainment, 2006.
Forte, John. "The Demons' Deadly Secret." *All-Winners Comics 5*. Summer 1942. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age All-Winners Vol. 2*. New York: Marvel Entertainment, 2006.
Fox, Gardner (words), and Everett E. Hibbard (art). "For America and Democracy." *All Star Comics 4*. March–April 1941. Rpt. *All Star Comics Archives Vol. 1*. New York: DC Comics, 1991.
Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *No Ordinary Time—Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.
Harvey, R.C. "What Jack Kirby Did." *The Comics Journal 167*. April 1994. Rpt. *The Comics Journal Library, Volume One: Jack Kirby*. Milo George, ed. Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2002.
"Jerry Siegel Attacks!" *German Propaganda Archive*. *Das Schwarze Korps*. April 25, 1940. Translated by Randall Bytwerk. "The SS and Superman." German Propaganda Archive. <*http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/superman.htm*> January 7, 2008.
"Joe Quesada." *The Colbert Report*. 27 July 2006. <http://www.comedycentral.com/colbertreport/videos.jhtml?videoId=72249>.
Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters and the Birth of the Comic Book*. New York: Basic, 2004.
Kaplan, Arie. "A Brief History of Jews in Comic Books—How American Jews Created the Comic Book Industry." *MyJewishLearning.com—The Personal Gateway to Jewish Exploration*. <*http://www.myjewishlearning.com/culture/literature/Overview_Jewish_American Literature /Into_The_Literary_Mainstream/JewsComics.htm*> 28 March 2008.
_____. *Masters of the Comic Book Universe Revealed!* Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2006.
Keegan, John. *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al-Qaeda*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.
Kennedy, David M. *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
Kraft, David Anthony. "The *Foom* Interview: Stan Lee." *Stan Lee: Conversations*. Jeff McLaughlin, ed. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007.
Lawrence, John Shelton, and Robert Jewett. *The Myth of the American Superhero*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002.
Leav, Mort. "Untitled." *All-Winners Comics 8*. Spring 1943. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age All-Winners Vol. 2*. New York: Marvel Entertainment, 2006.
Lee, Stan, and Jack Binder. *The Destroyer*. *All-Winners Comics 2*. Fall 1941. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age All-Winners Comics Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel Comics, 2005.
O'Neil, William L. *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home and Abroad in World War II*. New York: Free, 1993.
Orto, Suzanne Dell, and Gregory Wright, Tom DeFalco, ed. Introduction. "Meet Captain America." *Captain America: The Classic Years Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel Publishing, 1998.
Ro, Ronin. *Tales to Astonish—Jack Kirby, Stan Lee and the American Comic Book Revolution*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2004.
Savage, Jr., William W. *Commies, Cowboys, and Jungle Queens: Comic Books and America, 1945—1954*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998.

Scheikart, Larry, and Michael Allen. *A Patriot's History of the United States—From Columbus's Great Discovery to the War on Terror*. New York: Sentinel, 2004.
Siegel, Jerome, and Joe Shuster. "How Superman Would End the War." *Look Magazine*. February 1940. Rpt. *Superman in the Forties*. New York: DC Comics, 2005.
Simon, Joe, and Jack Kirby, et al. *Captain America: The Classic Years Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel, 1998. (*Captain America Comics 1–5* come from this volume.)
_____. *Captain America: The Classic Years Vol. 2*. New York: Marvel, 1998. (*Captain America Comics 6, 9, 10* come from this volume.)
Simon, Joe, and Jim Simon. *The Comic Book Makers*. Lebanon, NJ: Vanguard, 2003.
Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998.
Surchorsky, Mike. "Unknown." *U.S.A. Comics 4.* May 1942. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age U.S.A. Comics Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel, 2007.
Takaki, Ronald. *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II*. New York: Little, Brown, 2000.
Thomas, Roy. "Marvel's Most Timely Heroes." Introduction. *The Golden Age of Marvel Comics*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1997.
U.S.A. Comics 1. August 1941. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age U.S.A. Comics Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel, 2007.
U.S.A. Comics 5. May 1942. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age U.S.A Comics Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel, 2007.
"The Vampire Strikes!" *All-Winners Comics 5*. Summer 1942. Rpt. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age All-Winners Vol. 2*. New York: Marvel, 2006.
Vassallo, Michael J. Introduction. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age U.S.A. Comics Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel, 2007.
Vogel, Steve. *The Pentagon: The Untold Story of the Wartime Race to Build the Pentagon and to Restore it Sixty Years Later*. New York: Random House, 2007.
Weiner, Robert. "Okay, Axis, Here We Come!"—*Captain America and Superhero* Teams from World War II and the Cold War. B.J. Oropeza, ed. *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.
Wright, Bradford W. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Not Just Another Racist Honkey:

A History of Racial Representation in Captain America and Related Publications

Ora C. McWilliams

A presupposition of deconstruction is that nothing happens by accident. Every element of a particular work is intentional and every representation means something. The *Captain America* comics, published by Marvel Comics, are no exception. Scrawny and barely more than a child, Steve Rogers is given an experimental serum and becomes the patriotic symbol of America, Captain America. Captain America is a white man. Captain America has blonde hair. Captain America has blue eyes (Gruenwald 44). Captain America, an obviously Aryan ideal, has always had a curious relationship with racial ideals. His character has dealt with race in a number of different ways throughout the comic's history.

Comic books often have a hard time making a distinction between a character and a caricature. Minority groups represented in comics, and, in a larger picture, popular culture, often are not fleshed out as full characters. They simply become one-dimensional stand-ins for "their people" or "their cause," and some of the older Captain America stories seem almost incomprehensible outside of their historical context. Through the deconstruction of various images and stories, this essay is a textual analysis that aims to contextualize various historical incarnations of Captain America and display how ideas of race have progressed and been forwarded by the most patriotic of superheroes. Occasionally, philosophy is used to further ground ideals into intellectual context.

The topic of black superheroes and race relations was covered extensively in *Black Superheroes, Milestone Comics, and Their Fans*, by Dr. Jeffery A. Brown. The theme of racism in the Golden Age *Captain America Comics* (*CAC*)[1] was mentioned specifically in Robert G. Weiner's article "Okay, Axis, Here We Come!" However, it seems few scholars have covered the modern aspects of race in *Captain America* (*CA*) comic books, especially as it relates to the 1970s, the Falcon character, and the present.

CA comic books are absolutely no stranger to the topic of race, and they have run the whole spectrum of racial ideals. In tracing the sixty plus year history of Captain America, the issue of race is one of the most prominent features of Dr. Brown's book. During the "war years," the 1940s and 1950s, Captain America was depicted along with ghoulish characters, which were often stand-ins for members of the Axis Powers, and in Captain America's sister book, *The Young Allies*, African Americans were represented with racist undercurrents. *CA* comics became slightly less racist through the 1960s and 1970s. They boosted sales when they introduced a watered down blaxploitation in the form of an African American partner, the

Falcon. In the 1990s and 2000s, *CA* became almost apologetic about the topic of race as it relates to the Captain America character.

In 2002, Marvel Comics published a comic titled *The Truth: Red, White and Black* which suggests that the white Captain America (Steve Rogers) was not the first person who was given the superhero serum. The comic suggests that scientists first tested the serum on unsuspecting black men, with limited success. As a result this story tells how America created its own ghoulish super-soldiers early in World War II. In addition, Marvel introduced an African American character named Patriot into its Young Avengers squad. Patriot, the grandson of the black Captain America who is featured in *The Truth*, becomes a leader of the Young Avengers. He has a costume that is vaguely derived from Bucky's (Captain America's Golden Age partner) and a shield like the one the white Captain America used. Over the years, these representations have allowed Captain America and the nation to grow on ideas of race.

Golden Age (Captain America and the Young Allies)

The World War II era of comics was one of the high points in the history of comics. The books were published with few restrictions, and were relatively socially acceptable. Captain America was not the first patriotic superhero, but he was one of the more popular characters during the war, as is illustrated by the many copy-cat characters that followed. It follows that when patriotism was at an all time high, during and after World War II, the most patriotic comic book characters enjoyed success. *CAC* were not only for children on the home front. Comic books also were published to be sent to the troops on the lines. "Newsweek attributed the robust sales [of comics] to 'the well-filled pockets of the nation's school children' and 'the war-developed market of American servicemen'"(Wright 31). In the early and mid–1940s, amid the clamor of this nationalistic fervor, Americans grew xenophobic and at times blatantly racist, especially with respect to the Japanese. A relationship exists between nationalism and xenophobiaism. As a country becomes more insular, as America did prior to World War II, it and *CAC* became more xenophobic.

The earliest issues of *CAC* portrayed the Germans as bumbling idiots who were drawn with fangs and even sometimes forked tongues, clearly the ideal of evil. The Japanese were also drawn with exaggerated characteristics; they often had fangs, large protruding buckteeth, or hunched backs. Often, they were drawn to be very short and, of course, they were marked as being different from white America by their canary yellow skin.[2]

The Japanese were made to appear extremely grotesque, as is illustrated in a story titled "Captain America and the Ageless Orientals Who Wouldn't Die" (Simon 69–83). This story is about a Japanese man who finds some lumbering, giant men in the Himalayas, and enslaves them as soldiers to wreak havoc on "The Metropolis," by stealing money and killing innocent people. The giants have over-exaggerated racial features associated with Orientals: green skin, long fingers, fangs and hunched backs. These soldiers could be intended as inversions of Captain America. The way they are written into the story suggests that the Japanese are attempting to have a super-soldier like Captain America. These soldiers were not created by science as was Captain America; they were natural. However, since the Japanese super-soldiers don't use their humanity or intelligence, they are monsters — monsters that reflect the view that many Americans had of the Japanese after Pearl Harbor.

CAC were very popular when they were published, and had many spin-offs including

ASC, *AW*, and *USA Comics*; all of them featured Captain America in some way. Another book published concurrently with *CAC* was *The Young Allies*, and, while not directly a Captain America comic book, it is a spin-off for Bucky, which features a semi-multi-racial cast. The obvious implication of this particular book is that "only together (all-peoples of all races) can we fight the fascists." As the Young Allies' fight song would suggest,

> We fight together, thru stormy weather...
> We're out to lick both crooks and spies!
> We won't be stopped — and we can't be topped
> We're the Young Allies! [Lee, *Young Allies 4* 45]

The middle of World War II was a very scary time, and children probably needed support. The Young Allies gave those kids an emotional outlet for their fear, and supported patriotism, just as many comics of the day did. It seems like the comics' writers wanted to assure the populace that even the black kids were on the same page about the war.

The Young Allies book features kids from various, mostly white backgrounds, and it prominently features a black character named Whitewash Jones. Whitewash is a racial slur that to some has come to mean "a black person who takes on the characteristics of a white society to gain favor" (urbandictionary.com). The addition of a black character seems purposeful. The original incarnation of the Sentinels of Liberty consisted only of white kids (Simon 247). Sometime between their original appearance and their spin-off book, the cast was rounded out to be more inclusive. This was likely an attempt to represent the solidarity that the Young Allies fight song preaches. The Young Allies were not the first ensemble of kids cast together in potentially comedic situations. If one is familiar with classic television and movie serials, one can get an idea of what Young Allies was and what lineage it is following by imagining Our Gang, if the Little Rascals had no girls, two superheroes and fought the Nazis.

Whitewash was drawn with the typical racial-markers of African Americans in comic books and comic strips of the time. The artwork stressed racial stereotypes: exaggerated lips, wide eyes, and the look of a white person who was painted in black face. In addition, he was dressed outlandishly in a purple suit and wide brimmed hat.[3] Perhaps the worst affront of all is the way in which his speech pattern was written. At times, it is an incomprehensible mumbling; at its best, it is simply "jive talk." The only speech bubbles drawn for him that contain clear language are those in which he is singing the fight-song with the other allies. At least when he is speaking in unison with the other Allies he can be understood. This is further evidence that when alone, a person can act, think or feel in a particular way, but when the time for fighting comes, everyone falls in line.

When reading *The Young Allies*, it seems that Whitewash's purpose, besides representing the black community, is to get captured by the villain de jour and be saved by Bucky and the other Allies. The first example of this is in the very first issue of *The Young Allies*, when the rest of the kids are captured on a ship. Whitewash wants to save them, but can't think of how. He is found by the villain, and a brawl ensues. In fumbling around Whitewash eventually accidentally trips a lever that allows his friends to escape and overtake the villain. In this example, while Whitewash means well, he was not allowed to actively help his friends.

Another glaring example of this weakness of character is illustrated, heavy-handedly, when in Issue *3* all the Young Allies take a nap. The comic shows their dream sequences, in which, while the rest of the Young Allies are kicking Nazi tail, or fighting in their dreams, Whitewash is depicted as dreaming of eating watermelon. I'm sure that having the character

eating watermelon was, at the time, seen as a sight gag, and, in fairness, the token fat kid also was dreaming of eating. When viewing these pictures, a modern audience might react by saying, "That is the kind of racism that today we only allow crazy grandparents to engage in. It is 'acceptable racism,' because that's how they grew up and were indoctrinated. Why was it 'acceptable racism'?"

The sight gag of Whitewash eating watermelon might seem very innocuous. The problem is that Whitewash is illustrated doing exactly what was expected of "his kind." Recall the Congress scene from the film *Birth of a Nation* (1915), in which,

> A black political victory culminates in an orgiastic street celebration Blacks dance, sing, drink, and rejoice. Later they conduct a black congressional session ... in which the freed Negro legislators are depicted as lustful, arrogant and idiotic. They bite on chicken legs and drink whiskey from bottles while sprawling bare feet upon their desks [Bogle 12].

This scene caused fervor because it was set in the ultimate idea of reason, congress, and the blacks were acting like savages, like animals. This can illustrate the principles that go all the way back to Aristotle's ideas of the soul. *The Politics Book I: pt. 4–5* was used to justify slavery, of all kinds, for thousands of years: "For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule."

In short, the argument goes that some people are slavish from birth. Aristotle does not link characteristics to race, but he claims that some souls are animalistic by nature. They are like animals and they are different from men because their souls are naturally different. Further, in *De Anima* (On the Soul) the different souls are articulated: the nutritive, which is the soul that requires sustenance, present in all living things, used to describe plants; the sensitive (or appetitive soul), which feels sense perception and controls passion, used mostly to describe animals; and the soul, which is the rational soul, used to describe man (Copeleston 327–329). Some readers may interpret this watermelon eating dream sequence as racist in that Whitewash is giving in to his appetite instead of fighting Nazis, as would seem rational. In addition to racist overtones, this scene might be taken, by some readers, as an affront to the patriotism of African Americans because Whitewash did not dream of beating the Nazis.

Another sequence that some readers think attributes an animalistic nature to Whitewash occurs in his first appearance in *Young Allies 1*. In order to distract the guards, Whitewash and the other allies put on a show. In that sequence Whitewash plays "Growlo the Ape Man" and dances across the stage, and the effect is that Whitewash looks like he is half-man and half-ape (Lee 7).

Historically speaking, there is precedent for this kind of stereotyping in the media of the day. What is being illustrated in the *Young Allies* was common in comic books and films pre–World War I. When speaking of the earliest films that portrayed African Americans, author Donald Bogle says,

> Fun was poked at the American Negro by presenting him as either a nitwit or childlike lackey.... All were merely filmic reproductions of black stereotypes that had existed since the days of slavery and were already popularized in American life and arts [4].

He also states, "The pure coon emerged as no-account nigger, this unreliable, crazy, lazy, subhuman creature is good for nothing more than eating watermelons, stealing chickens, shooting crap, or butchering the English language" (8).

I would contend that this perfectly describes Whitewash, perhaps toned down for general consumption by children. Nonetheless, the traits described are definitely present. Whitewash

is a symbol of acceptable racism because he is a symbol of the African American in the historical and philosophical thinking of the pre-civil rights movement. Racism against the Japanese and African Americans was alive in comics long after *The Young Allies* ceased publication, not only in Captain America comic books.

A few years after World War II was over, Timely/Marvel comics attempted several times to reinvent the character of Captain America with little success. Eventually, in 1947, they shuffled him off into limbo,[4] and it was not until 1963, in *Avengers 4*, that they revived the character of Captain America. Eventually, in 1968, they gave him his own title book again. During the time period between the war years and the 1960s, America's feelings toward the African American had changed. No longer was the negro the butt of a joke; often he was powerful in his own right. Sometimes the black man was too powerful or scary for suburban America. This intrigued buyers of media and a lesser-served market segment of African Americans in the 1960s and 1970s. This, along with more disposable income, led to the birth of blaxploitation.

Silver Age (The Falcon and Blaxploitation)

During the 1970s, the character of Captain America was frequently teamed up with another character, the Falcon. Their team-up was so frequent that for several years the title of the book was *Captain America and the Falcon*. The Falcon's abilities have fluctuated over the years. He is a man who can fly, and, during the initial meetings, he is seemingly able to telepathically communicate with a particular falcon named Redwing (Gruenwald). Falcon is black, a fact that Captain America is quick to point out. The Falcon makes his first appearance in *CA 117*. During their first meeting, Captain America, who is incognito as the Red Skull, points to Falcon's race when he states, "You sound more Harlem than Haitian" (Lee 16).

In context, this quote is harmless enough. In the story, Captain America is stranded on a deserted island, presumably in the Pacific, and, since the Falcon speaks perfect English, with a tinge of jive talk, he must be from the United States. But isn't it odd that even with a New York accent Cap would assume that Falcon would be from Harlem (the racially heavy section of New York) and not, say, Hoboken, Harrison, or anywhere else around New York City? Then, on the next page, Falcon affirms that he is, indeed, from Harlem (Lee, *CA 117* 17). This is the first of many times stereotypes are represented in the book. This exchange firmly puts the Falcon in his place as the stereotypical black man. The only identity that the Falcon has until the next issue comes out, a month later, is the black guy from Harlem who saves Captain America. For a whole month, Falcon does not have a name; it is only in the next issue that he utters his own name, Sam Wilson (Lee, *CA 118* 5). Not having a name divorces him from full characterization. It is significant that his blackness is the only thing that is affirmed until several pages into that next issue. It identifies him as "black" Falcon in contrast to "white" Captain America.

The Falcon was introduced at a transitional point for comic books, and Falcon is a transitional character. Comics in the early 1970s were taking a turn to the less fanciful and more realistic. Marvel wanted to represent African American characters in their stories in a realistic manner. The Falcon was not the fantastic king of an African nation, as was the Black Panther; he was not a character that could be looked up to. Also, he was not characterized as later

black heroes, such as Luke Cage, were. Luke Cage, who was introduced into comics during the time of heavy blaxploitation (Brown 20–25), while a hero, was full of flaws and not necessarily intended to be looked up to. Blaxploitation, in this context, is media that focuses more on the stereotypes of blackness more than any other characteristic to create character. In the case of the Falcon, he is connected to Harlem, which is stereotypically black. Blaxploitation is the romanticizing of things or ideas, such as anti-establishment ideas, that at the time were typically stereotypically black. The media then co-opted and packaged those ideas in a profitable way. Blaxploitation is most often used in the context of film; as a result the best definitions come from this medium. Donald Bogle gives a fuller explanation of blaxploitation:

> Ghetto residents seemed to have a greater ethnic identity. Eventually, poverty and ghetto life (sometimes the very degrading constraints imposed on Black America by White America) were frequently idealized and glamorized.... With the glamourization of the ghetto, however, came also the elevation of the pimp/outlaw/rebel as folk hero [238].

But another element of blaxploitation is contained within the audience's reception of such films, and media. Bogle states, "'Blaxploitation film': a movie that played on the needs of black audiences for heroic figures without answering those needs in realistic terms" (242). In other words, the stereotypes of African Americans were exploiting them within the text. It's a double-edged sword because they were also exploiting the audience that came to purchase the text. The audience was exploited by those media because it didn't give them real answers to their problems, or even portrayed their problems as something to be romanced.

When Falcon, as Sam Wilson, explains his origin story, he says, "I used to have the biggest pigeon coop on any rooftop in Harlem" (Lee *CA 117* 17), and when he says this, it affirms both his racial and socio-graphic identity. While the character's history provides a convenient way to explain Falcon's affinity for birds, it is significant that he trains pigeons. Pigeons are thought to be a lower class of bird; they do not hold the same esteem, nor are they as regal an eagle, hawk or, say, a falcon. After all, he wasn't training an exotic bird such as a parrot or parakeet; he was training one of the lowest classes of birds, pigeons. Today, some people call pigeons "rats with wings." Urban pigeons live almost exclusively off the handouts of humans. "[Pigeons have] a hankering for human leftovers and have a tendency to live in large urban colonies" (Blechman 129–130). Taken within this context, pigeons could be another stand-in for the black man. In the mid–1900s, African American communities, such as the ghettoes of Harlem, were an urban phenomenon, and they were not looked upon favorably. Urban ghettos were not clean places, and people who lived in these ghettos would often be forced to live off the hand-outs of others. If nothing else, his living in Harlem and training pigeons illustrate Sam Wilson as a lower class character.

There are still other racist elements to the Falcon character. In his first appearance, the Falcon is seen in a jungle-esque atmosphere; he is shirtless and among foliage. Pants and a glove seem to be the only thing that separates him from the animals. Also, the idea that he has animal empathy makes him primal and closer to the animals. Within the context of this comic, an animalistic spectrum is drawn with Redwing at one end, Falcon in the middle and Captain America on the other end. Falcon is seen as an intermediary of communication between the animal world and the rational (human) world. Additionally, the Falcon's place in this book is often as an intermediary of communication between the black world and the white world. In this way, both classes that are "lower" than man are able to communicate with the white man though the Falcon.

The idea that the black man could stand between the animal world and man's world is a throwback to philosophical ideas mentioned earlier by Aristotle and other pre-moderns. Voltaire considered blacks midway between whites and apes, while David Hume allowed that black people might be able to develop certain attributes of human beings in much same way that a parrot picks up a few words (Jensen 77). Voltaire and Hume are following the same line of thinking that Aristotle was — that blacks are not fully human and were closer to animals. The Captain America comics seem to support the ideas of Voltaire and Hume.

In his third appearance, Falcon's bird, Redwing, is captured by the real Red Skull, and Falcon and Red Skull have an interesting dialogue.

> RED SKULL: Perhaps, he will be luckier than you, I may permit him to spend his life in captivity.
> FALCON: No! Redwing is mine! He must be free!
> RED SKULL: Freedom is only for the one who rules! All others must be slaves! [Lee, *CA 119* 8].

This is a really striking image in the original color format.[5] When Falcon screams, "Redwing must be free," he channels an emotion that would not necessarily be present were it a white character screaming it. Falcon is carrying hundreds of years of subjugation in those words. This is a panel with an angry black character and an off panel character telling Falcon "that freedom isn't for all." Needless to say, since Red Skull has his basis in Nazism, he would be a racist. Red Skull's words seem to echo that which Aristotle said in *Politics*. Yet, the next panel shows the Falcon giving in to his natural anger (i.e., non-rational). Therefore *CA* comics have not yet proven that Aristotle's ideas are wrong. Remember, this exchange takes place in the very beginnings of blaxploitation. Were Falcon a white character, the opportunity for these lines wouldn't exist. Red Skull saying the word "slavery" to a black man was obviously intended to elicit a response. Later in the issue, when Captain America *rationally* thinks through a plan to defeat the Red Skull, he and the Falcon enact the plan, eventually overcome this villain, and part ways for about six issues.

The final two panels in which the Falcon appears, in the next issue, contain some gentlemen that reside in Harlem, saying that Captain America and Falcon just need Jimi Hendrix to make a good team (Lee, *CA 120* 2). At this point, the reader can tell they are in Harlem because Falcon mentions it and because the gentlemen are black. Because it would be ludicrous to assume that a musician would be able to help on super-heroic missions, this scene may be an attempt to adopt Cap as an honorary black man, or to associate Falcon with a somewhat respectable black person. In any case, we cannot forget that the Falcon is black. The blaxploitation continues throughout the book in much the same way.

When the Falcon returns, in Issue *126*, he has been falsely accused of a crime, and the only person that believes he didn't do it is Cap. In the scene in which Cap and Falcon talk, there is some exposition about a black version of the Klan that was preaching "hate whitey," and Falcon explains, "They could set *our* progress back a 100 years" (7). These lines have the dual purpose of aligning Falcon with the "good" black men, and suggesting that there are "bad" black men who are against the establishment.

Another example of Falcon aligning himself with "the black man" happened in *CA 169* (1974). Falcon is feeling defeated after being "jumped" in an alley, notably by black men, and decides that he needs more power. Captain America suggests that he go see a couple of other superheroes, who are white. Falcon says, "The guy I had in mind, actually, was the Black Panther. From what you've told me ... he's as hot as the others ... and he's black ... which would make me feel easier" (Englehart 10). It's not entirely clear why it would "be easier" for Falcon to see a black man about the problems pertaining to his power level, but it did serve as

a way to allow Falcon to contrast his views about different political and racial matters with those of the Black Panther.

Further panel analysis is not within the scope of this essay. However, in researching this topic, I conducted a quantitative analysis of racial representation by going though the *CA* issues and counting the initial appearances of all the black characters and the roles they played. I looked for trends. If a character went unnamed or didn't have some distinctive feature (such as an eye patch or purple suit) they may have been counted more than once, and I only counted them if they were clearly supposed to be a black character (i.e., un-obscured). I counted the instances of initial black character appearances in *CA 117* (the first appearance of the Falcon) through *CA 222* (the last issue in which Falcon's name appeared in the logo). In these issues, I counted 87 black rioters, rebels, thugs, robbers or gang members, six higher than the 81 black unnamed crowd members or bystanders. That means that the number of black people represented as criminals was higher than those represented as background characters. While the number of black gang members was 87, the total number of black crime victims was only six. The numbers became more positive as the characters became named and more humanized. For instance, there were three black mob bosses, while the number of "good guys" (i.e. police, non-super heroes, and soldiers) was 16.

There were four black children and a total of nine black women. Of those nine, three were slave-girls, concubines, or hookers, one was the Black Panther's hand-maiden, one was a victim, one was a super-villain, and one was the Falcon's love interest, Leila, who appeared with the Falcon in all of his appearances in issues from *139* on. I don't think it is hard to draw a conclusion about black female representation in these stories, considering that there are only two strong female characters; one of them is a villain and the other is the Falcon's love interest. This might be explained by the fact that a large number of the comic readership was, historically, male, child or adolescent. However, if representation of the reader were central to those numbers it should be reasoned that the number of children represented in those issues would be higher.

In 105 issues, there were six black super-villains, all with heavy blaxploitation names including Ball n' Chain (reminiscent of a prisoner), Nightshade (black like the night), Lucifer (no explanation needed), and the black villain named Gamecock. Other representations of black characters included an interesting cross-section of professions: a reporter (who Spider-Man readers would have been familiar with), a priest/reverend, a liquor store owner (who is robbed), the Black Panther, a S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent (who becomes another regular cast member for a few issues after his first appearance in *CA 173*), and one black character who is obviously a bum.

Last, and perhaps most disturbing, was the number of black characters appearing on a cover. In those 105 *CA* issues, black people only appeared on four covers: *133* had three protesters, *134* had four gang members, *153* had one victim, and *164* had the super-villain, Nightshade, pictured. Only one of these covers depicted something other than anti-establishment imagery in association with black characters.

Understandably, some of these above numbers are a natural consequence of some of the stories taking place in Harlem. Therefore some of the trends and numbers themselves can seem more appalling than they are in actuality. However, a conclusion that can be drawn by looking at early issues without the Falcon (*121–124*, *127–130*) is that those issues only contain two black characters while issues with the Falcon contain several. It seems that, at times the Falcon was used as an excuse to tell a story regarding black characters. This is further evidenced

in that as the Falcon's popularity and blaxploitation waned, so did the appearances of black characters, including the Falcon. Toward the end of the run, after Issue *196*, only six black characters appear.

As the run went forward, the Falcon character became less important and moved further into the background. The team-ups with the Falcon run to *CA 218* (1978). There is one solo back up story in *220* (1978), but the Falcon's name was not removed from the cover until Issue *222*. The team-ups seem to end with a whimper rather than a bang when the Falcon is enlisted to train some rookie superheroes, and Cap wishes him "good luck." After ten years of team-ups, the Falcon was not given any kind of significant send off, simply a good luck by Cap. The Falcon is sparsely seen until a year later in *Avengers 181* (1979), when the Falcon is invited to be a member of the Avengers, at the time a government sponsored agency, to fulfill an equal opportunity quota (Michelinie 1–3).

In other words, through those issues of the comic, blaxploitation was present in the book to varying degrees, depending on the writer. In nearly every early issue of that run, there is some reference to Harlem, or scenes in which the Falcon mentions his "black brothers." The other side of the argument is that these stories walked a delicate balance. They may have contained blaxploitation, but they also exposed a reality to an audience that would have no other exposure to these types of social problems. In reviewing one story in particular, Brian Cremins correctly points out that often, the "true 'evil-doer' in this story then, is not the freakish Modok or his Bulldozer, but a social condition, a social reality" (Cremins 243). This run of Captain America is but one example.

Of course it is important to note that The Falcon was not Marvel's only attempt at creating a marketable African American character. Other black Marvel characters existed with varying degrees of blaxploitation ranging from the regal Black Panther to the obviously blaxploitation of "Brother Voodoo." Also, during the 1960s and 1970s it wasn't unheard of for other comics to deal with racial issues. An example of this would be one of the most dramatic moments in the comics of the 1970s. In DC's Green Lantern/Green Arrow crossover, a black character chastises Green Lantern for taking care of all these various skin toned aliens and not taking care of the Earth's "black man" by saying, "I hear how hard you been working for the blue skins, and how you helped out the orange skins, and you done considerable for the purple skins! Only there's skins you never bothered with ... the black skins! How come? Answer me, Mr. Green Lantern?" Green Lantern replies, simply, "I can't" (O'Neil 6).

Captain America continues to appear side-by-side with the Falcon in the Avengers. Captain America's own title takes a turn for solo adventures mostly involving large conspiracies though the 1980s and 1990s. The Falcon made sporadic appearances, and has had his own short lived title a couple of times. However, he never really returned to the popularity he enjoyed in the early 1970s.

*Modern Age (*The Truth *and* Young Avengers*)*

In a swing of the dialectic, as racist as the Golden Age Captain America stories were, the Modern Age has been more respectful, sensitive, and even almost apologetic in relation to racial issues. Progressive on racial issues, both the Truth and Young Avengers have represented race in ways that were not commercially viable in earlier eras.

Truth: Red White and Black was a special seven issue mini-series published by Marvel in

2002–2003. The book's story addressed the origin of Captain America, and was billed as "The Truth of the FIRST Captain America." The story follows the current white Captain America in his quest to discover the origins of some disturbing reports that the United States government tested the serum, which created him in his own origin story, on unsuspecting black men first. This was a retro-continuity explanation of the origin story of Captain America that would serve to address the issues of the government using black men as guinea pigs a la the Tuskegee experiments. Tuskegee was a United States experiment that used unsuspecting black men to test the effects of syphilis.

Post–9/11 Captain America had gained a new significance as a patriotic character. In Captain America's book, he was becoming more adult and he was fighting terrorists. *The Truth* was published in 2002, and follows in the adult tone of storytelling set by the main book. The hype for *The Truth* was very high prior to its release and gained quite a bit of mainstream media attention. This kind of media attention for comic books was rare in the post "death of Superman" world. Newspapers, television and radio all did stories on *The Truth* and the storm that built as a result of changing the origins of the now iconic Captain America. Said one reviewer, "I'm a huge fan of Captain America, and you'd think a re-working of his origin like this, or at least where the project comes from, might feel wrong" (Johns).

The book was not really well received by fans, and was not a critical success. Circulation numbers for the first issue were almost 75,000, but by the final issue they dipped to just 33,000 (Miller 1400). Surprisingly, a lot of the reviewers were not very much concerned with the story content, although it is often over-the-top. The first issue of the book is almost entirely dedicated to humanizing the three would-be experiments. Examples of this are: a man and wife, on their honeymoon, experiencing racism at the World's Fair; and two other characters being punished for standing up for "negro advancement." The first issue sets up a common criticism of the series as a whole: "Morales [the writer] has, for all intents and purposes, taken a high concept that could have really gone somewhere and boiled it down to 'white people bad, black people not'" (Martin). Later issues have African Americans dehumanized, mostly by the United States government. It was very difficult for me to read, and I imagine it was a hard pill for post–9/11 America, still in the hangover from the patriotism that resulted from those attacks, to swallow. This is further evidence of the relationship between race and national trauma. The attack on 9/11 has affected the Americans in a way that was, at least for a short time, similar to the affect of the attack on Pearl Harbor. It brought patriotism to an all-time high, and caused some Americans to become somewhat xenophobic. While racist Americans were focused on the Arabs as the enemy, an undercurrent of prejudice was planted.

There is a scene in Issue *2* of *The Truth* in which the U.S. Army loads as many people from the black platoon as it can fit in its trucks. The implication is that the army slaughters the rest. That issue also ends with images of the African Americans on the trucks that are sort-of reminiscent of movies that depict Nazi concentration camps. The comic implies that the people who were shot quickly might have gotten the better deal. Reading this issue was really jarring, as I'm sure it was intended to be, but not in a good way. America with its amplified patriotism from the attacks a year earlier likely did not understand what they were looking at with these graphic images. The reader was not made aware that that scene was based on an urban myth until an explanation appeared in an appendix in the collected edition (Morales, Appendix 2). Another reviewer said, "The result is a tale too often wrapped up in its own historical import, at the expense of a satisfying story" (Moreau). The overcompensation with regards to racial representation costs the story credibility.

It is important to note that, more often than not, story content was given a pass, and negative reviews focused more on the artistic choices. Dolan says, "Kyle Baker's art on this series is the worst I think I have ever seen in a comic," and another reviewer sums up most reactions nicely, by saying,

> He [the artist] is also horribly mismatched for this kind of story. His strong design sense made for some eye-catching, iconic covers for *TRUTH*, but his style, which veers more toward political cartooning and animation than traditional comic art, takes away from the seriousness of the story rather than intentionally contrasting it. Furthermore, some of the art, particularly towards the middle of the story, seems horribly rushed and unattractive in comparison to Baker's normal output [Anderson].

In Issue *2* of the *Truth*, the series draws the parallel to philosophical, non-human reservation for blacks established by Aristotle and Voltaire, when an unnamed white army soldier makes the statement, "We should ship these niggers to the Pacific so they can fight those yellow bellies monkey to monkey" (Morales 11). However, the point is driven home when, in Issue 4, the African Americans are subjected to the serum as murder machines. They inhumanly crush the enemy soldiers with their bare hands. The soldiers' intelligence was reduced by the serum, and most of them reverted to a childlike thought process. To some, this may seem familiar because it represents what they believe was the inhumanity that America represented on its enemies, during World War II, exemplified by the story of the Ageless Orientals.

The Truth may have overcompensated respect for African Americans, and seems disrespectful toward other groups. However, not all was lost. Spinning out of *The Truth* is a character who is the grandson of the black Captain America, a character named Patriot. Created in 2005, Patriot seems to be a full inversion of the character Whitewash, from Young Allies. Instead of being a weak character who is often captured, Patriot is a strong character. Patriot has super-strength earlier in the run of the first series. However, the super-strength is not an excuse for his strength of character. Patriot, in a complicated plot, actually was not born with super powers but gained them through the use of a drug. There is a panel in Issue 7 in which Patriot is found using the drug. It is almost a direct angle for angle homage to the cover of *Green Lantern 85* (1974), the historical issue in which long-time character Speedy was found to be addicted to heroin. Speedy was allowed to overcome his addiction, and was stronger as a result. Patriot's growth is intended to parallel Speedy's growth.

As was done with Speedy, Patriot's secret is found out, and, in the fallout of that revelation, Patriot initially quits the team. This is the end because the members beg him to come back, even powerless, remarking, "it wouldn't the same without him" (Heinberg, *Young Avengers 9* 10). His friends help him overcome his powerlessness, and in the end he is a stronger character. Not only is he a respectable character, but he is the unquestioned leader of the teen team Young Avengers, powered or not.

While Falcon has his race established before anything else, Patriot's race is not even mentioned until the third issue. It is only when pushed by Captain America that Patriot admits his connection to "the REAL Captain America.... My grandfather ... the black Captain America" (Heinberg, *Young Avengers 3* 13). Patriot's race is only an issue because Captain America, and by extension the reader, assumed him to be Caucasian. There are only two other minor mentions of his race in the whole thirteen published issues of *Young Avengers*:[6] Once, in the special, when gang members assault him and he takes the drug to "not be ashamed ... rise up against gang members ... live up to the legacy" (Heinberg, *Young Avengers Special* 34); and when Luke Cage, now a member of the "New Avengers," sees Patriot on TV, and Spider-Man asks

how Luke remembers Patriot's name, and Luke replies that there are so few black superheroes running around that he can remember their names. However, blackness is not what is at the core of Patriot's character; it is his leadership and strength. It was his own personal strength that allowed him to come back to the team and save Captain America from gunfire in *Issue 12*. His leadership is tested several times though the series, and Patriot always comes out looking better at the end. In a lot of ways, *Young Avengers* accomplishes what *Young Allies* failed to accomplish. It is a book that features minority characters like the young, black Patriot, and strong female leads. It even has a homosexual couple. It actually allows readers to relate to the characters — characters who are not defined by their "gayness," "femininity," or "blackness." These are just facets of a larger character in each case.

In conclusion, *CAC* and in particular *Young Allies* in the Golden Age of comics were unquestionably racist by contemporary standards. They probably were not considered racist in their day, and were likely quite on par with the messages that were in films and other media of the time. The Silver Age introduction of the Falcon was not as racist as the classic *CAC* comics, but was guilty of, at the very least, minor blaxploitation. The Modern Age *CA* comic books, in particular *The Truth* and *Young Avengers*, go to greater lengths to respect African Americans, but they appear somewhat apologetic in the portrayals of the characters in those books. The modern day characters seem to overcome the shackles of racism imposed by Aristotle and Voltaire. The example set in modern Captain America's comics allows characters to flourish apart from race, and it overcomes its own early racist history.

Notes

1. The full title of the comic before a renumbering in the 1960s was *Captain America Comics* (*CAC*). After that it became simply *CA*.
2. Marvel, in *Captain America* reprints of the Golden Age stories, did at times opt to slightly recolor these old stories including the skin tones of the various characters in the book.
3. When I say outlandish, remember that I am talking about a superhero comic book so there are people in spandex side-by-side with him and he still looks the more outlandish. That purple suit was probably fairly practical in war as well. By practical, I mean as a distraction. He didn't have a pimp cane but if he did he could hit enemy combatants with it. That is the kind of suit he wears.
4. There were a couple of attempts in the 1950s to revive the character as a "commie smasher" or even as a horror comic. None of those attempts worked out.
5. It is less striking in the black and white (*Essential Captain America Vol. 2*) from which my primary research is being done.
6. Twelve regular issues plus a special.

References

Anderson, Russ. "Paperback Reader: Review of Truth: Red, White, and Black by Russ Anderson." *Paperback Reader.* 2 January 2008 <http://www.paperbackreader.com/review.php?ReviewID=253>.

Aristotle. "The Internet Classics Archive: Politics by Aristotle." *The Internet Classics Archive*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. Dept. of Classics MIT. 20 December 2007 <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.5.five.html>.

Blechman, Andrew D. *Pigeons*. New York: Grove, 2006.

Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films.* 4th ed. New York: Continuum, 2001.

Brown, Jeffrey A. *Black Superheroes, Milestone Comics, and Their Fans*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

Copeleston, Frederick S.J. *History of Philosophy Volume 1: Greece and Rome* New York: Image, 1993.
Cremins, Brian. "'Why Have You Allowed Me to See You Without Your Mask?': *Captain America 133* and the Great American (Protest) Novel." *International Journal of Comic Art 4* (2002): 239–247.
Dolan, Cody. "Truth: Red, White, & Black #7 Review — Silver Bullet Comics." *Silver Bullet Comicbooks*. 22 July 2003. 2 January 2008 <http://www.silverbulletcomicbooks.com/reviews/105888233529629.htm>.
Englehart, Steve, Mike Friedich, and Sal Buscema, et al. *Captain America 169.* New York: Marvel Comics (January 1974).
Gruenwald, Mark, and Peter Sanderson. *Essential: the Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe — Deluxe Edition Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel, 2006.
Heinberg, Alan, and Neal Adams, et al. *Young Avengers Special*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 2006).
Heinberg, Alan, and Jim Chung, et al. *Young Avengers 3*. New York: Marvel Comics (June 2005).
_____. *Young Avengers 9*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 2005).
Jenson, Darrick. *The Culture of Make Believe*. New York: Context, 2002.
Johns, Geoff. "One of the Good Ones." *TheFourthRail.Com.* December 2002. 2 January 2008 <http://www.thefourthrail.com/features/1202/oneofthegoodones15.shtml>.
Lee, Stan, Al Gabriele, and George Klein, et al. *Young Allies Comics 1.* New York: Timely/Marvel Comics (Spring 1941).
_____. *Young Allies Comics 3.* New York: Timely/Marvel Comics (Summer 1941).
_____. *Young Allies Comics 4.* New York: Timely/Marvel Comics (Summer 1942).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Gene Colan, et al. *Essential Captain America Vol. 2.* New York: Marvel Comics (2002). (*CA 117–120*, *126* come from this volume.)
Martin, Matt. "Sequart Research & Literacy Organization COLUMNS: Optic Verve #20: Comics Published on 29 January 2003." *Sequart Research & Literacy Organization*. 29 January 2003. 2 January 2008 <http://www.sequart.org/columns/?column=372>.
Michelinie, David, George Perez, and John Byrne, et al. *Avengers 181.* New York: Marvel Comics (March 1979).
Miller, John Jackson, and Maggie Thompson, et al. *The Standard Catalog of Comic Books*. 3rd ed. Iola, WI: Krause, 2004.
Morales, Robert, and Kyle Baker. *Truth: Red, White, and Black TPB.* New York: Marvel Comics, 2004.
Moreau, Kevin F. "Truth: Red, White; Black [2004] Shaking Through.Net: Comics: Review." *Shaking Through.Net:* 28 March 2004. 2 January 2008 <http://www.shakingthrough.net/comics/reviews/2004/truth_red_white_and_black_2004.html>.
O'Neil, Denny, and Neil Adams, et al. *Green Lantern 76*. New York: DC Comics (April 1970).
Simon, Joe, Jack Kirby, and Stan Lee, et al. *Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age Captain America Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel Comics (2005).
"Urban Dictionary: Whitewash." *urbandictionary.com*. 30 December 2007 <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=whitewash>.
Weiner, Robert G. "'Okay, Axis, Here We Come': Captain America and the Superhero Teams From World War II and the Cold War." *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture*. Ed. B. J. Oropeza. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.
Wright, Bradford W. *Comic Book Nation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Special thanks to Dr. Heather Fryer (Creighton University)— without her encouragement I wouldn't ever have ended up here. Krypton Comics (Omaha, NE)— who were way more cooperative than they needed to be. Also, thank you to the Ray Browne Popular Culture Library. Thanks to my all of my editors, Elizabeth M. Potter, Sydney Lafferty, Justin Philpot, (Lil') Ben Phillips, Brian Blitz, Ben Dyer, and Damien Ryder. Lastly I'd like to thank Dr. Jeffery Brown (Bowling Green State University) for pointing me in the right direction.

Weakness Is a Crime

Captain America and the Eugenic Ideal in Early Twentieth-Century America[1]

Brian E. Hack

Eugenics — the quasi-scientific application of Darwinism to the conscious breeding of stronger, smarter and more ethical human beings — had long been mainstreamed into the nation's popular parlance and culture by the time Captain America emerged in early 1941. A term coined in 1883 by Charles Darwin's half-cousin, the British inventor and explorer Francis Galton (1822–1911), eugenics (derived from the Greek for "well-born") was originally conceived as a progressive movement, one that ultimately would bring an end to alcoholism, mental illness, physical weakness, sexual promiscuity and social disease by encouraging marriage only by those of healthy mind and body; the children of these physically and mentally "fit" parents would thus lead the way to an enlightened humanity (a proposal termed *positive eugenics,* as opposed to *negative eugenics,* which included the forced sterilization of those deemed "unfit" for procreation).[2]

The subject was standard fare in college course offerings, in innumerable books and magazine articles, and in the numerous "Fittest Family Contests" held at state and county fairs in the 1920s and 1930s. Through the American Eugenics Society, the American Museum of Natural History in New York (where the Second and Third International Eugenics Conferences were held in 1921 and 1932), and other organizations, the pseudo-science of eugenics achieved a certain cachet of acceptability as a benevolent public good and a viable path of scientific inquiry. While this reputation eventually faded within the scientific community by the 1920s, its general popularity in America lingered until the horrific scientific beliefs and practices of the Nazis — inspired in part by British and American writings on eugenics — made it tragically clear that a full-scale national quest for a Nietzschean *übermensch* brought with it disastrous consequences.

It is, however, within this milieu of human betterment and physical culture — interests shared by both American and German eugenicists — that Captain America's role as an idealized, eugenically created American can be more fully understood. While this supposition was touched upon in the 2003 series *Truth: Red, White and Black,* the matter was subverted through the addition of a revisionist narrative in which a group of African Americans — and not Steve Rogers, as one would surmise from the panels of *CAC 1* (March 1941) — were the original test subjects for the "super-serum" that would bestow Rogers with incredible physical and mental abilities; while the series unquestionably illustrated the racist undertones of the eugenics movement, the storyline somewhat detracted from the equally relevant and more telling issues

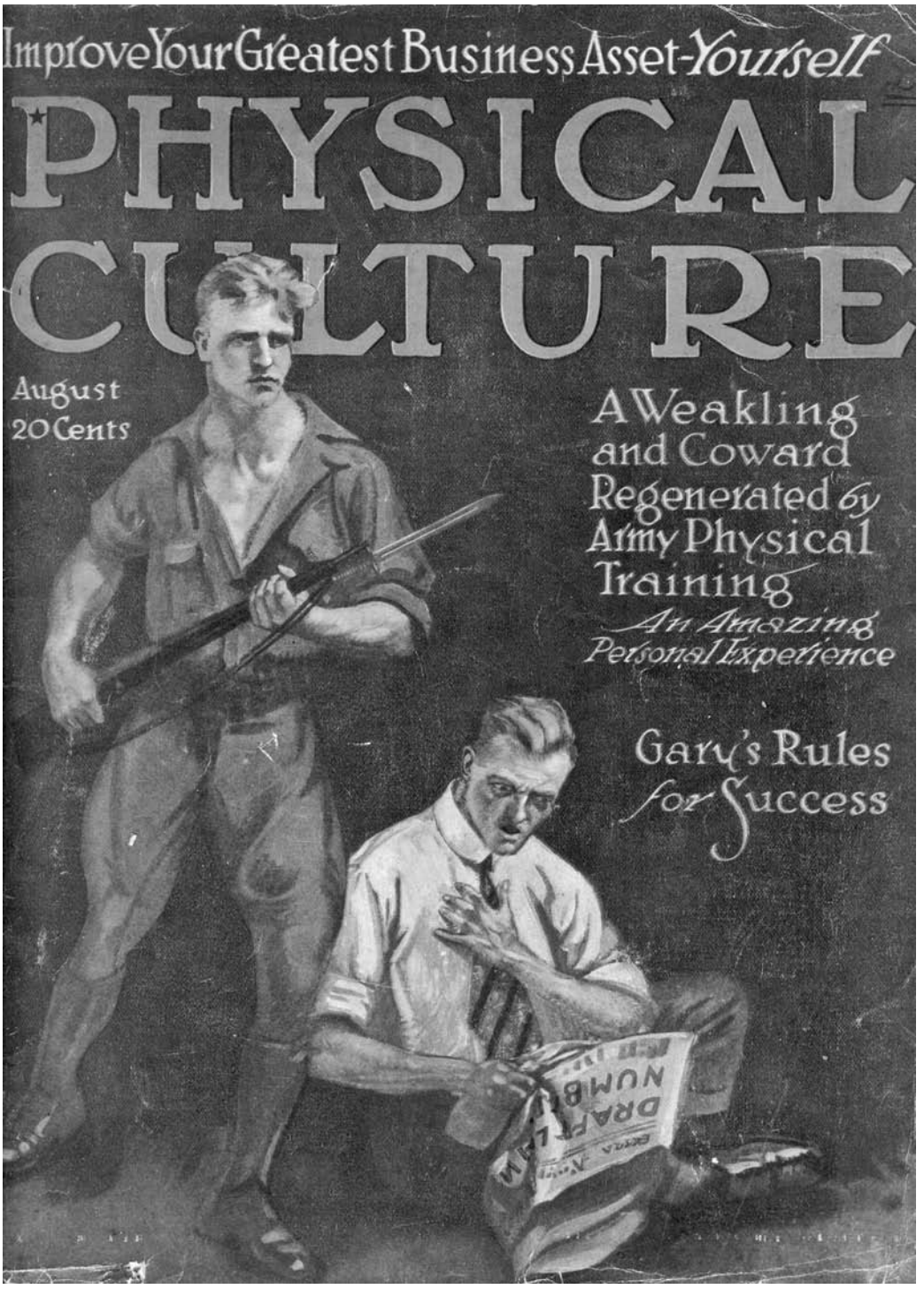
originally raised by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. A contextual examination of the 1941 origin story, and its later retellings, reveals not only the prevalence of eugenics in popular thought, but also the nuances of its American interpretation and application.

America's Savior

While the details of his biography were unraveled throughout the years, Steve Rogers is cursorily introduced in Simon and Kirby's *CAC 1* as a young man of "unfit condition" who had failed to meet the physical requirements for military service (Simon 5). Details of his character were fleshed out, as it were, much later: Rogers was an art major (a less-than-manly profession in the minds of many at the time, a detail no doubt added tongue-in-cheek) from the Lower East Side, like Jack Kirby himself, with a penchant for books; in one version of the tale Rogers's father notes that "It isn't normal! He has no friends, no interest in girls or sports!" (Gerber, *CA 225*, 23). This humble background — poor, weak, and pursuing what would have been perceived by some (at least on the Lower East Side) as a "sissy" ambition — made Rogers an ideal candidate for a eugenic makeover. The common perception of artiness as being synonymous with femininity or unmanliness was in part a vestige of the Aesthetic Movement, precipitated by the works and inimitable personality of Oscar Wilde, whose lecture tour of the United States in 1882 helped to spawn the archetype of the lily-carrying aesthete singularly devoted to the pursuit and enjoyment of physical and artistic beauty.

Similarly, being labeled *unfit* for the military was a social stigma often discussed and lampooned in the popular media. Physical weakness was perceived as not only unpatriotic but also as a sign of cowardice, as expressed in Clinton Brown's August 1918 cover illustration for *Physical Culture,* the popular magazine published by the self-promoting health guru Bernarr Macfadden (1868–1955). Brown's cover, entitled "A Weakling and Coward Regenerated by Army Physical Training," depicts a before-and-after transformation of a seated white-collar weakling, shown clutching his heart as he reads a headline on the impending military draft, into an upright super-soldier, advancing with determined expression and raised bayonet. Such transformations were seen as eugenically advantageous: In 1922 the sociologist Emory Stephen Bogardus (1882–1973) declared that "the chief eugenic effect of war is manifested during the period of training; this preparation period accents the importance of a strong physique and health measures. An insipid, stoop-shouldered population of city young men may be transformed into an army of fit soldiers" (331–332).[3]

Yet the eugenic benefits of war itself were criticized even by the movement's most ardent followers, including Borgardus. Warfare was seen by many as *dysgenic,* or detrimental to eugenic progress, a term generally attributed to scientist and Stanford University president David Starr Jordan (1851–1931), who maintained that sending the nation's physically and mentally healthy males into battle had the dysgenic effect of leaving only the weak and feeble-minded to procreate on the home front. "If a nation sends forth the best it breeds to destruction, the second best will take their vacant places," wrote Jordan in *The Human Harvest: A Study of the Decay of Races Through the Survival of the Unfit* (1907). "The weak, the vicious, the unthrifty will propagate, and in default of better will have the land to themselves" (Jordan 51). By transforming mild-mannered milquetoasts into heroic he-men, the super-serum alleviated, if only in the pages of the comics, these fears of racial and societal degeneration.



Clinton Brown, "A Weakling and Coward Regenerated by Army Physical Training," cover illustration, *Physical Culture*, August 1918.

Physical Culture and the Creation of the Eugenic Body

The physical culture movement, a corollary of sorts to the eugenics agenda, was built upon the premise that just such transformations — from puny to powerhouse — were not only possible but also beneficial for the future of the human race.[4] Within the pages of *Physical Culture* (which frequently published articles on the need for eugenic reform) and other Macfadden Publications (for which, perhaps not coincidentally, Joe Simon was a contributing illustrator), one finds innumerable advertisements for a variety of muscle building programs that presented miraculous bodily modifications in before and after photographs. The juxtaposition of these images — if they are to be taken at face value as truthful testimonies — visually minimize the actual time, energy and discipline required to transform one's body, suggesting instead an instant metamorphosis that promised superior strength and the self-confidence which accompanied it. Charles Atlas, the bodybuilder who first came to prominence through Macfadden's *Physical Culture* magazine, offered in a 1942 advertisement to "Let me make *you* a Superman!" While such ads capitalized on the vicarious desires of its young male readers to become as muscle-bound as their comic book heroes (perhaps best exemplified by C.C. Beck's *Captain Marvel,* who instantly enters a powerhouse of a body by the mere mention of a magic word), they also speak to the nation's eugenic encouragement of the physical health and vigor of its citizens. Injected with the wonder serum, Rogers too becomes a paragon of physical culture who immediately tempers his brute strength with a moral imperative (albeit a questionable one, as he immediately thereafter avenges the murder of his "creator," Professor Reinstein).

The creation of Captain America, however, is of course differentiated from the assorted muscle-building schemes (which are perhaps more relevant to a discussion of Bruce Wayne's physical development while in training to become Batman) in two fundamental aspects: the transformation was caused by chemical or genetic modifications to the cells in Rogers's body rather than through exercise; and, more importantly, it came as the result of a premeditated governmental program to develop an army of super-soldiers, the "saviors" of a nation threatened by spies and saboteurs. As it was well-known that the creation of the "superman" (the unfortunate English translation of Friedrich Nietzsche's *übermensch* or *overman*, the presumed next stage of humankind) was on the agenda of the Third Reich, this preemptive plan to create an American counterpart begs the question of how the creation of such an army of super-soldiers differed philosophically and ethically from the Nazi program.

The various accounts of Captain America's origin — each offering, omitting or modifying certain details — make this a difficult question to answer. In *CAC 1* (1941), Professor Reinstein (needless to say a play on Albert Einstein, who had come to the United States in December 1932 in response to Hitler's impending appointment as chancellor of Germany) proclaims to the newly transformed Steve Rogers that "like you, America shall gain the strength and the will to safeguard our shores." By "the will" one can infer a reference to "the will to power," the variously interpreted phrase most associated with Nietzsche and later immortalized by the German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl's propagandistic documentary *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, 1935). Rogers was to be "the first of a corps of super-agents" possessing superior mental and physical abilities (Simon 5). One would assume, then, that these agents would be an elite force separate from, or at least at the top of the hierarchy of, the conventional army rather than an army composed entirely of superior soldiers. As Captain America was created before America's entry into the Second World War, however, it follows that the

Which Are YOU—
"Before" or "After"?

BEFORE "My friends called me 'Slats'," writes Wesley Webb, describing his condition before taking Titus Training. You can see for yourself what a puny, undeveloped youngster he was.

TAKE your choice—how do YOU want to look—like the "BEFORE" pictures at the left, or the "AFTER" pictures at the right?

It's up to you. Thirty days from today you can see just as big an improvement in *your* condition as you see between the two sets of pictures here. These photographs are just samples of the amazing things I've done for *thousands* of men. I can do as much for YOU.

AFTER Now see what happened after Wesley wrote for the big free book "Miracles in Muscle". The amazing improvement in this lad's appearance certainly looks like a miracle, doesn't it?

BEFORE

Did you ever see a more puny looking lad than this one? Looks pretty hopeless, doesn't he? But not for Titus! Take a peep across the way and see what a few weeks of Titus Training did.

I don't care what your present condition is. You certainly can't be much worse off than the two lads shown here *before* they started Titus Training. Do you look like a poor imitation of a MAN? Are you ashamed to put on a bathing suit and let your friends see what a weakling you are?

Never mind! Cheer up! Just leave it to me. From now on Titus is going to be your big brother. In thirty days you can take a picture of yourself and label it "AFTER." And you can write underneath it: "This is a REAL MAN—and he can *prove* it. He's got one of the finest muscular developments you ever laid eyes on. Those great, powerful muscles are loaded with STRENGTH—*live* strength, fast as greased lightning."

AFTER You'd never recognize this as the same man as the one on the left. Look at that wonderful set of muscles Titus Training built! Send for the Free Book that tells how Titus performs these "Miracles."

LET ME WRAP YOUR BODY IN MUSCLE

SAXON

"Many people who have seen my feats of strength on the stage have asked me what exercises I used to develop my body and how I keep it in the pink' now. My answer is always the same: I brought them all until I found the best. I bought every appliance from A to Izzello up, but the one that gave me the punches and arms in the one I got from Titus. And today I keep fit with the same one I bought two years ago. There isn't another exerciser like Titus IN THE WORLD."

HERMAN SAXON,
[Brother of Arthur Saxon, World's Strongest Man.]

Friend of mine, when I start working on your muscles, you're going to see them GROW. I'm going to put big, solid bands on your chest, your back, your legs. I'm going to build up your biceps to giant size. You'll be proud of your broad, square shoulders, your massive, arching chest, your superb development from head to foot.

Get Out the Bathing Suit and See Her S-t-r-e-t-c-h

You won't be ashamed to step out in a bathing suit *this* summer. Those big, bulging muscles are going to fill it out until it s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-s. You'll be a model for a sculptor when you step out on the beach. You're going to draw a lot of admiration and envy when you walk through the crowd.

Only Titus Gives You This Super-Strength

Just give me a few minutes a day in your own home—that's all I want. I'll pile those muscles on so fast you'll wonder where they came from. And I'll not only increase their SIZE. I'll pack them full of the SPEED that makes CHAMPIONS. I'll give you that marvelous power of MUSCLE CONCENTRATION—the secret of SUPER-HUMAN strength that is *exclusive* with Titus Training.

MY method is *scientific*. That's why it accomplishes more in WEEKS than other systems accomplish in MONTHS. Send for my big BOOK that tells *how*. I'll send it to you FREE.

Wear This Medal

Strong men all over the world wear it. Made of solid statuary bronze and given to you free. Mail coupon for full details.

FREE Amazing New Book "Miracles in Muscle"

Send along the coupon NOW. Or write your name on a piece of paper or a postcard and put it in the mail. Do it NOW. My big new book is so good that you owe it to yourself to read it without a moment's delay. Man, if you want to see some astounding demonstrations of muscle-building—if you want PROOF that Titus Training will make YOU a giant for strength, get this wonderful book of mine. It's yours FREE — no strings to it, no obligation.

TITUS
Dept. K-128
105 E. 13th St.,
New York City

Dear Titus: Sure, I'll be glad to have a copy of that big new Book of yours. Send it FREE.

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....State.....

The One and Only **TITUS** 105 E. 13th St. New York City

Advertisement for the Titus Training system, *Physical Culture*, July 1928.

goal of this corps would be to defend the nation from spies and saboteurs rather than to be soldiers on the front lines in Europe. Regardless, the suggestion is made that Rogers has been transformed into something superhuman, an American *übermensch*.

In a much later retelling of the origin story in *CA 109* by Stan Lee/Jack Kirby (January 1969), Rogers, who in this version is subjected to Reinstein's "potent, invisible vita-rays"

Advertisement for the Charles Atlas Dynamic Tension System, *Pep Comics*, October 1942.

which activate the super-serum that had been injected into his system, is hailed as "the first of an army to come — an army of the most perfect physical specimens on earth" (Lee, 15). Written nearly twenty-five years after the end of the war (that is to say, with the historical hindsight of not only the war and its outcome but also of the atrocities of the Holocaust), the story is historically revised to suggest that the initial plan was to create a new breed of super-soldiers to defeat Hitler's armies. The vita-ray, a space age addition to the plot, perhaps had

less humble origins: in the 1930s and 1940s Vita-Ray was a face cream of dubious benefits containing Vitamin D (purportedly equal to receiving the vitamin-enriched rays of the sun); its ads touted its "scientifically-proven" ability to fight wrinkles as well as rickets and other ailments. Similarly the early twentieth century was replete with advertisements for ray-emitting devices, such as the Renulife Electric Company's Violet Ray, which promised to "reach every nerve cell, fibre and part of [the] body" by "enriching and purifying" the blood with "a flood of oxygen, giving added vitality and strength."

Elated with the success of his project, Reinstein speculates on its eugenic potential beyond mere military superiority: "Think what this will mean to our nation! Think what it can one day mean to the world! My serum will virtually wipe out disease ... weakness ... infirmity!" The professor notes that the new Steve Rogers is "not super human — but has become a nearly perfect human being! He personifies the ideal of *mens sana in corpore sano* — a sound mind in a sound body!" (Lee, *CA 109*, 16). Perhaps unsurprisingly, this firm affirmation in this later version that Rogers was not superhuman but "nearly perfect" distances Captain America from any tinge of the quest for the *übermensch*. In this telling it is Steve Rogers who vows to "dedicate myself to fighting — to destroying the enemies of liberty" and seemingly undertakes the role of Captain America on his own, although advised by the government to keep his actual identity a secret (Lee 17).

In *Captain America King-Size Special* #1 (January 1971) the origin story, again told by Stan Lee/Jack Kirby, changes once again: Professor Reinstein has been recast as the somewhat younger Dr. Erskine, the vita-rays are unmentioned, and the experiment's end goal is to create "an army of fighting men such as the world has never known! His reflexes, his physical condition, his courage, will be second to none" (Lee 4). Notably, this version ignores the changes to Rogers's mental faculties — he is touted as merely a "new champion, a new defender, born in an hour of need — destined to be a living symbol of the glory that is America." The revision of the narrative, from that provided prior to the Second World War, a period in which the immediate threat to democracy appeared much more serious, to that offered during the Vietnam era, when the purpose was far less clear, is noteworthy: his origin is not to better humankind, but to be merely one of an army of similarly enhanced soldiers. He assumes the role of Captain America not through Professor Reinstein/Erskine, or on his own volition, but on the orders of "the high command" (Lee, *Captain America King-Size Special 1*, 6).

The origin story provided in *CA 255* (as told by Roger Stern and drawn by John Byrne) adds considerable revisionist details: "Reinstein" is revealed to be a cover for the biochemist Dr. Abraham Erskine; Rogers is injected with the super-serum, given an additional dose of the serum orally, and is subsequently subjected to the Vita-Ray. Rogers undergoes physical training and studies military strategy, which he later learns is preparation for him to become Captain America to fight the scourge of Europe, the Red Skull (remarkably, the Red Skull — conceived as the perfect Nazi — was not a eugenically or genetically modified character, unlike Fawcett's Captain Nazi; his build was much like that of Hitler himself). As a creation of the United States government, Captain America reflects the similar and contemporaneous steps taken in an effort to "improve" the genetic stock of the nation (which unfortunately often involved negative eugenics, such as the forced sterilization of those deemed unfit for procreation).[5] These revisionist accounts, with the exception of *Truth*, present the origin story in a manner that negates the historical record of the nation's interest in eugenics. Eugenics, however, was not the only link to the Third Reich downplayed in *Captain America.*

Advertisement for the Renulife Violet Ray, *Physical Culture*, September 1919.

Saboteurs and Profiteers

In many ways the fantasy of the Golden Age *Captain America* series — a pre-war propagandistic narrative in which the Nazis were perceived by everyone as threats to American interests and ideology, was itself a reflection of middle-class naïveté in regards to the nation's involvement with those deemed our mortal enemies. Sabotage, a word which evoked a fear and public panic analogous to that of terrorism today, dominated the press in the buildup to the war, with Franklin D. Roosevelt and FBI director J. Edgar Hoover set to ferret out these rogue elements, perceived as Germans or German-Americans, from American life.

Simon and Kirby were of course well aware of the existence of Nazi sympathizers; Simon acknowledged that the character Captain America was created as a response to those against America's involvement in the war and against those "who really opposed what Cap stood for" (Wright 36).[6] In many of the stories, such as "Killers of the Bund" (1941), the duo battles a Fifth Column group not unlike the German-American Bund (outlawed in December of that year); unsurprisingly, one of the Fifth Column members is named Fritz, most likely (although a common German name) a nod to Fritz Julius Kuhn (1896–1951), the notorious leader of the German-American Bund publicly acknowledged as "America's Fuhrer" and the nation's most anti–Semite figure (in 1939 some 20,000 Nazi sympathizers, including 1150 guards in full Nazi regalia, attended a "German Day" rally in Madison Square Garden at which Kuhn received a standing ovation). Through the character Heinrich Shmidt, a "good American citizen" who is assaulted after refusing to join the Bund on the grounds that he will "have nothing to do with an organization that aims to destroy the country," the story didactically shows that not all German-Americans are evil; as Cap tells Bucky, "I've found German-American people to be very nice" (Simon, *CAC* 5, 2).[7]

Like many Americans, the creators of Captain America made the erroneous assumption that only German-Americans were suspect in having ties to Nazi Germany prior to 1941; one needed to look no further than the daily financial report of the Stock Exchange. While the majority of Americans and American companies, rightfully, were politically and morally opposed to the Third Reich, it cannot be denied that a number of America's largest and most powerful corporations — IBM, DuPont, Standard Oil, General Electric, and Union Carbide, just to name a few — garnered enormous profits from Germany in the 1930s; DuPont and Standard Oil Company, notably, were linked to the German chemical conglomerate I.G. Farben, the producer of Zyklon B, the gas used against those imprisoned in the concentration camps. In the pages of the comics, it is Captain America and Bucky against "all enemies of Liberty," most of who were German spies and saboteurs intent on destroying American ammunitions plants; in actuality it was often American companies, such as General Electric (which had formed a cartel with the German steel company Krupp), that had been instrumental in enabling the Nazi war machine, often supplying parts and know-how for German tanks and aircraft (Archer, *Wall Street, passim*).

Yet the general public, largely unaware of such nefarious transactions, were awash in the patriotic buildup for the war. Captain America and Bucky invited its readers to join the Sentinels of Liberty, their fan club of "10,000 red-blooded young Americans in a gallant crusade against the spies and traitors who attempt treason against our nation (Simon, *CAC 5*)." In reality not all such patriotic groups were as committed to the Constitution as one would assume. The American Liberty League, founded in 1934 and financially supported by some of the nation's leading banking institutions and corporations (some who had business dealings

with Germany), was allegedly established in part to fund the Business Plot, a clandestine and overtly fascist plan to overthrow the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, return the country to the gold standard and to eliminate what these corporations viewed as costly and unnecessary New Deal reforms (Archer, *The Plot, passim*). Similarly many of America's most revered figures of the period, such as Henry Ford and Charles Lindbergh, recently have been criticized, justifiably, for their anti–Semitic rhetoric and for their admiration of the Nazi regime.[8]

The historical evidence of these and other disheartening matters is difficult to refute, and begs the question as to whether comics such as *CA* knowingly presented a different America from the one that actually existed, or if the creators of these books believed a version of reality in which eugenics was a boon to civic virtue and in which no American would knowingly profit from Nazism. As a comic book presumably designed to be devoured by younger Americans of a vastly different generation, however, *CA* cannot be blamed too harshly for not exploring the uncomfortable and often unpalatable realities of American eugenics policies, geopolitical alliances and corporate war profiteering (particularly when those profits are made by trading with the enemy). Good and evil were presented in reductionist terms, and offered little of what contemporary conservatives decry as moral relativism; yet these distinctions were no less blurry in pre-war America as they are today: war, as always, is business. *CA* was not merely escapist fantasy, but utopian literature that envisioned a morally absolute reality, an America in which the promise of liberty and justice for all was defended with fist and shield.

Notes

1. The title of this essay refers to the slogan of the American physical culture promoter and publisher Bernarr Macfadden, who offered certificates featuring this phrase to those who completed his exercise course. Joe Simon worked for Macfadden Publications. The author would like to thank Robert Hack and Caterina Y. Pierre for their generous assistance in the completion of this article.

2. For more on the eugenics movement in America, see: Edwin Black, *War against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003); Elof Axel Carlson, *The Unfit: A History of a Bad Idea* (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Cold Spring Harbor Press, 2001); Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Diane B. Paul, *The Politics of Heredity: Essays on Eugenics, Biomedicine, and the Nature-Nurture Debate* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); and Steven Selden, *Inheriting Shame: The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999).

3. Emory Stephen Bogardus, *A History of Social Thought* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1922), 331–332. Bogardus also noted that "the conclusions are obvious that the dysgenic effects of war are far more potent than eugenic gains, and that the eugenic advantages may be acquired in other ways than by propagating war" (332).

4. Bernarr Macfadden, *Macfadden's Encyclopedia of Physical Culture, Volume V* (New York: Physical Culture, 1912), 2416. Macfadden's belief that his physical culture movement was part of a larger eugenics agenda is supported by comments he made such as, "[Eugenics] is a big and splendid program, and there is no doubt that the large and growing host of physical culturists throughout the world will do more than any other force toward bringing about this great result" (2416).

5. For more on forced sterilization of those deemed "unfit," see the above works on eugenics, as well as Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 1–10, passim; and Harry Bruinius, *Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity* (New York: Knopf, 2006), passim.

6. Joe Simon, quoted in Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 36.

7. The story predated the "Christmas Declaration by Men and Women of German Ancestry," a full-page statement that appeared in the *New York Times* and nine other newspapers at the end of 1942. Written by

the journalist Dorothy Thompson (1893–1961), the anti–Nazi declaration was signed by fifty notable German-Americans, including George Herman "Babe" Ruth (*New York Times* 28 December 1942, p. 13).

8. For more on these connections, see: Max Wallace, *The American Axis: Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, and the Rise of the Third Reich* (New York: St. Martin's, 2003); Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001); and David M. Friedman, *The Immortalists: Charles Lindbergh, Dr. Alexis Carrel, and Their Daring Quest to Live Forever* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

References

Archer, Jules. *The Plot to Seize the White House.* New York: Skyhorse, 2007 [1973].

Bogardus, Emory Stephen. *A History of Social Thought.* Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1922.

Jordan, David Starr. *The Human Harvest: A Study of the Decay of Races Through the Survival of the Unfit.* Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907.

Macfadden, Bernarr. *Macfadden's Encyclopedia of Physical Culture* (Volume V). New York: Physical Culture, 1912.

Gerber, Steve, Sal Buscema, and Mike Esposito, et al. *Captain America 225*. New York: Marvel Comics (November 1978).

Lee, Stan, and Jack Kirby, et al. *Captain America* 109 (January 1969).

_____. *Captain America King-Size Special #1* (January 1971).

Simon, Joe, and Jack Kirby, et al. *Captain America 1* (March 1941).

_____. *Captain America 5* (August 1941).

Stern, Roger, John Byrne, and Frank Miller, et al. *Captain America 255*. New York: Marvel (March 1981).

Wright, Bradford W. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Sixty-Five Years of Guilt Over the Death of Bucky

ROBERT G. WEINER

> Captain America had blood on his hands, yet by virtue of being himself, he had the capacity to do great and noble things for a world that desperately needed him.
>
> — *David Zimmerman*

Introduction

According to Elaine Scarry, "war in its formal structure is a contest," and its central activity is "injuring." War is a "shared activity" in which the "participants must work to out-injure each other" (Scarry 81, 88–89, 111). In the case of World War II, the contest was between the Axis (the bad guys) and the Allied Powers (the good guys), and comics showed this contest in fantastic, brightly illustrated stories, in which the superheroes beat the Axis powers. Although, in real war, death and injury affect both sides, Captain America and the other superheroes always vanquished the forces of evil, and their adventures made life a little more bearable for those in the service during the war. However, even in the comics, there are times when death came to the good guys, most notably, and tragically, when Captain America's partner, Bucky, was killed, near the end of World War II.

Using comics and graphic novels, as well as psychiatric, psychological, and other relevant professional writings as primary source material, this essay examines how Captain America deals with the loss of his partner, Bucky Barnes.[1] It discusses how various writers have dealt with Captain America's trauma and feelings of guilt, spanning the entire length of Captain America's career, from the Golden Age of comics, to the recent *Winter Soldier* storyline and the subsequent resurrection of Bucky.

Tragedy, Trauma, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

As the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders* points out, trauma is often experienced when someone has "witnessed or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death ... or [there was] a threat to the physical integrity of self or others; the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (467, quoted in Grinage 2402). Andrew Slaby says that trauma is experienced after witnessing a dreadful "event that is generally outside the range of usual human experience" (15).

Hundreds of writers and artists have told Captain America's story over the years, which

has caused some continuity errors, but in many of these stories, Captain America has been portrayed as suffering from disorders such as anxiety, depression, and, most importantly, survivor's guilt. All of these can be symptoms of PTSD, which, according to Grinage, is "an anxiety disorder that occurs following exposure to a traumatic event" (2401). (Understandably, it has been documented that some who survived the Nazi Holocaust have experienced a form of survivor's guilt.)

Despite the presence of some continuity errors, in this essay we view all of the writings about Captain America as a coherent whole. Also, numerous people (besides Steve Rogers) have donned Captain America's costume; there have been several different Buckys and several versions of the Red Skull (Captain America's main nemesis). However, in this essay, we are concerned with the classic Captain America, aka Steve Rogers, and his partner, Bucky, aka James Buchanan Barnes (Olshevsky, Morales, Weiner).

The Classic Captain America

The classic Captain America was born when young Steve Rogers, who wanted to serve his country in the armed forces, was rejected because he was physically unfit for duty. However, he was asked to volunteer for a special, top-secret program, Operation Rebirth, which was under President Roosevelt's supervision. Rogers had no idea what this program was, but he was told that he would be serving his country in a time of need, and he agreed to volunteer for the program. Dr. Abraham Erskine (code named Professor Reinstein) had created a formula for a "super soldier" potion which he gave to Rogers. Reinstein reassured young Rogers by saying, "Don't be afraid son, you are about to become one of America's saviors," and when Rogers drank the potion, his scrawny physique was changed into that of an ideal military soldier. The goal was to build a whole army of super soldiers, and Rogers was to be the "first of a corps of super-agents whose mental and physical ability will make them a terror to spies and saboteurs" (Kirby, *Visionaries* 27–28).

When Rogers ingested the formula, and his body began to change into that of a perfect man, one of Hitler's secret agents somehow managed to witness the experiment. He pulled out a gun, and shouting "Death to the Dogs of Democracy," shot and killed the scientist (Kirby, *Visionaries* 29), who had never written down his findings because he feared that his notes might get into the wrong hands. Therefore, the Operation Rebirth formula died with him. At this point, one of the generals told Rogers, "You're the only one we've got.... You were intended to be only the first of many. Now you're it. You're the one man we have and we need to utilize you as effectively as we can." Rogers was given a costume, and told,

> We're giving you an alter ego, a symbolic identity. When you don this uniform ... you'll no longer be a private citizen. You'll be America herself. You'll be Captain America. You'll give this country a rallying point.... And you'll give old Adolf something to think about" [White 30].

This statement to Captain America contains a number of implications. First, Rogers is no longer Steve Rogers; Captain America is now the reality and Steve Rogers is now the alter ego. "The simple man that was Steve Rogers died. In his place was born a new being ... an inspirational symbol of the glory that is America" (Ross 4). When Captain America was told that he was to give Hitler something to think about, the concept of war as a contest was implicitly stated. Captain America was then put undercover as a private in the U.S. Army, and was stationed at Camp Lehigh, Virginia.[2]

Captain America and Bucky Meet and Bond

According to the *Essential Handbook of the Marvel Universe Vol. 3*, James Buchanan Barnes, Bucky, was an orphan whose mother died when he was a child and whose father died in an accident at Camp Lehigh. After the accident, Bucky was adopted as the Camp Lehigh mascot, and became one of the most trusted individuals in the camp (Sanderson). He struck up a friendship with Private Rogers, and one evening, while searching for Rogers, he came upon him changing into his Captain America uniform. At first, Captain America, obviously stunned, did not know what do, but Bucky responded with: "Gosh, Cap.... There's only one thing you can do! You've gotta let me share your mission.... I'll be your partner! You've got to Cap" (Lee,[3] *ToS 63* 8). Because Bucky was "fast-witted and clever" and was "quick at adapting himself to conditions as he found them," Captain America trained Bucky, and gave him a costume (White 32). Captain America saw "something of himself" in young Bucky. The lad had a sizzling spirit that would be a boon to Captain America during his various missions, and Bucky also had a "sense of duty" for the country and the war cause (Isabella 10). Thus was born one of the most lasting partnerships of World War II and in all of comicdom. Bucky became Rogers' ward, and with Captain America became part of the Invaders group. In addition to adventures with Captain America, Bucky formed his own groups, including the Young Allies, Kid Commandos, and the Liberty Legion, to help fight the war.

From the very beginning of their relationship, Captain America showed numerous times that he cared for Bucky very deeply. For example, during their very first encounter with the Red Skull (*CAC 1*), he left Bucky behind at the Camp in order to protect him. Of course, Bucky ended up getting captured, and, of course, Captain America saved the day (Simon). In *CAC 2*, when Rogers heard that the Wax Man had captured Bucky, he responded by saying "What? Bucky Gone?," and when he was shown a wax mask of Bucky's face, he was horrified, saying "GULP! Just like him." Once he got into costume, he cried out, "Don't Worry Bucky, I'm Coming After You," and waving a defiant fist, he yelled, "Okay Mister Wax Man, You Asked For It!" (Simon, 9). In another instance, Captain America followed the trail of a serial killer, without Bucky, and Bucky responded sarcastically, "Without Me? What a Pal." Then, when Dr. Grimm kidnapped Bucky, Captain America yelled, from behind a glass cage, "You'll settle with me yet if you dare harm that boy!" (Kirby *CAC 3,* 14, *CAC 4,* 10).[4]

The Tragic Event, Trauma, and Cap's Future

Toward the end of the war, in late 1945, Captain America and Bucky encountered Nazi scientist Baron Zemo,[5] who had stolen an experimental plane from the Allies. Zemo strapped them to the plane, and was going to send them to their deaths on the plane itself. They managed to escape from the plane, but they could not stop it from taking off. Captain America and Bucky grabbed a motorcycle and chased after the plane. With the plane about to explode, they jumped off the bike, and ran toward the plane, but only Bucky manages to grab hold of it—just as it exploded. Bucky was killed instantly and Captain America was thrown into the ocean, where he went into a state of suspended animation that lasted for several decades[6] (Lee *Avengers 4;* Kirby *Visionaries*; Sanderson; Thomas *Avengers 56*; Waid; White 32–34). This incident shaped Captain America's career more profoundly than any other single event, and various writers have shown the different ways in which he dealt with this tragic event.

The pivotal story takes place in *Avengers 4,* decades after the incident with Baron Zemo. The Sub-Mariner, Prince Namor, was chiding some Eskimos for worshiping a frozen figure as a god. Namor, who had lost his mind, didn't remember much about his past, and didn't recognize the figure as Captain America, threw the figure into the sea. While traveling in their submarine, the Avengers group of superheroes came across the figure and let it thaw out. When Captain America awoke, the first words out of his mouth were, "Bucky, Bucky Look Out" (Lee 2–5; Kirby *Visionaries*). His first thought was of Bucky, his adopted son and partner, and, immediately, he began to blame himself for Bucky's death. Seeing Bucky blown to pieces had been a traumatic event for Captain America:

> [He] emerged with survivor's guilt and an inability to adapt to a changing, youth driven society[7] ... [the] new characterization, Captain America blaming himself for Bucky's death, did the trick.... [It helped make] Captain America the most popular hero in years [Ro 82–83].

The "super soldier" formula had not only kept Captain America alive, but it also had kept him looking young, and he was welcomed into the Avengers' ranks at once. One modern interpretation has Captain America experiencing a dreamscape just before he wakes up and joins the Avengers. In the dreamscape, he lives out his life, through old age and death, with Bucky at his side (Waid *Captain America: Red White and Blue*).[8]

Captain America solo stories started appearing in *ToS,* and he eventually got his own book. Lee and co-creator Jack Kirby, who drew the Avengers and the "new" adventures of Captain America, had hit upon a plot device that worked so effectively that many future writers built upon it again and again.

At least two to eight percent of people deployed on military missions and combat operations experience some kind of depression and stress when they come back from the fighting (Pearn). Certainly Captain America had seen his fair share of people dying during and after the war. But for him, there was no civilian life to return to. He tried, but he could never lead a "normal" life as Steve Rogers. He was Captain America, and there was no other life for him. However, this does not mean that he was void of emotion or didn't experience the feelings that normal people did. In fact, as the forthcoming examples show, his feelings of depression and survivor's guilt were probably deeper than those of a normal person.

Examples: Cap's Denial (Avoidance of Reality)

One of the signs of PTSD is "avoidance" of the reality of the event and of others (Harvard 4–5). Survivor's guilt is a horrible thing (Holleman), and those who suffer from it feel "shame at having survived and with that shame the sense that one's experience is thereby inauthentic, less true than the reality" (Bernstein 2). In *Avengers 56*, Captain America, filled with self-doubt and loathing over Bucky's death, wants to use Dr. Doom's time machine to go back to the pivotal moment when he and Bucky were trying to stop Baron Zemo from using the experimental plane. He could not bring himself to believe that Bucky was dead, and asked, "How can I be sure he's dead? ... If somehow I survived it, couldn't he have too?" (Thomas 5). Here, Captain America was avoiding the reality of Bucky's death by wanting to go back and "make sure" he really was gone. He hoped that by going back in time he could find a "loophole," a way in which he could change the outcome, or learn that his ward had indeed survived. However, one cannot change history, and using Dr. Doom's time machine, Captain America and the Avengers witnessed a rerun of the traumatic event. Bucky was gone.

For a brief moment, it seemed like Captain America had resigned himself to Bucky's death, saying, "gone forever and that is a fact I'll just have to learn to live with" (Thomas *Avengers 56* 20). But later episodes show that Captain America never did learn to live with Bucky's demise.

Examples: Cap's Exaggerated Sense of Responsibility

In *ToS 59*, Captain America tortured himself by looking at old pictures of himself and Bucky (Lee 3), and in Issue *72*, the Scarlet Witch was prophetic when she said, "[Captain America] blames himself for his young partner's fate ... and such a man can never forgive himself." Captain America expressed his regret at having taken Bucky on the mission with Baron Zemo, saying that he could save countless other lives but was "unable to save the life of his own partner" (2). In another instance, the Sub-Mariner told Captain America that he would have to live with the fact that Bucky was dead (Austen), but Captain America was still in denial, and still felt as though he should have done something to prevent the tragedy. All of these examples (and there are many others) show that Captain America had not recovered from the trauma of Bucky's death and that he was still suffering from survivor's guilt. Probably, because of his feelings of guilt, he took personal responsibility for the actions of other youngsters who donned costumes and wanted to fight the good fight against evil.[9]

When a member of the Young Avengers, a group of teenagers, donned a modified Bucky outfit, Captain America was enraged. Jessica Jones, a newspaper reporter, told her boss, Jonah Jameson, that Captain America would not approve of the Young Avengers saying, "He would never put another kid's life in danger." Then, when Jessica talked with Captain America, he said, "[I] will not allow another child to get hurt or worse by trying to follow my example," and when she implied that Captain America was not responsible for the actions of others, he said, "Yes, I am. I was then [with Bucky] and I am now..." (Heinberg, *Young Avengers 1* np). Captain America also said that he planned to shut down this group of upstarts. When he first met Rick Jones, a young friend of the Avengers and the Hulk, he thought Rick was Bucky, projecting his wishful thinking upon the boy.[10] Rick wanted to be an official member of the Avengers, but Captain America was against it, and he was horrified when Rick donned one of Bucky's old uniforms. In *Avengers 7* he said (to Rick),

> I said take it off. Don't ever call yourself my partner again! I lost my partner!! I'll never forgive myself for letting it happen!! And I'll never let it happen again. Do you think I could bear it if anything happened to you too. I'll never have another partner! I won't be responsible for another life — NEVER!! [Lee 6].

Villains (including the dreaded Zemo) often kidnapped Rick to get at Captain America and the Avengers. Captain America's vehement responses to this are evidence enough to show that Captain America felt responsible for these youngsters, as a result of the responsibility he felt for Bucky's death. Eventually, he allowed Rick to don the Bucky costume, and help fight the bad guys, but that did not last very long.

Captain America had always been somewhat of a loner, and it was difficult for anyone, other than Bucky, to get close to him. The trauma of Bucky's death caused him to keep others at arm's length even more. His various romances had been nothing but "roller coasters," until he started to fall in love with espionage agent Sharon Carter. But, even then, he refused to let their relationship blossom into something more permanent. He wanted Sharon to leave her job so that her life would not be in danger, but because she believed in what she was

doing, she had a hard time doing this. Eventually, she agreed to take an office job, but when she tried to stop Captain America from stepping into a trap, he rejected her because he thought she had lied to him about putting herself in danger again (Lee, *Captain America 123–124*).

Another pivotal example occurred in *CA 168*, when a madman took a shot at Captain America and his partner, the Falcon. Captain America did not want the Falcon to get involved, for fear he would get hurt or killed. Therefore, he told the Falcon that he should get lost, that he would be useless in a fight, and then went off after the killer alone. However, the Falcon did not buy into Captain America's tough talk. He followed Captain America, and found him just as he was about to be dropped into a vat of Adhesive X. As it turned out, the son of Baron Zemo, Zemo II, was after Captain America because he believed Captain America was responsible for his father's death (Lee, *Avengers 15*). In the end, Zemo II, who knew that trying to take on Captain America might turn out badly, but whose thirst for revenge was too powerful, fell into the vat. Again, Captain America felt responsible for the outcome. When the Falcon told him it was not his fault, Captain America said: "Say it again Sam — Say it isn't my fault! Maybe the second time, I'll believe you" (Thomas *CA 168* np).

What Captain America failed to realize was that Bucky chose to be Captain America's partner. He knew the risks of being associated with Captain America, and of fighting crime and the Axis powers. And, he chose to jump on the experimental plane to stop it from being used by the Nazis. Sharon Carter, the Young Avengers, The Falcon, and Rick Jones also knew the risks when they chose to align themselves with Captain America. But Captain America chose to retain responsibility for all of them so that he could wallow in his own misery, and never again get close to another person. In some ways, one could argue that Captain America used Bucky's death as an excuse to keep people at a distance.

Grief, Fear, and Morality

Theologian C. S. Lewis talked about grief being a form of fear. Not only did Captain America fear that someone associated with him would be tortured or killed, but he also feared getting on with his life. Captain America threw himself into his missions, but as a civilian he was a nowhere man. No matter how he tried to live as Steve Rogers, he never succeeded. His fears, melancholy, and depression ran deep in his psyche (Whybrow, XV, 1–3). Captain America's survivor's guilt and PTSD were based largely on the fact that the deaths of the Bucky and others had "transgressed an aspect of a moral system, and thereby caused harm" (Price 161). Price further states, "A behavior may be characterized as wrongdoing when it violates that level of the moral system which prescribes it" (160).

The "senseless" death of any innocent, or non-innocent, went against Captain America's personal moral code, and therefore was ethically unacceptable under any circumstances. Captain America displayed the four cognitive dimensions, or components, of guilt, which according to Kubany, are:

A. perceived responsibility for causing a negative outcome
B. perceived lack of justification for actions taken
C. perceived violation of values
D. a belief that one knew what was going to happen before the outcome was observed.

Bucky's death, Rick's kidnapping, and even the supposed death of Zemo II (not the death of Zemo I, which will be discussed later) all somehow violated the above components.

Captain America felt responsibility for these events, and to him the outcome was morally reprehensible. His values were violated by these deaths. He believed that by being associated with him, the people he loved (and even those he disliked) were somehow going to be in danger. Captain America blamed himself for deaths and dangers he considered avoidable. Although Captain America exaggerated his responsibility, his survivor's guilt syndrome permeated all aspects of his life (Bernstein, Nader, Kubany, Peters, Porot, Price).

Villains knew all too well about Captain America's distraught feelings over his partner's death, and sought to take advantage of them. In *ToS 89*, the Red Skull created a robotic version of Bucky, which, when fighting Captain America, spewed all sorts of accusations at him. The robot accused Captain America of being jealous of him, and said it was payback time for leaving Bucky on the plane. However, Captain America recognized that it was just a robot built by the Red Skull and smashed it to pieces (Lee).

Another example, from *CA 131,* involved a Nazi, Baron Strucker, who found a boy who had amnesia and looked an awful lot like Bucky Barnes. The Baron released a news story about finding Bucky alive, and Captain America, who was overjoyed at hearing this, went to find him. Meanwhile, Strucker had brainwashed the boy into believing he really was Captain America's long-lost Bucky. Later, while fighting Strucker, Captain America stated, "I'm in this to STAY till I learn the truth about Bucky" (14). Then, with the help of the new "Bucky," Captain America defeated Strucker. But things were not what they appeared to be; there was a more sinister plan at work. When, in *CA 132*, the press and camera crews welcomed Captain America and "Bucky" back, the evil scientist, MODOK, and his crew from A.I.M. were watching very carefully. MODOK had Dr. Doom create an android of Bucky, and when MODOK flipped a switch, the "Bucky" android began to attack Captain America, who asked, "Bucky is it because of what happened ... years ago? Do you still blame me for not saving [you] from that doomed plane? You can never blame me as much as I've blamed myself!" At the pivotal moment, even an android of Bucky could not bring himself to kill Captain America. It had been programmed to take Bucky's place too well, leading Captain America to say, "Not even a replica of my long lost partner could bring himself to harm me" (20).

Examples: Cap's Nightmares and Hallucinations

One could argue that Captain America was suffering from what Sigmund Freud called "war neurosis," described as a "frequent symptom [based] on some terrible event such as the mutilation or death of a comrade which would appear in hallucinations or nightmares" (quoted in Breger, 252). In 1895, Freud, writing in *Studies in Hysteria,* stated that trauma can be associated with:

> Painful emotion, moral disgust, fright, anxiety, shame, ... suffering, mortification, tormenting secrets, and confessions, irreparable loss of a loved person, severely paralyzing effects such as fright, ... [reactions from] tears to acts of revenge ... [quoted in Breger 118].

When Captain America mistook Rick Jones for Bucky, he was hallucinating, and as time went on, he continued to have nightmares and hallucinations. The previous and following examples bear this out.

In the Alternate Universe story, *Cap Lives*, Captain America experienced a supposed dream within a dream. He started out by dreaming about how he lost Bucky; then, in that

dream, he dreamt that he was awakened by the Nazis,[11] at which time he began screaming, "You can't kill Bucky, I won't let...." The Nazi standing by told him that Bucky was "long dead," which caused Captain America to go wild and attack, screaming, "You killed him, YOU KILLED BUCKY!" After he was subdued with drugs by the Nazi, he continued to dream about Bucky's tragic end. In this phase of the dream, Bucky was very much alive and part of the resistance. But, later in the dream, Bucky was taken by the Red Skull, and Captain America and the Red Skull were in deep battle. During the battle, Captain America yelled, "You won't kill Bucky." Eventually, Captain America woke up from this nightmare, and saw the Avengers standing over him (Gibbons *Captain America Vol. 4: 17–20*).[12]

In another dream sequence, Captain America saw a giant Baron Zemo towering over an industrial plant that had Nazi zombies coming out of it (Casey, *Avengers Earth's Mightiest Heroes 4*). Captain America's lust for revenge against Zemo for Bucky's death permeates Casey's whole story. In *Avengers 15*, Zemo kidnapped Rick Jones, and then was killed when an avalanche of stones fell on him. For a brief moment, Captain America was at peace, and said, "You can rest easier now Bucky.... Your death has been AVENGED." But this moment of peace was very short (Lee 20). Captain America's nightmares were not confined to Bucky and Zemo; they included some of his other friends. In *CA 122*, he had a horrible nightmare in which the Red Skull took his love interest, Sharon Carter (Lee *6*). According to Freud and others (Fagan, Grinage, Harvard, Kubany, Nadler, Price), Captain America's frequent nightmares, flashbacks, and recurrent reliving of the traumatic 1945 event are typical symptoms of survivor's guilt and PTSD.

Examples: Villain's Reactions to Cap's Grief

According to Koenen, "Research had documented the efficacy of psychotherapy and psychopharmacology for treatment of PTSD" (5), and Grinage points out that, "cognitive-behavoir treatment is effective in ameliorating the symptoms of PTSD" (Grinage 2405). After experiencing the most horrible dreams imaginable, including one in which Bucky was a zombie who accused Cap of killing him, Cap realized that he had a problem, and sought professional help. In *CA 107*, he went to see a psychiatrist, Dr. Faustus. However, Dr. Faustus had an agenda of his own; he wanted Captain America to keep experiencing all these horrible events. He wanted to control him and make him his puppet. Therefore, the pills he gave Cap did affect his psyche, but not in a positive way. This issue is one of the most intense Captain America tales ever written. Dr. Faustus attempted to break Captain America's will, and almost succeeded. Finally, Captain America realized that something was wrong, and, after having the drugs analyzed, he confronted Faustus. However, what he was initially made to suffer at Faustus' hands was typical of the survivor's guilt, PTSD, and deep depression syndromes that we have been discussing throughout this essay. After breaking Dr. Faustus' jaw, Captain America, thinking about Bucky, said "That one was for you, old friend" (Lee *20*).

It is as though the villains in Cap's life understood him better than his friends/lovers (Sharon Carter, Nick Fury, the Falcon, the Avengers). They were able to capitalize, time and time again, on his pain and guilt, and they used it as a weapon against him. Another example, which illustrates how well his enemies knew Cap, is shown in *CA 297*. There, the Red Skull allows Cap to relive, once again, the moment of Bucky's death (the one event that has disturbed Captain America more than any other), and then tells Cap:

> ...to all intents and purposes you have truly done what you have dreamed of doing since you were resurrected from an icy grave! You have *redeemed* yourself! You have conquered a lifetime of guilt! You have atoned for the one sin you thought beyond atonement! You have SAVED Bucky Barnes....

He further states that he did this out of respect for Captain America:

> ...But to be worthy of the Red Skull's hatred is to be worthy of his RESPECT as well! There is no man alive I respect more than Captain America ... he will soon die BY MY HAND ALONE ... and I wish him to face death with a heart unstained by guilt! [DeMatteis 20–21].

These comments show how Cap's most fearsome foe understood his psyche and make up much better than his friends did. The Skull still wanted him dead, but dead with a clear conscience, free from blame and anxiety about past failures.

At the hand of the mystical Mister Buda, Captain America experienced a flashback in which Hitler and the Red Skull were beating Bucky. In it, Captain America helped Bucky escape, and they flew out of the bunker together, but then Bucky disappeared and Captain America was left screaming, "Come Back, COME BACK," as Buda sent him on another time traveling adventure (Kirby, *Bicentennial Battles* 9–14). Another time, in *CA 448*, the Red Skull remade Captain America's world through the use of a special Cosmic Cube. In this world, when Captain America and Bucky were fighting Zemo, Captain America saved Bucky from Zemo. Bucky lived through the plane explosion, but his ghost told Captain America that this scenario was wrong and that he must fight the Skull. The ghost said that both Bucky and Captain America's creator, Erskine, were dead, and that was the way it should be (Waid). In *What If 5*, Bucky and Captain America lived through the war, but special agent Sgt. Nick Fury was killed. Rogers became a S.H.I.E.L.D. espionage agent, and Bucky donned Captain America's uniform to become a new Captain America. As fate would have it, Bucky still died just after World War II, while fighting Baron Zemo. No matter the story, Bucky was always destined to be killed. In this case, however, Rogers did not bemoan Bucky's death. He realized that it was not his fault, and asked himself,

> ...Am I really the one who killed him? Maybe I'd best STOP dwelling on those questions! I'd rather think that Buck made his own CHOICE to live the life he did.... And when he saw that his abilities might help a strife torn world ... he offered them and his life freely [179; Glut, *What If 5* 171–180].

In this story, Captain America had a healthy attitude toward Bucky and his death. Of course he was sad about the loss, but he realized that Bucky made the choice to don the outfit of Captain America, and he knew that with it came certain responsibilities and dangers. Bucky gave freely of his life, and it was not Rogers'/Captain America's fault that Bucky died. However, this was an Alternative Universe story, not a part of the regular Marvel continuity.

Bucky Back from the Dead: The Winter Soldier

Comics are fantasy stories that may or may not take place in real cities, like New York or Los Angeles, or in fantasy worlds. Any comic character can be revived from the dead, or transformed in any manner, and comic writers are free to change characters and situations at will. Some stories may turn out to be dreams, or a character long thought dead may turn out to be a clone. What one writer does, another writer might undo, and since there may be literally hundreds of writers who have taken a shot at writing Captain America, Spider-Man, and Superman, there are bound to be some contradictions and continuity problems. Despite this, it is amazing just how well the overall continuity of something like the Marvel Universe,

DC, James Bond, Tarzan, Conan, or other fictional characters holds up. Ultimately, there seems to be an overall concept that works and keeps writers and, more importantly, readers interested. With this introduction, we will present a brief look at recent events in Captain America's life, and present a brief discussion about how the Winter Soldier storyline may impact Captain America's world.

While Captain America had indeed seen Bucky stuck to the experimental plane, the explosion had blown Bucky's body off into the sea, where a certain Russian general, who had nothing but disdain for Captain America, found it. Applying various treatments, he revived Bucky from the dead, wiped his mind and memory clean, and replaced parts of Bucky's[13] that had been blown off. The general turned Bucky into the Winter Soldier, a partly robotic cold war assassin, who could be taken in and out of stasis as needed.

In the beginning of the story, because a very wealthy Russian Industrialist desired the Red Skull's Cosmic Cube, he had "Winter Soldier" assassinate the Skull.[14] Because parts had been blown off, he was now partly robotic. The Russian industrialist planned to bring back the glorious Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) by using the Cosmic Cube and the Winter Soldier. When Captain America realized that the Winter Soldier might indeed be his long lost beloved Bucky, he was understandably horrified. However, he decided that if the Winter Solider was Bucky Barnes, he was not responsible for becoming the monster that the Russians programmed him to be.

Meanwhile, the Cosmic Cube had been manipulating events on its own, and Captain America was having horrible dreams and memories that were very vivid. But they did not always depict things the way Captain America remembered them (e.g., he did not remember seeing Zemo torture Bucky mercilessly). Then, when he went back to the castle where he had had the showdown with Zemo, and lost Bucky, he saw, heard, and felt the Nazi soldiers coming at him.

This type of flashback trauma and hallucination are in line with the symptoms of PTSD, as discussed earlier. Castle points out that people with this disorder may "experience hallucinations and flashbacks, and in extreme cases, physically reenact the trauma as if in the midst of it" (160). Certainly this is the case throughout the *Winter Soldier* storyline.

When Captain America and the Winter Soldier first came in contact with each other, Captain America yelled, "Bucky," but the Soldier responded, "Who the Hell is Bucky?" The Winter Soldier had no memory or understanding of his past. When the final showdown between Captain America and The Soldier occurred, Captain America tried to convince Bucky of who he really was, and, when The Soldier was about to shoot him, Captain America just stood there saying, "shoot me if you truly don't know me ... then just do it...." The Soldier hesitated, but did shoot at Captain America, who used his shield to dodge the bullet. Then, Captain America got the Cube and told the Soldier to remember who he really was. When Bucky began to remember who and what he was, and all the people he had killed while acting as the Soldier, it was too much for him. He told Captain America, "you should've just killed me." He grabbed the Cosmic Cube, and disappeared as Captain America was yelling, "NOOO." Captain America still refused to believe that Bucky was gone, saying," No! He's NOT dead.... He just, he isn't! No Bucky is a survivor ... he's out there somewhere ... I know it." Later, we do see a glimpse of the Winter Soldier at the ruins of Camp Lehigh, with his hands on his head and crying.

In the *Winter Soldier* storyline, as in previous examples, Captain America refused to let the memory of Bucky become tarnished. Perhaps all the grief, denial, depression, and trauma

Captain America suffered turned out to be true, with Bucky now alive (Brubaker *Winter Soldier Vols. 1 & 2*). This, however, does not negate all the PTSD, depression, trauma, and survivor's guilt that Captain America went through.

Captain America: Still the Superhero

However, sometimes Captain America did get a glimpse of hope. In *Marvel Holiday Special 1991*, while spending time serving food to the less fortunate during the holidays, Steve Rogers met Bucky's sister. Bucky never told Captain America about his sister, so this meeting was quite a shock. Captain America went to her home at Christmas to give her an update on her long lost brother; that information was classified, and she had never known what had happened to him. Captain America gave her a piece of one of Bucky's costumes, and filled her in on what had happened to him during the war as his partner. Then, as Captain America was about to leave, she ordered him to, "Go get washed up for dinner young man and I mean NOW." For someone like Captain America, who was used to giving orders, not receiving them, this was quite a surprise, but it was a pleasant one for both him and Bucky's sister. There is some healing in this story and some closure (Kaminski, "Precious Gifts" 48).

There are literally hundreds of stories, and probably thousands of examples,[15] of written dialogue that could be used to describe the various aspects of Captain America's trauma and guilt over Bucky's death. One could write a whole book on this topic, and still not cover it all. We have only scratched the surface, but what we have looked at does illustrate how Captain America felt and how he dealt with his problems. It certainly does fall in line with some of the medical, psychological, and psychiatric thoughts on trauma, PTSD, and survivor's guilt. In this essay, at times, it may seem as if Captain America was being criticized for not accepting the inevitability of Bucky's death, but that is not the case. Despite Captain America's serious personal problems, he never let his pain stop him from doing what had to be done: from saving lives and doing what he believed was right.

As Captain America biographer, Thomas Forget, states, "...what makes Cap a true hero are the heart and mind that drives his perfect body" (5). It was never a question of whether or not to do the right thing, regardless of whatever pain he might feel. Cap transcended his pain and guilt about Bucky's death, and forced himself to keep fighting evil. Unlike Batman or Spider-Man, who donned their costumes and fought crime because of some earlier traumatic event, Captain America's trauma came long after he had begun to fighting the good fight. For this reason, Captain America stands above other superheroes, and is one of the noblest of heroes in fictional literature.

Notes

1. Many of the graphic novels quoted in this book do not have page numbers and will be listed as np.
2. Captain America's origin has been told and retold in numerous sources over the past 65 years. See also Kraft, Nicieza, Stern.
3. In the 1940s, when Marvel icon Stan Lee (then a teenager) started working at Timely Comics, he was most fond of Captain America. Ronin Ro states, "*Captain America* was the most brilliant adventure superhero strip he'd ever seen. He thought those early 'stories were clever [and] the artwork was wonderful.'"
4. Captain America expresses his concern for Bucky in just the first ten issues of these Golden Age comics.

But a few of them are cited as examples to illustrate Captain America's genuine love for Bucky. Bucky reciprocates; when Captain America is believed killed in *CAC5* (14), Bucky is in tears (Kirby).

5. Both Baron Zemo and CA had been at odds for a long time because of the death of Bucky, which was ultimately Zemo's fault. Zemo invented a very strong substance called Adhesive X. During an early battle with Captain America, Zemo's mask got stuck onto his face permanently with Adhesive X.

6. Recently, Captain America discovered the U.S. government may have placed him in suspended animation because they believed that he would be against using atomic bomb (see Austen, *Captain America Vol. 3: ICE*).

7. In the early issues of Avengers, Captain America had a hard time adjusting to modern society after being gone for so long. When he became the leader of the Avengers, one of the members, Hawkeye, taunted him ruthlessly, chiding him for being an "old" codger and comparing him to Methuselah. However, eventually they became the best of friends.

8. See also Austen for another interpretation. Throughout the years many Marvel writers have retold the story of the Avengers finding Captain America. The Captain America and Bucky who were members of the All-Winners Squad of the 1940s and the "Commie Smashers" of the 1950s were two different people taking on the names Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes. See Olshevsky for a thorough analysis of the different versions.

9. Another very important example of Captain America's reliving the experience of Bucky's death occurs in *CA 297* (DeMatteis).

10. Rick Jones has had a long history in the Marvel Universe. He was originally a sidekick of the Hulk and the cause of Bruce Banner's transformation into the behemoth. He briefly fought side by side with Captain America and became a sidekick and bonded with the alien Captain Mar-vell. However, his role in the life of the Avengers and Hulk never stopped.

11. In this story Hitler won and the Red Skull is leader of the world

12. This is another take on the *Avengers 4* tale, see Gibbons, *Captain America Vol. 4; 17, 20* in *Cap Lives*.

13. There is also a subplot involving the "Commie Smasher" Bucky (Jack Monroe of the 1950s). Monroe himself is assassinated by the Winter Soldier. The graves of previous Captain Americas are also desecrated. There is a great deal of background and history in the two volumes of *Winter Soldier* related to Captain America's life.

14. The Skull has died and been resurrected many times. A good villain, like a good hero, never stays dead.

15. There are other recent examples besides *Winter Soldier* that we could examine, such as the recent *Two Americas* and *Captain America Disassembled* storylines where Captain America had to deal with another super soldier type who has a similar resemblance to Bucky.

References

American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manuel of Mental Disorders, 4th ed*. Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2000.

Austen, Chuck, John Ney Rieber, and Jae Lee, et al. *Captain America Vol. 3: Ice*. New York: Marvel, 2003.

Bernstein, J.M. "Bare Life, Bearing Witness: Auschwitz and the Pornography of Horror." *Parallax* 10: 1 (2004): 2–16.

Breger, Louis. *Freud: Darkness in the Midst of Vision*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000.

Brubaker, Ed, and Steve Epting, et al. *Captain America: Winter Soldier Vols. 1 & 2*. New York: Marvel, 2005–2006. (*Captain America Vol. 5: 1–9*, *11–14* come from these volumes.)

Casey, Joe, Scott Kolins, and Morry Hollowell, et al. *Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes*. New York: Marvel, 2005. (*Avengers Earth's Mightiest Heroes 4* is taken from this volume.)

Castle, Lana, and Peter Whybrow. *Bipolar Disorder Demystified: Mastering the Tightrope of Manic Depression*. New York: Marlowe, 2003.

DeMatteis, J.M., Paul Neary, and Roy Richardson, et al. *Captain America 297*. New York: Marvel (September 1984).

Fagen, Nancy, and Kathleen Freme. "Confronting Posttraumatic." *Nursing* 34: 2 (February 2004): 52–53.

Forget, Thomas. *The Creation of Captain America*. New York: Rosen, 2007.

Gibbons, Dave, Lee Weeks, and Joe Quesada, et al. *Captain America Vol. 4: Cap Lives*. New York: Marvel, 2004. (*Captain America Vol. 4: 17*, *20* are taken from this volume.)

Glut, Don, Roy Thomas, and Herb Trimpe, et al. *What If Classic Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 2004. (*What If 5* comes from this volume.)

Goulart, Ron. "Jack Kirby" in *Comics in the Golden Age* 4 (September 1984): 4–10.

Grinage, Bradley D. "Diagnosis and Management of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." *American Family Physician* 68: 12 (December 15, 2003): 2401–2408.

Gruenwald, Mark, Josef Rubinstein, and Peter Sanderson, et al. *Essential Handbook of the Marvel Universe*. New York: Marvel, 2006.
Harmon, Daniel. *The Tortured Mind: The Many Faces of Manic Depression*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1998.
Harvard Men's Heath Watch. "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." *Harvard Men's Health Watch* 7:3 (October 2002): 4–6.
Heinberg, Allan, Jim Cheung, and John Dell, et al. *Young Avengers: Sidekicks*. New York: Marvel, 2006. (*Young Avengers 1* is taken from this volume.)
Holleman, Joe. "Survivor's Guilt." *Everyday Magazine: St. Louis Dispatch*. June 2, 2004.
Isabella, Tony, Bob Ingersoll, and Jim Steranko, et al. *Captain America: Liberty's Torch*. New York: Byron, 1998.
Kaminski, Len, Ron Lim, and James Sanders III, et al. "Precious Gifts" in *Marvel Holiday Special 1991* (December 1991): 42–48.
Kirby, Jack, Joe Simon, and Stan Lee, et al. *Jack Kirby Visionaries Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 2004. (*Captain America Comics 1* and *Avengers 4* are taken from this volume.)
Kirby, Jack, Herb Trimpe, and John Romita, et al. *Captain America: Bicentennial Battles*. New York: Marvel, 2005.
Koenen, Karestan C., Renee Goodwin, and Elmer Struening, et al. "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Treatment Seeking in a National Screening Sample." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 16:1 (February 2003): 5–16.
Kraft, David Anthony, Stan Lee, and Jack Kirby, et al. *Captain America: The Secret Story of Marvel's Star-Spangled Super Hero*. Milwaukee, WI: Ideals, 1981.
Kubany, Edward. "Thinking Errors, Faulty, Conclusions, and Cognitive Therapy for Trauma-Related Guilt." *NCP Clinical Quarterly* 7:1 (Winter 1997). Accessed July 11, 2006, at http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/publications/cq/v7/n1/kubany.html.
Lee, Stan, Gene Colon, and Dick Ayers, et al. *Captain America 131*. New York: Marvel (November 1970).
_____. *Captain America 132*. New York: Marvel (December 1970).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Dick Ayers, et al. *Essential Avengers Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 1999. (*Avengers 4, 7 15* are taken from this volume.)
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Gil Kane, et al. *Essential Captain America Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 2000. (*Tales of Suspense 59, 63, 72, 89* are taken from this volume.)
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Jim Steranko, et al. *Essential Captain America Vol. 2*. New York: Marvel, 2002. (*Captain America 122–124* are taken from this volume.)
Morales, Robert, Kyle Barker, and Wes Abbott, et al. *The Truth: Red White and Black*. New York: Marvel, 2004.
Nadler, Kathleen. "Guilt Following Traumatic Events." Accessed July 11, 2006, at http://www.giftfromwithin.org/html/guilt.html.
Nicieza, Fabian, Kevin Maguire, and Steve Carr, et al. *The Adventures of Captain America 1–4*. New York: Marvel, 1991–1992.
Olshevsky, George, and Tony Futti. *The Marvel Comics Index Vol. 1. 8:A; Heroes From Tales of Suspense Book One: Captain America*. Toronto, Canada: G&T, 1979.
Pearn, J. "Traumatic Stress Disorders: A Classification with Implications for Prevention and Management." *Military Medicine* Vol. 165 (June 2000): 434–40.
Peters, U.H. "Psychological Sequel of Persecution: The Survivor Syndrome." *Fortschritte Neurological Psychiatry* 57:5 (May 1989): 169–191.
Porot, M. A. Couadau, and M. Plenat. *Survivor's Guilt Syndrome*. Annual Medical Psychologists (Paris) 143: 3 (March 1985): 256–62.
Price, Gail M. "Non-Rational Guilt in the Victims of Trauma." *Dissociation* III: 3 (September 1990): 160–164.
Priest, Bart Sears, and Rob Hunter, et al. *Captain America and the Falcon Vol. 1: Two Americas*. New York: Marvel, 2004.
Priest, Joe Bennett, and Jack Jadson, et al. *Avengers Disassembled: Captain America*. New York: Marvel, 2004.
Priest, Joe Bennett, and Andrea Divito, et al. *Captain America and the Falcon Vol. 2: Brothers and Keepers*. New York: Marvel, 2005.
Ro, Ronin. *Tales To Astonish: Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, and the American Comic Book Revolution*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2004.
Ross, Alex, Paul Dini, and Todd Klein. "Origin of Captain America" in *Captain America: Red White and Blue*. New York: Marvel, 2002: 4–5.
Sanderson, Peter, Mark Gruenwald, and Howard Mackie, et al. *Essential Handbook of the Marvel Universe Deluxe Edition Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 2006.
Sanderson, Peter, Mark Gruenwald, and Keith Pollard, et al. *Essential Handbook of the Marvel Universe: Deluxe Edition Vol. 3*. New York: Marvel, 2006.

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body In Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
Simon Joe, and Jim Simon. *The Comic Book Makers*. Lebanon, NJ: Vanguard, 2003.
Simon, Joe, Jack Kirby, and Alex Schomburg, et al. *Captain America: The Classic Years 1*. New York: Marvel, 1998. (*Captain America Comics 1–5* taken from this volume.)
Slaby, Andrew E. *After-shock: Surviving the Delayed Effects of Trauma, Crisis, and Loss*. New York: Villard, 1989.
Stern, Roger, John Byrne, and Joe Rubinstein, et al. *Captain America: War & Remembrance*. New York: Marvel, 1990.
Thomas, Roy, John Buscema, and Stan Lee, et al. *Essential Avengers Vol. 3*. New York: Marvel, 2001. (*Avengers 56* taken from this volume.)
Thomas, Roy, Tony Isabella, and Sal Buscema, et al. *Thunderbolts: Marvel's Most Wanted*. New York: Marvel, 1998. (*Captain America 168* taken from this volume.)
Waid, Mark, Mike Huddleston, and Bill Sienkiewicz, et al. "American Dream" in *Captain America Red White and Blue*. New York: Marvel, 2002: 63–70.
Waid, Mark, Ron Garney, and Scott Koblish, et al. *Operation Rebirth*. New York: Marvel, 1999. (*Captain America 448* taken from this volume.)
Weiner, Robert G. "Okay Axis, Here We Come!" Captain America and the Superhero Teams from World War II and the Cold War" in B.J. Oropeza, ed., *Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Pop Culture*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005: 83–101.
White, Ted. *Captain America: The Great Gold Seal*. New York: Bantam, 1968.
Whybrow, Peter C. *A Mood Apart: Depression, Mania, and Other Afflictions of the Self*. New York: Basic, 1997.
Zimmerman, David A. *Comic Book Character: Unleashing the Hero in All of Us*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2004.

Special thanks to David Postle for the scan of the "Precious Gifts"; John Rhett Thomas and the ezboard Masterworks users (I could not have written this essay without their help in tracking down certain issues); Leonard Harold and Marilyn May for their help in editing and their unique insights; the ILL department at the Mahon Library (Stephanie Zurinski and Nancy Hill); the lovely Conni Kitten, for her editorial advice and support; the TTU Document Delivery department; and John Shelton Lawrence and Shawn Gillen for their insights.

Captain America, Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and the Vietnam Era

Shawn Gillen

Unlike many of his peers — Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, and Daredevil, among many others — Captain America's origin is tied directly to the U.S. Army. Steve Rogers was — at least for decades — America's first and only super-soldier. He fought alongside Allied troops in Europe and the South Pacific during World War II. In the 1950s, he hunted down communist infiltrators for a brief stint on the pages of Atlas Comics' *Young Men*. More recently Cap has cleared debris at the ruins of the World Trade Center, fought domestic terrorists, and, through emanations of his spirit, inspired endangered troops fighting in Afghanistan. These actions are in accord with the intentions of his creators, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, and the fictional masterminds of Operation Rebirth.

Captain America's character has become more complex as he has morphed from being the patriot-solider of the 1940s and 1950s into the self-conscious hero that he became in the 1970s. This essay traces Cap's fraught journey through the 1960s and early 1970s, an era in which he struggled with post-traumatic stress, attempted (on several occasions) to ditch his superhero identity, and finally accepted his role as an American hero and cultural icon.

It is tempting to presume that events of the 1960s — and particularly the Vietnam War — led Captain America to become a more multi-dimensional character. But Captain America's relationship with the American military took a curious and notable lapse during the Vietnam War. Cap makes only two appearances in Vietnam in *ToS* and *CA* one in 1963 and the other in 1971. He also makes an appearance in a fictional country "somewhere in the Orient" called Yahshonka in *ToS 86* (Feb. 1967), but this country appears to be more modeled on the People's Republic of China or North Korea than Vietnam. A group of Asian military leaders — one of whom could pass for Chairman Mao — create a replica Captain America and infiltrate America via some desperate Hollywood hack producers in *CA 106* (Oct. 1968). The unification of Vietnam, however, appears not be one of their goals — or the goal of any of Cap's major and minor villains of the 1960s and '70s.

Captain America's scant engagement in Vietnam is especially curious because his reappearance in the comic industry's Silver Age[1] coincides with key events in the Vietnam War. For example, a Captain America imitator makes his first appearance in the 1960s in *Strange Tales 114* (November 1963).[2] The magazine was published in the same month as John F. Kennedy's assassination and newly sworn-in President Lyndon Johnson's confirmation that the United States would remain committed to Vietnam. Five months later, the authentic Captain America makes his first official appearance in *The Avengers 4* (March 1964). That same

month then U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara gave a major address committing the United States to more military and economic aid to fight communism in Southeast Asia. By the time Cap gets his first solo adventure in *ToS 54*, Congress has passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and America is openly engaging the North Vietnamese.

Given Captain America's history as superhero-soldier in World War II and briefly as a "Commie Smasher" in the early 1950s, committing Cap to the Vietnam War effort would seem like a natural extension of his career. He was exactly the type of hero our national leaders called for and needed to get America behind Vietnam. Captain America's belief in American principles, his leadership style with the Avengers and his penchant for self-sacrifice for the common good all appear to make him the perfect American superhero anti-dote to Communist aggression. In fact Jack Kirby's drawings of Steve Rogers in the 1960s bear a striking resemblance to President John F. Kennedy.[3]

Kennedy knew that volatile times were on the horizon for the United States and he laid the groundwork for the Vietnam War, but it was Steve Rogers/Captain America who struggled to survive the decade. President Kennedy, in his introduction to *Profiles in Courage* (1956), had even predicted that the United States would need politicians and public figures with personal qualities like Captain America's to defeat Communism *while* preserving America's best qualities. "And only the very courageous," Kennedy wrote in *Profiles in Courage*, "will be able to keep alive the spirit of individualism and dissent which gave birth to this nation, nourished it as an infant and carried it through its severest tests upon the attainment of its maturity" (19).

The reasons that *Captain America*'s principal writers of the 1960s and mid 1970s choose to minimize Cap's engagements in Vietnam seem puzzling. He was kept busy instead with his classic World War II foes such as the Red Skull and Baron Zemo, and a collection of new opponents with few real world political ties such as Doctor Faustus, Batroc, the Super-Adaptoid, and the Trapster. Stan Lee would sometimes tell readers that the majority of them simply wanted to read comics with more fantastic plots, and he was only meeting their needs.[4] Some readers concluded that Marvel was simply dodging the fight against Communism and/or disapproved of the presence of American troops in Indochina.

Stan Lee's explanations and readers' assumptions that Marvel was dodging the Cold War do not hold up for long, though. Marvel published — and Stan Lee wrote — many comics that took on Communism and Vietnam throughout the 1960s, and sometimes they seemed as propagandistic as the Captain America comics of the 1940s and early 1950s. Iron Man, for example, with whom Cap shared space in *ToS 59–99*, forged his first armor when he was imprisoned in Vietnam by the communist "warlord" Wong Chu. The Iron Man of the 1960s has no qualms about bringing all of his and America's power to bear on Communism.[5] Even the Norse god Thor fights an intense battle in Vietnam in 1965's *ToS 117*. Nick Fury infiltrates Haiphong in 1967s *Nick Fury and His Howling Commandos King Size Special 3*.[6] As will be discussed later in this essay, Marvel will not publish Captain America's most notable engagement in Vietnam until fifteen years after the fall of Saigon in *The 'Nam 41* (February 1990). This campy fantasy superhero intervention in the war, however, was unpopular with both '*Nam* and Captain America fans.

The range of Cold War and Vietnam oriented comics put out by Marvel still begs the question of why these conflicts are largely missing from the pages of *Captain America* comics of the 1960s and '70s. The answer may be that Captain America's solo comics of this period are a surprisingly integrative study of a character suffering from an array of symptoms that

can be best described as a psychological disorder, in Cap's case Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Cap is so horribly caught in the throes of this malady that he has difficulty understanding and processing the world in which he now lives. One of the great hallmarks of PTSD is self-absorption with the past, a trait Cap displays in almost every issue of his comic in the Vietnam Era. Even when he embarks on adventures set in the 1960s, he often has difficulty separating past from future — and his most cunning enemies find ways to exploit this vulnerability.

Captain America's name, uniform, and actions encourage readers to interpret his actions as emblematic of national identity and ideals. His struggles with PTSD in the 1960s and early 1970s can also be understood in larger terms. Like Cap, veterans of World War II — what Tom Brokaw and others have called "the greatest generation" — struggled to understand cultural, global, and military shifts that occurred first during the Korean War and particularly during the Vietnam Era. Cap's forays into 'Nam in his comics is colored by his experiences in World War II and his untreated PSTD. Where Cap differs from his World War II peers is that they were welcomed home, treated as heroes, and awarded military and civilian honors. These events in themselves do not eviscerate post-traumatic stress but recognition of trauma can help begin the process of healing for veterans.[7] Cap, however, awakes eighteen years after Japan's surrender. He has not experienced the elation of the Allies after the War, the national recognition that greeted returning American vets, or even benefited from the GI bill. In several 1960s issues of *CA*, he watches films and documentaries of his exploits with Bucky. Rather than finding these shows comforting, he finds them incongruous with his feelings that he was responsible for Bucky's death. With no time to reacclimatize himself, Cap bravely assumes his new duties as modern superhero and squad leader for the Avengers. He does so with baggage that makes him vulnerable and causes him considerable personal pain.

PTSD manifests itself in numerous ways and varies from victim to victim. Jonathon Shay, a noted author about PTSD and Vietnam veterans describes it as "the persistence of post traumatic experiences in the present physiology, psychology and social relatedness of the survivor" (Shay xx). Symptoms of PTSD range from the mild to the severe and include all or some of the following:

- Loss of authority over mental function — particularly memory and trustworthy perception
- Persistent mobilization of the body and the mind for lethal danger, with the potential for explosive violence
- Persistence and activation of combat survival in civilian life
- Chronic health problems stemming from chronic mobilization of the body for danger
- Persistent expectation of betrayal and exploitation; destruction of the capacity for social trust
- Persistent preoccupation with both the enemy and the veteran's own military/governmental authorities
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Suicidality, despair, isolation, and meaninglessness (Shay xx).

Diagnosing a fictional character, particularly a superhero, with a complex and controversial psychological disorder is fraught with problems, but, as discussed below, the body of symptomatic evidence in Captain America's case is almost overwhelming. Outside of his battles

against supervillans and unreformed Nazis, PTSD is the central theme of *Captain America* of the 1960s and '70s. Psychologists, social workers, and doctors still work to understand how to best treat PTSD, but Cap struggles largely alone in the macho world of other heroes and secret agents. Reading his comics of this period and observing Cap suffering over a course of a decade can be a depressing and compelling experience. It also becomes clear, though, that one of Cap's most admirable traits is his long, lonely fight with the malady. He is aware of his condition and attempts to alleviate it, but whenever he tries to grow beyond his past, it comes back to him in his thoughts, in his dreams, and, most horribly through the external reappearance of World War II enemies and resurrections and restagings of Bucky Barnes' death.

Cap also seeks professional help for PTSD in the memorable *CA 107*, "If the Past Be Not Dead." This issue's stunning cover features a distraught Captain America standing in the page's center, a gloved hand over his temple in a gesture of anguish. Swirling around him are images that include a risen Bucky reaching over his gravestone for Cap, the Red Skull, faces of the war dead, and an image of Cap leading a World War II battle. As the issue unfolds, readers learn that Cap has sought out therapy for PTSD. A recurring nightmare of World War II has nearly driven him to madness. This violent dream concludes with Bucky accusing Cap of letting him die. "Why didn't you save me?" Bucky asks him. "You've saved hundreds of others! Why not me? Why couldn't you rescue your own loyal partner?" (Lee, 107, 3).

Before the story begins, Cap has met a psychiatrist named Doctor Faustus on a talk show. Apparently impressed, Cap seeks therapy from Faustus, who it turns out, has been laying in wait for the hero. Few details are provided about Faustus's origin, but he says that his main motivation for destroying Cap is that no one else has done it (5). Faustus — who will become one of Cap's most effective enemies — prescribes Cap a nightmare and hallucination inducing medication, making Cap's PTSD dangerously acute. Faustus is among the earliest of Cap's enemies who hope to defeat him by recreating scenes of Cap's greatest trauma, particularly Bucky's death. The nefarious doctor goes so far as to hire goons to pose as Nazi soldiers, Gestapo men, and even Sharon Carter. Although Cap pulls out a victory with some help from S.H.I.E.L.D., Faustus has revealed that psychological trauma can weaken the apparently invulnerable hero.

The same issue also contains a telling passage where Cap is walking alone on a crowded city street and mistakenly believes a passerby is the "lost" Sharon Carter. The woman is actually another of Faustus's stooges, but Cap fails to detect the ruse until later in the issue. Moments before he sees "Sharon" on the street, Cap's reflects on who he is and what he has become:

> Perhaps it would have been better if I'd never been rescued from the floating glacier — where I was in suspended animation for decades! The world seems so changed — so different — I feel like a relic — a holdover from some dim and dismal past. Everything is has changed the cities are more crowded — with people racing about in vehicles we never dreamed of in the Forties! But is it really progress. We may one day be meeting strangers on far distant stars — But, we still haven't learned to live with our neighbors — in peace and brotherhood! Or — are mine just the ramblings of a man who is mentally disturbed! [Lee 6]

These feelings persist for Cap throughout the 1960s and into the '70s and are not uncommon for PTSD sufferers. Such feelings can be set off by reminders of their trauma and can occur years and years after a horrific event. One example from the body of research in the early 1990s on PTSD cites the example of another World War II navy veteran who, almost fifty years after the War, began having sleep and depressive problems after he watched on television an acci-

dental gun turret explosion on the USS Iowa. He had served on similar vessel decades before and had witnessed a similar event (Litz et al. 55).

Cap occasionally seeks the solace and aid of his friends and allies but they fail to register all he is going through. Although they acknowledge his condition, their responses to it tend to be flip and even unsympathetic. For instance, when Cap opens himself to Nick Fury at the close of the 1960s about his guilt over Bucky's death and his feelings that fate has dealt him bad cards, Fury tell him that his feelings are "old hat" and that anyway "everyone knows the story." Cap responds despondently that it is a story that he has to live. "You shoulda warned me, Rogers — and I'da brung my crying towel!" Fury then adds that Cap should stop feeling sorry for himself because there is nothing wrong with being a middle age man who still looks like an undergraduate and can fight like a wildcat (Lee *CA 109* 7).

Even among the various 1960s lineups of the Avengers, Cap finds himself without a close friend with whom he can share his deepest feelings. After he becomes the Avengers' squad leader, he begins to play the role of a leader and peacemaker. When not engaged in combat, he spends his time with his colleagues is spent settling lovers' quarrels between the other superheroes. The archetypal non-combat image of Captain America in the pages of *The Avengers* is of him spending yet another night alone at their headquarters. Even Jarvis, the group's bachelor butler, goes home to a life and his elderly mother. In the 1960s Cap spends his free time either "on duty" at Avengers mansion or spending a lonely night at yet another seedy motel.

That Captain America was a hero besieged with guilt, grief, and despair would not come as a surprise to his readers. Stan Lee's narrative continually supports Cap's isolation, guilt and depression. The opening of *CA 110* typifies how Lee and Kirby framed Cap's character. Moments before a battle with Hulk, Steve Rogers is framed in a claustrophobic set of tiny panels. He is walking alone in an urban landscape devoid of human life. "Slowly, falteringly, he walks through the night...." Lee writes, "A lone, silent figure ... haunted by his past ... plagued by memories such as few have ever known ... every tortured by doubt ... yet driven by duty" (1).

Captain America readers responded to their hero's fragile mental state on the pages of "Rap with Cap," the comic's monthly letter column. Some readers grew tired with the superhero's predicament and asked for more contemporary stories set in places such as Vietnam or anywhere in the present, but a national hero racked by post-traumatic stress intrigued many readers. Several letters attempted to find a cause for Cap's mental state. One appreciative letter published in *ToS 33* (1965) epitomizes the empathy readers shared with Captain America. "The pathos of Captain America," Cathi Manfredi, a student at Mt. Shimer College in Illinois, wrote "is due to his grief over Bucky's demise" (*Captain America* DVD-ROM, *ToS 64* 17).

Manfredi is correct in her assessment that Cap's PTSD is focused largely upon the moments before and after Bucky's death. Until he meets Sam Wilson (the Falcon) and teams up with him in 1969, Cap grief over Bucky's death tends to color his every encounter and often leads him to make initial misjudgments. Cap also grieves for Agent 13 (Sharon Carter) who he often assumes he has lost, but his feelings for her do not resonate as deeply or with the same violent passion as does his grief over Bucky. Why Cap seizes upon losing Bucky is both understandable and puzzling. He had seen and lived through hundreds of moments of sacrifice and death in World War II. He had witnessed the bombing of London, toured concentration camps, and witnessed the murder of Dr. Erskine, the inventor of the Super-Soldier

Serum. Still, it is the apparent death of Bucky that often sends Cap spiraling into bouts of depression or leads him to be susceptible to diabolic recreations of his lost comrade.

Jonathan Shay in *Achilles in Vietnam* helps to explain the close relationship between fellow soldiers, making Captain America's plight more understandable. Drawing upon the *Iliad* as way to understand soldiers and post-traumatic stress, Shay examines Achilles relationship with his fellow Myrmidon and close second, Påtroklos. Many readers and commentators of the *Iliad* believe that Achilles and Påtroklos were lovers, but Shay points out that Achilles grief for his fallen comrade would "not have been greater if they had been a sexual couple, nor less if they had not been" (42). His point is that many people cannot comprehend a loving relationship between men that is rich and passionate but not necessarily sexual. Such relationships, Shay believes, are not uncommon between men who go into battle together. Because our culture is uncomfortable with such them, many veterans grieve in isolation, only furthering their suffering from war's trauma. Achilles takes part in ceremonies remembering Påtroklos on the shores of Troy. Cap has had no part in any public remembrance of Bucky's sacrifice, and there is no site where Cap can go to grieve him.

From the pages of Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* to *Saturday Night Live*'s "Ambiguously Gay Duo," man-boy superhero teams such as Captain America and Bucky's have often raised suspicion of a sexual relationship. There is certainly no concrete evidence of such a relationship in the original comics, just as there is scant textual evidence in the *Iliad* to confirm that Achilles and Påtrokles were lovers. There is no doubt, however, that Captain America has loving feelings for Bucky. In their World War II adventures it is rare for Cap to let down his guard around people or let himself care for them but Cap does clown around with Bucky. Cap's most tender moments are rendered when he is caring for Bucky and other soldiers and secret agents.

It is intriguing that the bond between soldiers leads Cap into his first foray to Vietnam. His first adventure there occurs in *ToS 61* (January 1965). The title on the magazine's cover "The Strength of the Sumo!" is qualified with the subtitle is "A Debt is Repaid in Battle-Torn Vietnam!" In the story Cap infiltrates a Viet Cong base to barter for the release of Jim Baker, a helicopter pilot. Baker is the brother of a man who rescued Cap in Europe during World War II—and Cap is repaying his debt to him and to all "he holds dear" (Lee *ToS 61* 5). A mysterious Viet Cong general who, it turns out, is also a giant Sumo wrestler, is holding Baker captive in the jungle. The General bears a striking resemblance to Marlon Brando in *Apocalypse Now* and has even assembled what appears to be a cult somewhere in the jungles of South Vietnam. Moments before the General makes his first appearance, he is preceded by a retinue of courtiers and worshippers in "Oriental" masks and poses that might have graced the walls of a 1960s Chinese restaurant. "It looks to me," Cap remarks about the procession, "as though the General has seen one too many Cecil B. DeMille movies!" (Lee *ToS 61* 6)

Cap's character is flatter and less tortured with PTSD than it will be a few years later, but his almost myopic focus on what happened to him in Europe during World War II shapes how he witnesses the Vietnam conflict. Jack Kirby's art and Stan Lee's writing in the issue is also reminiscent of Captain America comics of the 1940s set in the Pacific Theater. The Viet Cong's faces, the statuary surrounding the General's compound, even the way the Viet Cong treat their prisoners—it all closely resemble comic renditions of the Japanese in the 1940s. The fact that the Vietnamese General is a Sumo master and Jim Baker is the brother of a World War II vet further links the two conflicts.

The issue's climatic battle between Captain American and the General cements that sense

that the Viet Cong are to the 1960s what the Japanese were in the 1940s. The General attempts to fight Cap using his massive Sumo bulk and strength. He even attempts to crush Cap by falling upon him. Cap handily defeats the General by drawing upon American football tactics. Essentially, the fight pits Japan's national sport against one of America's most popular sports — there is no Sumo fighting tradition in Vietnam, where taekwondo reigns as the martial arts style of choice. The physical combat between the General and Cap creates the sense that the Viet Cong are a massive expansionist army led not by dogmatic Communists but men like the General who Cap calls "a glory hungry, power-mad potentate" (Lee *ToS 6* 6).

Cap's quick foray into Vietnam and his battle against the General was quickly resolved and never revisited. After a single-issue skirmish with a group of rioting prisoners in *ToS 62*, the next nine issues of *ToS* contain stories about Cap and Bucky in the "Daring Days of World War II." When Lee and Kirby return to setting Cap stories in the present, they have laid out the background and themes for the majority of his solo adventures — and for understanding Cap's PTSD. At the outset of *ToS 72*, Cap has finished telling another World War II yarn to the Avengers. Their reaction to it stings Cap and sends him into what will be the first of his many melancholy fits of the 1960s. The first wound comes when Hawkeye tells Cap that "to hear you tell it, the Nazis would have won the war if not for your dauntless courage and matchless skill." Cap puts his head down slightly and responds that he didn't mean it that way, he was just telling it as it happened (Lee *ToS* 1). Moments later Hawkeye asks what happened to Bucky. Cap tells him that Bucky died and then slumps out of the Avengers meeting room.

In the panels that follow Cap is shown alone in an isolated guest room atop Tony Stark's mansion. "If only," Cap thinks, "the memories could vanish with the year" (Lee *ToS* 2). After his first bout of what will become Cap's regular attacks of memory and guilt over Bucky, Cap begins to fall asleep. As he enters that "fleeting second that comes to us all, just before we sink into the spell of slumber," a larger-than-life apparition of the Red Skull's head hovers over Cap's bed. The Red Skull apparition tells Cap that the final battle of World War II has not yet been fought, that "Now, twenty years later ... the fruits of victory shall be mine" (Lee *ToS* 2).

The comic never makes clear whether the apparition is actually the Red Skull or a manifestation of Cap's emerging PTSD. Within pages, however, Cap is investigating the first of the Red Skull's Sleepers and once again fighting Nazis in Europe, but this time it is 1965. The four Nazi Sleepers that appear in this and subsequent Captain America comics are some of Cap's most visually arresting foes of the 1960s: Their horrible power to cause pain parallel and visually represent Cap's PTSD about his World War II past. Like Cap, the Sleeper machines have slumbered for decades, though they are intentionally awakened to re-invoke through terrifying violence the horrors of World War II. One symptom of PTSD listed early in this essay is that victims are often preoccupied with their traumatic past. Cap would like to leave his behind, but the Sleepers — and soon the Red Skull and Baron Zemo as well — literally do not let his trauma fade with time. Whenever Cap defeats 1960s villains such as Batroc and the Trapster, he begins to glimpse a role that he might play in contemporary American life, but then some portion of his traumatic past becomes external reality and his suffering begins anew. If the Red Skull isn't traumatizing Cap with another Sleeper or a recreation of Bucky Barnes, for example, he is using a weapon against him like the Cosmic Cube. The infamous Cube, which makes its first appearance in *ToS 79*, allows its holder to make any thought or desire become reality. The canny Red Skull uses it to play upon Cap's PTSD by terrorizing Cap's perception and memory as well as his sense of time. In a subsequent

adventure, Red Skull employs the Cube to switch bodies with Cap. This ploy, not atypical in comics, adds another layer to Cap's sense that he is not in control of his mind, body, and, in this case, his identity.

Marvel Comics of the 1960s — particularly the Fantastic Four and Spider-Man — contain frequent references to contemporary life. After Captain America has his first encounter with a Sleeper, though, his magazine's pages become more and more removed from the historic events of the 1960s. Like countless traumatized veterans, Cap is a hero caught in a recurring loop of grief over the death of Bucky Barnes, depression, intrusive thoughts, and the endless manifestations and reappearances of enemies that he thought he had vanquished long ago. The pages of his comics are a reflection of his painful self-absorption in PTSD, a disorder that disturbs his private life and finds confirmation in the external world.

This confirmation extends beyond Cap's battles with Sleepers and the Red Skull. The only films and television Cap appears to watch are about World War II. He is a public figure as well "a living legend." Everywhere he turns he finds his own self-trial reflected in mass media. Many of his new foes of the mid 1960s simply pick fights with him to test their strength and mettle against an American icon. His exploits against the Sleepers dominate the newspaper headlines he passes on the street. The Civil Rights movement, the Apollo Program, Tet, even the Beatles — with the exception of two issues depicting protests on college campuses — very little seeps into Captain America comics of the 1960s.

"Cap Goes Wild," *CA 106* (Oct. 1968), is a provocative and masterful single-issue exception to typical Captain America storylines of the period. In this story "Oriental commandos" likely from Communist China have launched Operation Replica.[8] After capturing S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Life Model Decoy (LMD) file, the Asian superpower's military leaders — one of them looks remarkably like Chairman Mao — creates a replica Captain America. They then splice a scene into a World War II documentary featuring Cap and Bucky that shows "Cap" shooting an unarmed prisoner. Outraged, Cap travels to Hollywood and tracks down the LMD at a studio. At the moment when Cap is about to defeat his replica, its molecular structure begins to unravel and it flees as it enters an apparent death spin.

"Cap Goes Wild" is amazingly complex single issue that features several levels of stories, including a tragic tale of the two Hollywood hack brothers who collude with the "Orientals." The issue's promise that Cap will go berserk is misleading but it plays on the tension that has been building in Captain America comics since his reawakening. One of the tragic consequences of PTSD can be that the stress caused by its toll can lead to a violent episode(s) or even suicide.[9] Jonathan Shay in *Achilles in Vietnam* calls this explosion of violence the berserk state and notes that it can occur when soldiers believe they have been betrayed, insulted, humiliated by their leaders, or are grieving for the loss of a comrade (80). Shay points to various types of berserk state actions in the *Iliad* to explain the actions of some American soldiers in the Vietnam War. What distinguishes Captain America — at least the Captain America of this period — is that he never goes "wild" as this issue promises; in fact, he never loses his self-control in combat, never lets the darkest side of his PTSD drive him to murder. When he witnesses the representation of himself as a cold-blooded killer, he becomes unusually angry and demands to be taken to Hollywood to find the people responsible. His plan for revenge, however, takes a bizarre turn when he discovers that his enemy is a replica of himself.

Cap's potential as a berserker remains, however, visible to readers during his private moments — and it seems to grow with each passing 1960s issue. Lee and Kirby juxtapose desperate moments of isolation and grief with outlandish battles in settings teeming with the

kinetic energy of Kirby's drawings. Lee and Kirby imply that Cap finds release from his pain during his battles. No one notices this cycle of depression and violence more than Cap, and it begins to wear him down. He makes several attempts to break out of it, including touring the countryside in his motorcycle, taking on a job as physical education instructor at a small liberal arts college, and a failed attempt to shed his Steve Rogers identity. None of these efforts have any lasting effect.

Some of Cap's readers began to criticize his lack of involvement in the Vietnam War and what they felt the role of a national superhero should be. Readers' letters on the pages of "Rap With Cap" in the late '60s and early '70s contain an intense debate about how much of a patriot Cap really was, about his lack of involvement in Vietnam, and about whether America — or any country — should have national superheroes. Some readers claimed Cap was an ideal while others cited his humanity. Stan Lee's responses to his critics were varied and changed as readers demanded that Captain America become more relevant to the times. At first Lee had answered his critics by claiming that the majority of them wanted fantasy stories, not national adventures. By 1969, letters on every side of the debate appear as part of what Lee called the "patriotism-centered controversy" (Lee, *CA* DVD, *CA 118* 17). In *CA 118* (October 1969), Lee responds to one reader that Marvel has instituted a policy "that we have all but discontinued using any foreign 'enemies' in the pages of our superhero sagas ... and why we try to make it clear at all times that, even in our way-out war mags, we are not trying to condemn all citizens of any nation or nations." The world, Lee writes, "has become much too small a place for such a thing" (op. cit.).

Despite Lee's disclaimers, though, the stories within Captain America reveal that Lee was listening to his critics — or perhaps changing his own views. Cap's PTSD continues to rage unabated but he gradually begins to question the role he has played — and continues to play — in American history. "Perhaps," Cap tells himself during another depressive monologue in *CA 122*, "I should have battled less ... and questioned more" (Lee 3). Cap's brooding about this issue and others make him restless and hungry for distraction. He may no longer feel comfortable with his legacy but combat at least provides a distraction from intrusive and recurrent thoughts.

Perhaps nowhere in Captain America is the connection between Cap's personal pain and his employment of adventure and combat as an antidote to it clearer than during his second invasion of Vietnam in *CA 125*, "Captured in Viet Nam!" (May 1969). At the outset of the story Cap is half-naked and trashing a hotel room with his shield, brooding over his recent breakup with Sharon Carter. "I've got to get involved!" Cap yells as he slams his shield into a lampshade, "ANYTHING to make me forget about Sharon!" (Lee 2). He realizes that his emotional fragility is turning their breakup into a crisis. "If I had a job ... or Friends ... or any sort of social life ... maybe I could take the loss ... but the life I lead ... the LONELINESS ... gives me too much time to think to REMEMBER" (Lee 3).

Cap turns on the television and discovers that Dr. Robert Hoskins has mysteriously been captured. Hoskins is a man of peace who tends to the wounded on both sides of the conflict. Cap cannot understand why anyone would capture Hoskins, believes the action could damage peace talks between combatants, and finds the release he needs in a new adventure. Upon his arrival in 'Nam, Cap sees that each side in the conflict is using Hoskins' capture for their own propagandistic purposes. He soon discovers that Hoskins has been captured by Iron Man's great Asian nemesis, the Mandarin. After Cap liberates Hoskins from the Mandarin's grasp, he dons a faint smile and remarks that now both sides can return to the peace table.

He notes, however, that he personally has nothing to face but loneliness and strife and eventual defeat.

Stan Lee told Cap readers in a previous issue that "Captured in Viet Nam" would let them in on Cap's approach to the war. In the issue, though, readers are introduced only to the Air Force pilot who flies Cap to Vietnam in a B-52. After Cap drops into the jungle, there are only a few panels with pictures of what appears to be the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN), and the North Vietnamese shooting each other over Hoskins' disappearance. There are no pictures of Americans on the ground. If Cap has an attitude about the Vietnam War, it is that is should be resolved as soon as possible. In the twenty-five years since World War II ended, Cap has changed from a participating combatant to an international peacekeeper.

Captain America remains out of Vietnam for the remainder of the conflict. As it drags on and as American troops begin to withdraw, his PTSD begins to subside. His relationship with the Falcon, one of the first black superheroes, seems initially to help him break out of his PTSD. His real trial and arguable cure comes, however, during the Watergate Era when Steve Rogers retires Captain America, becomes the Nomad, and then remerges as a reinvigorated Captain America. Much of the change in Cap's mental health comes from the infusion of a series of new writers, most notably Steve Engelhart, who gave the series a more contemporary currency. The parallels Engelhart created between Cap's slow realizations that the United States is no longer the country he knew in the 1940s and his discovery of corruption at the highest levels of government shatter him, but also allow him to reconstitute his identity.

Captain America makes one final appearance in war-ravaged Vietnam sixteen years after the fall of Saigon. In *The 'Nam 41*, Captain America, Thor, and Iron Man invade North Vietnam and capture Ho Chi Minh in a controversial fantasy sequence. The superhero invasion of Vietnam came as an abrupt break in a comic acclaimed for its realism and reflected a response to the magazine's declining sales.[10] Many readers and critics saw the appearance of superheroes in the magazine — a young Punisher would later become a major character in the series — to be a sellout, but failed to register the sequence as a satiric fantasy. In the issue prior to it, Frank Aeder is killed when he leaves his base to visit his Vietnamese girlfriend. Aeder is a serious comic book fan and one of the gentlest and most likable characters in *The 'Nam* series. After he dies, Ice, one of his former comrades, is reading some of Aeder's comics, and discussing them with the character, Martini. A Captain America comic with Cap and Bucky on the cover is on top of the pile.[11] "Hey," Martini says, "is that a Captain America comic? I used to read him when I was a kid!" Ice replies that "Old Cap'd really love this war" (Murray 3).

Martini tells Ice that all the superheroes would love it in 'Nam as well. The fantasy sequence then begins. The Captain America in it, however, is not the Captain America of the 1960s but an unthinking warrior who spouts jingoistic clichés as he takes on scores of Viet Cong. After the superheroes capture Ho Chi Minh, the fantasy ends and the issue concludes when Ice, a character who has saved many American lives, leaves his unit. As a chopper whisks him away, a lieutenant tells Martini that "real heroes rarely think of themselves as anything special" (Murray 27). In the sky, just beyond the chopper carrying Ice to the U.S., are images of Thor, Captain America, and Iron Man.

The point *The 'Nam's* writers were attempting to make did not sit well with superhero fans or devotees of *The 'Nam*. Many cultural observers have pointed out that Vietnam narratives, like *The 'Nam*, were a way for American culture to integrate the Vietnam experience.

Such narratives can also be a tool to help victims of PTSD heal. Such stories, Jonathon Shay, points out can enable "the survivor to rebuild the ruins of character" (188). Although most Vietnam stories, including *The 'Nam*, do not critique the causes of the war, they do provide American participants in it with a validation of their experience. Most importantly, such publications and films provide veterans with the opportunity to witness a larger community hear a version of their story and react to it emotionally. *The 'Nam*'s fantasy superhero episode gives veterans the respect many of them deserve as heroes through its satiric portrayal of Marvel's own superheroes, It does so, however, by boiling down complex characterizations of Captain America and Iron Man honed in the 1960s and 1970s.

Captain America's lack of engagement in America's longest war remains a notable lapse in the hero's long career. His struggle in the 1960s with acute PTSD remains a fascinating study of character inflated to superhero proportions. It is ironic that Cap was suffering from this malady while thousands of American soldiers were experiencing horrific events in Vietnam that would eventually lead PTSD to be recognized as a disorder. Cap's myopic trauma of the 1960s is an exaggerated but incisive portrayal of other survivors of World War II and their responses to Cold War conflicts such as Korea, Vietnam, and the 1960s. Still meshed in the global conflict that shaped them and caused their own internal struggles, many World War II veterans failed to recognize the unique challenges of the Vietnam War and its effects on younger soldiers until late in the War. Perhaps the experience Captain America went through in the 1960s now enables him to comfort and inspire young soldiers fighting in Afghanistan in *The Chosen* series. Nonetheless, Captain America's full understanding of Vietnam is a story waiting to be told.

Notes

1. Nailing down precise dates for the Silver Age of Comics Books is anything but a science, but many commentators on the comic industry would agree it ran from the late 1950s until the early 1970s. Marvel Comics earned a name for itself in this period because of its focus on the characterization of its superheroes.

2. The Captain America of this issue turns out not to be Captain America at all but the supervillain the Acrobat. The Human Torch (Johnny Storm) defeats this faux Captain America but later is seen reading a vintage Captain America comic. The story is followed by a panel asking readers if they would like to see more of Captain America.

3. There are dozen of Steve Rogers drawings that bear a resemblance to JFK. For a particularly striking image, see *Captain America* 109, 8, in Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Jim Steranko, et al., *The Essential Captain America, Vol. 2* (New York: Marvel), 2002.

4. See, for instance, Stan Lee, "Rap With Cap," Captain America 118 (October 1969). Many letters columns in Captain America between 1967 and 1973 contain debates about Cap and the Vietnam War.

5. Many classic Marvel villains were created as Soviet counters to their American nemesis. These supervillans include the Black Widow, Titanium Man, It, the Colossus, the Red Guardian, Gargoyle and Gremlin.

6. See "The Vietnam War in Comics: the Good, the Bad, and The Other Side," http://goodcomics.comicbookresources.com/2006/10/04/comic-blogs-should-be-good-jason-aaron/.

7. See Shay, 183–194.

8. Operation Replica is a clever pun on Operation Rebirth, the American program that led to Steve Rogers' being injected with the Supersoldier Serum.

9. See Shay, xxx

10. For discussion of The 'Nam, its response to the Vietnam, and pressures upon its editors, see Annette Matton's "From Realism to Superheroes in Marvel's *The 'Nam*, " in *Comics and Ideology*. Matthew P. McAllister, Edward H Swell Jr., and Ian Gordon eds. New York: Peter Lang, 2001: 151–75; For a detailed study of reader response to Annette Matton's "Reader Responses to Doug Murray's The 'Nam," *International Journal of Comic Art*, 2 (1): 33–44.

11. The comic looks like actual cover of *Captain America* 100, except that a drawing of Bucky has replaced the Avengers.

References

Aaron, Jason. "The Vietnam War in Comics: the Good, the Bad, and The Other Side," GoodComics.Com. (http://goodcomics.comicbookresources.com/2006/10/04/comic-blogs-should-be-good-jason-aaron/).

Kennedy, John. F. *Profiles in Courage*. Harper & Brothers, New York. 1955.

Lee, Stan. "Rap With Cap," *Captain America 118* in *Captain America: The Complete Collection* (DVD), New York: Marvel Comics, 2007. (Many of the citations in this essay come from this DVD.)

Lee, Stan, and Jack Kirby, et al. The *Essential Captain America, Vol. 1.* New York: Marvel, 2000.

Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Jim Steranko, et al. *The Essential Captain America, Vol. 2.* New York: Marvel, 2002.

Litz, Brett, and Walter Penk, et al. "Assessment of Traumatic Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" in *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, ed. Phillip A. Saigh. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1992: 50–84.

Matton's "From Realism to Superheroes in Marvel's *The 'Nam*" in *Comics and Ideology* ed. Matthew P. McAllister, Edward H. Sewell, and Ian Gordon, eds. New York: Peter Lang, 2001: 151–75.

Matton's "Reader Responses to Doug Murray's The 'Nam," *International Journal of Comic Art*, 2 (1): 33–44.

Murray, Doug, Wayne Vansant, and Phil Felix, et al. *The 'Nam* 41, New York: Marvel Comics (February 1990).

Shay, Jonathon. *Achilles in Vietnam*. New York: Atheneum, 1994.

Comparisons of Captain America with Other Characters

The Historical Value of Bronze Age Comics

Captain America and the Haunted Tank

Nicholas D. Molnar

Comic books can be rich historical sources that tell us much about the time period they were created in; perhaps there is no better example of this than Captain America. The creators of CA pitted the superhero against the Red Skull and his Nazi henchmen during World War II. In the 1950s, when the United States was engaged in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, Captain America became a "Commie Smasher," fighting the spies and saboteurs of the "Communist Hordes" (*CAC 78* cover). Comics, in addition to telling us about the political climate they were created in, tell us about their creators. Many comic creators during the Golden Age of comics were Jewish, and they "naturally borrowed concepts from their religious and social upbringing when creating heroes." When Nazi Germany oppressed the Jews in Europe during the 1930s, Jewish comic creators responded. "At times, this sensitivity showed up in comic books," Robert G. Weiner writes. "American superheroes were fighting Hitler even before America entered World War II" (Weiner 84).

Comic books can also be challenging sources to work with, not always representative of their historical moment. When the Young Allies, a team of kid heroes created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby of Timely (Marvel) comics, went to fight Hitler and his minion the Red Skull in the summer of 1941, it was truly an eclectic group. Bucky, Captain America's ward, and Toro, a mutant who could wield fire, led the charge, followed into battle by "four everyday kids"— the tough guy Knuckles, the fat kid Tubby, the brainy youth Jeff, and Whitewash, the stereotyped Negro who conformed to the "Sambo" archetype (Weiner 86).

Although extremely problematic, Simon and Kirby's attempt to create an integrated team to fight Hitler was ahead of its time, for the U.S. military that would actually defeat the Axis powers would be a segregated one. Comic books featuring the Young Allies paralleled U.S. government propaganda efforts, which downplayed racial segregation and promoted the wartime achievements of African Americans for the sake of national unity, as shown in the government-commissioned wartime poster by Alexander Liberman, entitled "United We Win," which showed black and white workers riveting in a home front factory with an American flag flying above them.

This essay will explore the many levels of value that comic books provide when used as historical sources, focusing on the Bronze Age of comics (circa 1970s–1980s), and two comic book characters in particular — Captain America from Marvel Comics and the Haunted Tank

"United We Win," by Alexander Liberman, showing the illusion of wartime racial integration (U.S. Government).

from *G.I. Combat* from DC Comics. Like their Golden Age counterparts, these comic books tell us much about the political climate they were created in, as well as about their creators. In both Captain America and the Haunted Tank, African American heroes were introduced for the first time; comic book creators felt that their introduction was long overdue. An increased degree of realism was also introduced to comic books, especially in their depictions

of the past. But, like the Young Allies, the comics of the Bronze Age can also be challenging to work with. The comic book creators' attempts to be more realistic, as seen in the introduction of African American heroes, created peculiarities that rendered some comic books' depictions of the past, especially of World War II, historically inaccurate.

The creators of Captain America introduced mainstream comics' first African American superhero, the Falcon, in September 1969 (*CA 117*). After teaming up to defeat the Red Skull, the Falcon and Captain America became partners in crime fighting, and for a time, the series was renamed *Captain America and the Falcon*. The Falcon represented multiple trends that were taking place throughout the comic books of the Bronze Age. During this time period, Marvel was introducing new black heroes, such as Gabe Jones, a member of Sergeant Fury's elite Howling Commandos (1963), the Black Panther, an African superhero introduced in the pages of the *Fantastic Four* (1966), and Luke Cage, the super-powered "Hero for Hire" (1972). These characters were all given realistic origins and alter egos by their creators. The Falcon grew up in New York City's Harlem neighborhood, involving himself with the city's criminal element after his mother's murder. The Red Skull gave the Falcon his powers and attempted to use him as a pawn against Captain America, but the plot failed. When not donning the superhero tights, the Falcon was Sam Wilson, a social worker in Harlem who helped underprivileged youth.

DC comics followed these trends, introducing their own realistic African American heroes. Former U.S. Marine John Stewart took up the mantle of the Green Lantern in 1972. One year later, the first African American crew member of the Haunted Tank, Gus Gray, was introduced by the creators of the long running comic book series in *G.I. Combat 160*.

The Haunted Tank was a regular feature in the war anthology *G.I. Combat*. It was a World War II tank (originally an M3 Stuart Light tank, but later replaced by an M4 Sherman Medium tank) haunted by the ghost of a Confederate Civil War General, J.E.B. Stuart. The apparition acted as a guardian over his namesake, tank commander Jeb Stuart, who happened to be the only one who could see the ghost. Sent by the spirit of Alexander the Great, General Stuart does not initially care for his assignment to the Yankee tank crew, but he is impressed with their fighting spirit and by the fact that they fly a Confederate flag on their tank in honor of their invisible protector (*G.I. Combat 114*). Gus Gray becomes part of the crew when original crewmember Arch Asher is killed saving the Haunted Tank from an exploding German vehicle.

Like Captain America's ally the Falcon, Gus Gray was a realistic, believable character. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Gray was introduced after comic book creator Joe Kubert became editor, writer, and artist for many of DC comics' Bronze Age war titles, including *G.I. Combat*. "Without making any obvious changes in the strips themselves, Kubert subtly raised their level of quality," Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones write. "The stories seemed a little more human, the art more vivid and polished" (Jacobs 184). Gray fit this description perfectly. He was a religious man, a deacon in civilian life. Prior to engaging a duo of German Tiger tanks, Gray professed that "God almighty on the side of the just cause" was with them (*G.I. Combat 260* 36). When the other crew members joked (and they often did) that Jeb Stuart was crazy for claiming to see the ghost of a Confederate general, Gray would defend Stuart, in the process professing his religious beliefs. When a crew member referred to Stuart as the "Lootenant" and another suggested that the medics would give him "a Section-8 discharge so fast his head would spin," Gray angrily responded, "Get off Jeb's back! You don't have to *see* the lord to *believe* he's there!" (*G.I. Combat 277* 6).

Gray was also realistic in that he had a grasp of history, and he saw the irony of going

into battle with a Confederate flag draped over his Sherman tank. Gray addressed this issue in a *G.I. Combat* story entitled "Whose War is it Anyway?" "The emblem of the South fightin' the Union Army durin' the Civil War ... yeah, we knew all about cotton plantations, big mansions, southern belles dancin' with their gentlemen ... but this was *World War II*," Gray mused as he stared at the Confederate flag. "For me ... I'll never forget that flag of the South ... the flag of slaves, bigotry and suppression ... and, even now, we're fightin' to be free — free at last!" Gray, usually good-natured and jovial, was critical of his white crew members. "They don't think twice about us flyin' a reb flag in a tank of the *United* States Army!" he ruminated to himself. "Instead of haulin' cotton like my ancestors," Gray thought, "I was passin' 75-mm armor-piercin' shells to Rick [the gunner]." Gray released all his pent-up anger when a U.S. Army general ordered Jeb Stuart to "join ... *our* army" and "get rid of" the flag by burning it. When the other crew members were reluctant to do so because they felt it brought them good luck, Gray ripped the flag off the Haunted Tank, yelling, "*I'll* do it ... and be glad to! It never represented *my* people!" A gust of wind lofted the flag away before Gray could set fire to it, but it was returned just when the crew needed it the most, blinding a German Panther tank and enabling the Haunted Tank to destroy the Nazi enemy with its last round of ammunition. "Like the good book says," Gray professed as he looked toward the heavens, "the Lord works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform!" (*G.I. Combat 260* 35–41).

Other Bronze Age comic heroes grasped history as well, such as the Invaders, a superhero team that Captain America was a member of. Created in 1975 by Marvel editor and writer Roy Thomas, the Invaders help the Allies fight the Axis during World War II. "Thomas knew with hindsight that sensitive issues related to World War II needed to be addressed," Robert G. Weiner writes, "such as the concentration camps and the holocaust": The *Invaders* comic described "with historic detail the pogroms against the Jews starting in 1939" (92–93). Although these comics were more representative of the past, they did not address every sensitive racial issue dealing with World War II. No black heroes were part of the Invaders superhero team.

The Bronze Age trends of introducing realistic African American heroes had the peculiar effect of actually rendering some comic books' depictions of the past inaccurate. The introduction of Gus Gray into the crew of the Haunted Tank is one poignant example. The addition of Gray to *G.I. Combat* makes it a more realistic depiction of World War II than it was without him, for during the conflict over 900,000 blacks served in the U.S. Armed Forces (Butler 8). Gray's anger toward the Confederate flag adds further realism to the comic. What fails to be addressed by Gray is the fact that the U.S. Army he is serving in was itself segregated. The vast majority of black troops had separate training facilities and fought in segregated combat units; even blood supplies were separated by race (Osher 239; Adkins 585).

Even as comic book creators attempted to create a more realistic depiction of the past, they sometimes failed to address major issues, such as the racism of the U.S. armed forces during World War II, making these same comics historically inaccurate. Gray is always accepted by other units when fighting alongside them. When Sergeant Rock and Easy Company, another group of popular DC comics' World War II heroes, teamed up with the Haunted Tank in one battle, the racism that blacks faced in the military went unseen. Rock had no qualms with Gray, for they were both Americans fighting the Germans (*G.I. Combat 271* 14). In real life, however, it was far different. Leonard "Smitty" Smith, an African American tanker in the segregated 761st Tank Battalion, encountered racism every time his unit was assigned to a new command. "Their accomplishments, bitter-fought miles, and horrific casualties meant

nothing to the vast majority of the new white troops beside whom they'd been assigned to fight," wrote one historian of the battalion. "They were not seen as soldiers but as black." Leonard Smith and his unit were referred to as "nigger tankers," "in a tone that implied the very thought of it was absurd." As the 761st Tank Battalion bounced around from division to division, "the needle would be set again to zero every time." For Smith, a real-life Gus Gray, "those days numbered among the most painful of the war" (Abdul-Jabbar 157).

Even when examining only a snippet of the trends and challenging aspects of researching Bronze Age comics, the value of delving into the comic book genre is obvious. Comic books tell us not only about the time period in which they are created, but also about the thoughts and concerns of their creators. This is in itself of historical value as we can learn much just from looking at Captain America and the Haunted Tank in the Bronze Age: trends of introducing a greater degree of realism and African American heroes are clear in both comics. Yet, some comics' attempts at a realistic portrayal of the past actually distorted it because they failed to deal with the racial issues that these new black heroes would have faced. The result was not a realistic past, but an inaccurate, idealized one. In some cases, the expense paid for rectifying a problem of the previous comic book ages — the lack of minority characters — was the distortion of the distant past.

References

Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem, and Anthony Walton. *Brothers in Arms: The Epic Story of the 761st Tank Battalion, WWII's Forgotten Heroes*. New York: Broadway, 2004.

Adkins, Brian. "Charles Drew." In Chambers II, John Whiteclay. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Butler, John Sibley. "African Americans in the Military." In John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Heath, Russ, and Robert Kanigher, et al. *G.I. Combat 114*. New York: DC Comics (November 1965).

Jacobs, Will, and Gerard Jones. *The Comic Book Heroes From the Silver Age to the Present*. New York: Crown, 1985.

Kubert, Joe, and Archie Goodwin, et al. *G.I. Combat 160*. New York: DC Comics (April 1973).

Kubert, Joe, Sam Glanzman, and Murray Boltinoff, et al. *G.I. Combat 277.* New York: DC Comics (May 1985).

Kubert, Joe, Sam Glanzman, and Robert Kanigher, et al. *G.I. Combat 260.* New York: DC Comics (December 1983).

_____, and Murray Boltinoff. *G.I. Combat* #271 New York: DC Comics (November 1984).

Osher, David. "Race Relations and War." in Chambers II, John Whiteclay. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Romita, John, and Stan Lee, et al. *Captain America Comics* 78 (September 1954). New York: Atlas/Marvel Comics (September 1954).

Sinnott, Joe, Gene Colon, and Stan Lee, et al. *Captain America 117* (September 1969). New York: Marvel Comics (September 1969).

Weiner, Robert G. "*Okay, Axis, Here We Come!" Captain America and the Superhero Teams from World War II and the Cold War*, in Oropeza, B.J., ed., *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.

Special thanks to Robert G. Weiner for his guidance in the preparation of this essay.

The Ultimate American?

Jackson Sutliff

Stop me if you've heard this one before. Steve Rogers, scrawny 4-F nobody, is turned into Captain America, fights in World War II against the Nazis, decades later is found frozen in ice in the modern day. So what's the difference between Captain America and his Ultimate counterpart?

For those not in the know, Marvel launched an imprint in 2000 that "rebooted" their pantheon of characters and stories. The "Ultimate" version of the Marvel universe is modernized and reimagined. Captain America has long represented an ideal — he's a tried and true patriot who will do the right thing no matter what. He's presented as everything an American should want to be; he's the American dream made flesh: a scrawny nobody becomes the pinnacle of human perfection — never selfish, always valiant, fighting for what's right. Which begs the question: what happens when you modernize the American dream?

Ultimate Captain America is less of an inspiration than an action hero; instead of John Adams, he's Sylvester Stallone. He's here to wear the American flag and kick ass, all in the heavily marketed name of Nick Fury's supergroup. He leaps out of airplanes without a parachute — "He says parachutes are for girls," laughs Bucky Barnes in the first issue of *The Ultimates* (Millar *Ultimates 1 Vol. 1* 4). Teammate Henry Pym comments that it's like playing with his old G.I. Joes again. Whereas the Cap of the traditional Marvel Universe (lovingly dubbed "616") is known for his stirring orations, this version of Steve Rogers isn't one for speeches. Snappy one-liners are more his style.

The best example of the divide one can look to is also one of the most famous. There's a well known page from the blockbuster miniseries: Captain America, enraged at the suggestion of surrender, goes ballistic and bellows, "You think this letter on my head stands for France?" (Millar *The Ultimates 12 Vol. 1* 22) The original Captain America has a "rebuttal" of sorts noting that "The country may have surrendered, but the people didn't" (Brubaker *CA 3 Vol. 5* 18). Both of these Captains are proudly waving a flag, but one is simply condescending about it.

All of his moments as an action hero are cut sharply by his moments as an old man. He wakes up to find the world has passed him by — they remember Captain America, but they've forgotten Steve Rogers. Bucky Barnes, now aged and frail, married Steve's fiancée, Gail Richards (who can't bear to even see him). "I feel like Rip Van Winkle," he says. "All I did was blink and the world just left me behind." He's a relic, a perfectly preserved antique (Millar *The Ultimates 3 Vol. 1* 14).

When Nick Fury offers Rogers the chance to meet one of his last living relatives, he moans, "What's the point? She doesn't even know me. Nobody knows me anymore. Even the little

kids I remember are old men now." He's devastated by time passing him by. "You should have left me in the ice where I belonged, General Fury. Everything I ever loved is gone" (Millar *The Ultimates 3 Vol. 1* 17). Again, he meticulously pieces together his old record collection, only to have it ruined by a band of kids — kids born and raised in his own neighborhood, now infested with urban decay. By clinging to his past, he's vulnerable to the present.

As soon as he steps into a bright, shiny new uniform, however, it's another matter entirely. Suddenly, he's Captain America again, beating up anyone who'd threaten the United States, all with a beaming grin on his face. He drops a tank on the Hulk. He pounds Giant Man with construction equipment. He flies an airplane into a Skrull, then jumps ship when it plows into fuel tanks.

This version of Steve Rogers is something terrifying, charming and deserving of pity all rolled in one. If Captain America represents the American dream, then his Ultimate counterpart is its obituary. For every victory on the battlefield, there's a crushing personal defeat. He is simultaneously extraordinary and impotent.

Steve Rogers comes from a different era and can barely settle in. He's a man who knows only a time when it was okay for America to be right about anything and everything. Does his devil-may-care action star attitude come from having nothing left to lose? Cap brawls with the best of them, never giving in. Why should he? It's not like he has a family waiting for him at home. He's lost everything he's ever wanted to time. By demanding the extraordinary, he's forsaken the ordinary. His former fiancée bleats a dirge:

> Why should I listen to him when he never listened to me? I told him they were going to destroy us the minute they started pumping their chemicals into his body. But he wanted to look like a movie star. Oh no, being an ordinary person was never enough for him [Millar, *The Ultimates 3 Vol. 1* 15].

Being transformed into a super-soldier is "Ultimate" Steve Rogers' wish come true, but at a price. He's more than human, but with all the flaws — while brute force might be an acceptable battle plan for dealing with a rampaging Hulk, in the modern world it's a little outmoded for settling personal disputes. When Hank Pym viciously attacks his wife, Janet, Captain America rides in like a white knight, dropping from a helicopter and slapping Hank around, goading him to transform. All he wants is a bigger target, something more extraordinary to take down. There's no discussion, no dispute — Rogers beats Pym with pure, unadulterated malice. Is he justified? It's a shady situation, hardly as black and white as decking Hitler across the chops. But while Cap is unquestionably good at saving the world, he's barely able to function in it. Janet Pym sums it up best: "This isn't nineteen forty-five, Steve," she says. "This isn't how you fix things anymore" (Millar *The Ultimates 9 Vol. 1* 20).

The sequel miniseries, *The Ultimates 2*, mimics the morality shift seen in the United States' own military conflicts. The shape-shifting Chitauri (a.k.a. the Skrulls), much like the Nazis they worked with, are inarguably evil. They're a figure everyone can rally against; they are clearly the bad guys. The villains are defeated; the heroes come home to cheers and adoration. But suddenly, Captain America is being dropped in Iraq, and things have changed. A "Person of Mass Destruction" is used to extract hostages, breaking foreign policy and hearing mixed opinions from the media and Thor, who leaves the team over the incident.

When information about the Hulk's identity is released, Cap's old habits resurface. The most likely suspect for the leak is Thor, so he drops from a helicopter in Times Square to bust into Thor's favorite nightclub. Fists, for once, don't fly, but Thor calls him out: "Captain America here has just accused me of leaking those Bruce Banner papers to the press and I

think he's come to beat me up. Is that an accurate assessment, Captain?" (Millar *The Ultimates 2 Vol. 2* 16). Cap brushes it off in true tough guy fashion, but he accepts that Thor didn't betray the team.

Captain America's resurgence sparks an arms race of sorts — every nation is clamoring to have a superhero of their own, covering their own "Captains" in flags. The European Union forms a cadre of nationalist heroes almost identical in design to Steve Rogers' uniform. Protests start, rumors fly that the Ultimates' next target will be Iran or Syria, and Thor goes berserk.

Cap and the Ultimates have become the next stage in weaponry, often referred to as "Persons of Mass Destruction." They're the next level of the atomic bomb, but there's a key difference: they have faces. The Ultimates are stars with perfect smiles and physiques built for action figures — they're bombs the nation can cheer for and then watch the DVD a week later. Who wouldn't want a superhero or two?

But the scene that's most chilling is in *Ultimates 2: 7*. Captain America and the Ultimates, in true fashion; lead a blockbuster assault on a nuclear facility in the Middle East. In the aftermath, Captain America stoically barks orders to citizens. It's all matter of fact; he's almost casual about it. "We're doing this for your own protection, people" (Millar *The Ultimates 7 Vol. 2* 12). It's this incident which creates the leader of the Liberators (a band of supervillains in classic comic book doppelganger style), Colonel Abdul al-Rahman. The Colonel abandons a colorful "codename," insisting they're infantile.

In the final battle with the Liberators, traditional comic book banter is tossed aside. Ultimate Captain America seems almost fed up with the superhero archetype, abandoning the cornball dialogue of the era in comics that created him. Colonel Abdul al-Rahman makes a final jab as he accepts death: "Is this where you crack a joke? Is this where you finish me with a witty barb?" The Captain remains stoic, jamming his shield into the soldier's chest. "No jokes, Abdul"(Millar *The Ultimates 12 Vol. 2* 27–28).

Is Captain America actually toxic to the world of the Ultimates? Since his arrival, he's saved the world twice, but not without a great cost: both the Hulk's rampage on Manhattan and the Liberators' attack on the United States were arguably caused by his return to life.

But maybe it's not Captain America that's the problem. Take a glance at the rest of the Ultimates: Hank Pym is a wife-beater, Tony Stark is a drunk and Janet Pym is an adulteress. All of these traits, however, are inspired by the Marvel comics of old, suggesting that the issue isn't Cap himself, but trying to modernize him. The flaws in the rest of the team have historically been part of what readers find so compelling about the characters, but part of Captain America's appeal has been his unwavering devotion to ideals. He's clearly a creation of the '40s, an All-American born in a time of war. The traditional Captain America is a paragon, while the Ultimate version — for all his superheroics — is cripplingly human. He is a human that finally doesn't want to be a bomb.

At the end of *The Ultimates 2*, Cap realizes the team can't function while tied to the government. Keeping the world safe is a just cause, but only by working for themselves can the team stop themselves from becoming weapons. It's a sign that perhaps Captain America can adapt after all. He's finally recognized that it's not the same old ballgame anymore. The enemies aren't clear cut, and he affects more than the resolution; he affects the repercussions as well. It's a whole different America — and a whole different world.

Maybe Ultimate Captain America is a more believable character — wouldn't you be kind of a jerk if you had superpowers like that? He doesn't know how to react to a new millennium, so he lashes out physically. But there's something missing. Something irreplaceable!

Will the character continue on the same track in future books? It's hard to say. But it's almost certain this Cap is "Ultimate" in name only.

References

Brubaker, Ed, Steve Epting, and Michael Lark, et al. *Captain America 3, Vol. 5*. New York: Marvel, 2005.
Millar, Mark, Bryan Hitch, and Andrew Currie, et al. *The Ultimates 1, Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 2002.
_____. *The Ultimates 12, Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 2002.
_____. *The Ultimates 3, Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 2002.
_____. *The Ultimates 9, Vol. 1*. New York: Marvel, 2002.
Millar, Mark, Bryan Hitch, and Paul Neary, et al. *The Ultimates 2: 2*. New York: Marvel, 2005.
_____. *The Ultimates 2: 7*. New York: Marvel, 2005.
_____. *The Ultimates 2: 12*. New York: Marvel, 2006.

The Alpha and the Omega

Captain America and the Punisher

Cord Scott

> Captain America! I've followed your career for years, sir — and I can admire you for what you stand for — But this is none of your business! Either back off— now — or I'll deal with you as I would any criminal scum!
>
> —*The Punisher*

> People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf.
>
> —*Attributed to George Orwell*

The superhero has always carried with it some sort of fantasy for the reader. The character represents what the reader wishes he (or she) might be able to do: e.g., fly, have superhuman strength, x-ray vision, or the like. The character also is able to act out some sort of fantasy that the reader has: stamping out injustice, fighting for the weak, or simply beating on those who represent a threat to the people or the community around the reader. The cover of *CAC 1* was simple in its desire: to see a citizen of America rid the world of the biggest threat at that time, Adolf Hitler. And what better way to demonstrate the desire than by having a character literally dressed in the colors of the United States deliver the punch. Ah, those were the un-encumbered days of America before the moral ambiguity of Vietnam, the Cold War, and self-doubt crept in.

Captain America, clad in his red, white, and blue, has been one of Marvel Comic's most enduring characters, as well as a type of manifestation of America. While Cap and his alter ego, Steve Rogers, represented the ideal American spirit (moral strength, fighting for everyone's equality, and law abiding, using deadly force only as a last resort), a minor character introduced into the Marvel stable in the 1970s was the antithesis of Cap: the black and skull clad Frank Castle, a.k.a. the Punisher. Castle represented the attitude that seemingly pervaded the Seventies and Eighties: no more dancing around the law, make it happen. Punish those who are evil, and kill if necessary. While the two characters have interacted before, the recent death (*CA 25* March 2007) of Captain America has altered the Punisher to a new symbol: a protector of America who is willing to go to extremes. This essay compares the two characters, their interactions, and what the modern Captain Punisher might say (or do) in post 9/11 America.

The character of the Punisher represents the antithesis of Captain America (Cap), but at the same time represents a darker part of the American psyche. He is the one willing to do

anything necessary to rid the world of truly bad people. To do that, one must be willing to compromise their values and ethics for the "greater good." Whenever the two have "teamed up" the situation and forces allayed against them are truly evil. But what is the greater good in this case? Does the Punisher's means (willingness to kill, a seemingly cavalier attitude towards due process and civil liberties) justify the end of a safe and secure America? That is the complexity and the meaning of the two characters. They both seem to represent America in some form.

The World War II Captain America keeps the mythos of a righteous, moral America alive, while his teenaged partner Bucky (an orphan named James Buchanan Barnes, who becomes the camp mascot where Steve Rogers, a.k.a. Captain America, is based, and goes on to become Cap's first sidekick) is in fact an assassin. Cap keeps his proverbial gloves clean while the job gets done. It is rather interesting that Bucky was the more ruthless (in terms of using weaponry) than Cap was. This in particular was demonstrated in the *AW 7* winter 1942–1943 issue in which Bucky used a rifle to shoot (in the back, no less!) an escaping Japanese soldier (*AW 7*, 224).

As Marvel has experimented with "back stories" of characters, the similarities of their creation have increased, whether consciously or subconsciously. For example, During Garth Ennis' *Born* (2003) series, Castle's back-story is that he was a captain in the U.S. Marine Corps. This was in contrast to his earlier series in which he was an enlisted man in the either the Marine Corps or the Special Forces. Steve Rogers took on the Captain moniker when he was in costume; he was otherwise a mere private in the U.S. Army. Both dealt with the loss of family members (Rogers lost his parents to illness pre–World War II, while Castle's family was killed post–Vietnam after witnessing a mob hit). For both characters, how they approach society and their methods for dealing with injustice are displayed through their martial arts.

The first meeting of the two characters was in *CA 241* (January 1980). In this episode, Captain America is following the path of both the gangsters terrorizing New York, as well as the Punisher (who is seen as a vigilante). The struggle comes to a climax as Punisher manages to get ahold of Cap's shield, as was shown on the Frank Miller drawn cover. Even at this early stage, the duality of the characters is apparent. Both are working for an ultimate goal (a just society) but how they approach it is very different in methodology and outcome. The Punisher gets the drop on Cap, but the battle ends with an outcome acceptable for both: the bad guys are halted.

In the confusion of the street violence where Cap lives, the Punisher's outfit even draws back to Cap's origin. In *241*, Cap's neighbor mistakes the Punisher for the dreaded Schutzstaffel (SS) of the concentration camps: "Now everything is falling into place! Anna Kappelbaum saw the Punisher's black outfit and thought he was a Nazi! Hmmm, she may not be far from wrong! From what I've read about the Punisher, he's a strange fanatical crusader who's bent on exterminating all organized crime!" (Barr, 19). In the reference, Cap notices the similarity of the Nazis' predominant colors (black) and symbology (skulls), which were prevalent on both uniforms.

This first issue also sets forth many of the comparisons of both characters. Both seem to possess superior reflexes. When Cap throws his shield at the Punisher, the Punisher knocks it down and puts his foot on it. Cap replies that "Not one man in a thousand could stop my shield like that" (Barr, 15). The two unite later in the issue against the mob, and when the Punisher gains the upper hand and is about to kill them, Cap lectures the Punisher on the need for

due process and the law. Coming from the late 1970s/early 1980s, when the crime rates were skyrocketing all over the country, it is an important notation to a general reading public that may want the Punisher's form of justice. One only has to look at some of the positive press that real life vigilante Bernhard Goetz received during the eighties.[1]

Most importantly, Cap appeals to the Punisher that one needs to take the moral high ground, even in war, lest the U.S. soldier stoops to the level of "the other" be they sadistic Nazis or Japanese of World War II, Vietcong in the Vietnam War, criminals in America, or (after 2001) terrorists (Barr 23). Finally as a last foreshadowing of the conflicts to come, Cap lectures the Punisher on the use of firearms: "I've handled a few guns in my career, but I've never willingly taken a life, and I never will" (27). As the two heroes part ways, Cap goes one step further by stating that "We're very much alike.... The Punisher and I.... Each of us are fighting a very personal war" (30). Again, one seemingly compliments the other, regardless of the surface tension.

Aside from the early comparisons, creators of comics as well as the viewing public liked the comparisons of the two. In *Captain America Annual: The Von Strucker Gambit* focuses on issues of genetic enhancement of terrorist group Hydra's operatives. Two people that the terrorist agency wants DNA from are Captain America (for his genetic perfection) and the Punisher (for his instinctive fighting skills, not to mention his unpredictability in perhaps turning to the villainous side of life).

The concept of these two and their interaction was significant. During the '80s and '90s, Marvel started experimenting with various superhero origins. For these two characters it culminated in *What If? #51: What if the Punisher Became Captain America*? The cover artwork was provocative: The familiar blue cowl with the A and wings, on the familiar skull. In the story line, alternate histories are formed when events do or do not occur. In this case, Captain America is defeated by Red Skull and Frank Castle/Punisher is chosen to become the new Captain America. He turns it down, and then the alternates to Castle fail in their missions. Only after Castle's family is killed does he take on the mantle of Cap, but for a different reason: to seek revenge.

His path of vengeance culminates in the same result that the original Punisher had created: the violent death of enemies of society. The Punisher as Cap makes some interesting distinctions about what American society has become. People in the 1990s were still part of the perspective that the U.S. needed to be tough on crime, and tough on those enemies of the world who wished to use violence for their own ends, and not those of civilized society. Yet, the Punisher would easily fit into that exact category.

In the end however, Castle is faced with the real decision of killing a mobster in cold blood when he is stopped by "Captain America." The Cap figure is only an android (presumably built by the government), and after a lengthy treatise between the two as to why the image of Captain America needs to live on in a living person, Castle stops the execution and finally drop the persona of the Punisher. He takes on the moniker of Captain America, and adopts his ideals as well. Again, we see the concept of force being tempered with justice (the very American ideals that the original Cap stood for).

Another interesting interaction is that of the Punisher with U.S. Agent (John Walker). It is ironic that U.S. Agent should have the same name as the U.S. Navy cryptologist that sold secrets to the Soviets in the 1980s. U.S. Agent is far more reactionary, and actually more akin to Punisher than to Cap in methods of combat. This, on the other hand, does not mean that the two would work together. In fact in *Punisher: No Escape* (Marvel 1990), U.S. Agent is seen

by Castle as a weak imitation of Captain America and what he stands for. In one particular exchange, the true feelings of Castle to U.S. Agent are revealed: "You're the jerk who tried to take over from Captain America when he was down and out. Guess you couldn't cut it. Cap's a Boy Scout, but a tough boot to fill. You aren't worth Jack" (G. Wright 27). It is an interesting aspect of Castle. He hates the naïveté of Cap, but anyone who tries to replace the original Cap is treated even worse.

Even towards the end of the story, as both U.S. Agent and Punisher attempt to rescue innocent people caught in a fire, the idea of U.S. Agent filling Cap's shoes is unmistakable. Castle notes "He's relentless. Dedicated. Unquestioning. Shame he is the Commission's whipping boy" (G. Wright 32–3). In this sequence, the "Commission" refers to the Commission for Superhero Activities, a precursor to the same group that calls for registration of all superheroes and leads to the Superhero Civil War that ultimately causes the death of Captain America. Even at the end of this story, U.S. Agent noted to the Commission that it was wrong to pursue Castle, as the Punisher is working for the best interests of the people (G. Wright 48).

What was intriguing was that the Punisher was seemingly assassinated by the U.S. Agent, who must atone for not capturing the Punisher. The Punisher "dead" to the world is then able to continue on his path of hunting down those who serve as an enemy of the people. For U.S. Agent, his failings as Cap's replacement are also telling, and it casts doubt on who can take up the task of portraying Captain America.

Perhaps the most substantial look into the two characters was the *Punisher-Captain America: Blood and Glory* three part mini-series, which ran in 1991. This series came out at a time when the Cold War and even Desert Storm were finished, and the enemies of America became internal. The story line for the series was both novel at times as well as uninspired. The book looked at the sales of U.S. weapons from a gun runner named "Mr. Slickster" and his sale to a Central American dictator, General Miguel Navatilas of the country of Medisuela. The weapons systems are flawed in such a way that they guns will fire only a few times before they misfire and explode. The gun runner knows this and Cap overhears it. Within the dialog, Cap again states his ideals and morality: "There is no such thing as a just war ... unless it is maybe the one that made me what I am" (Jansen *Blood and Glory 1* 6). He goes on to state that the excessive use of force is not always worth the cost, as demonstrated by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. The key to the writing in this section of the book is that many see Captain America as too simple of a person in an era of complexity and changing friends and foes. He sees the issue as a simple matter of "us" and "them" while *realpolitik* dictates that the U.S. back dictators and ne'er-do-wells for the complexity of the greater good.

As the Punisher is introduced later in the same issue, the idea of his persona is juxtaposed with Cap's. The Punisher noted that "Civilians don't see the war for what it is. They see what a soldier has to do as no different, no better than the enemy. But those who see the world so black and white never stop to think that it's a gray light that reaches the floor of the jungle" (Jansen *Blood and Glory 1* 16–17). This passage is telling, as it notes the distrust of Americans in the post–Vietnam world of international affairs, as well as the perception given the American population of Hollywood and the idea of "the good war" that is one in which the heroes fight (and even die) in a moral, righteous manner, and that no atrocities are committed by the good guys. However, when one looks at the historical records from historians such as Stephen Ambrose, Paul Fussell and Peter Schrijvers, the record of what American soldiers thought and did was quite different than what Hollywood, or the comics, would

have us believe. For the Punisher, the attitude towards war is quite simple, and is spelled out on the next few panels: both the Punisher and criminals deal in death, but "they sell theirs, and I [the Punisher] give it away" (Jansen *Blood and Glory 1* 17). His mannerisms in combat are simple: start the bleeding, stop the breathing, and promote established shock, which are classic combat principles. Unlike Cap, whose idea is subduing an enemy, Punisher simply means to eliminate them.

For the rest of the first issue, the premise of the series is that the U.S. government, through several agencies, is selling these weapons to a U.S.-friendly dictator, who in turn sells drugs to the U.S. The Machiavellian structure is such that the U.S. can eventually use the drug issue to invade Medisuela and then control the surrounding countries. The story line itself is not surprising: the ties to Manuel Noriega are apparent (in fact Noriega is even mentioned later on, as an example of anyone who opposed the U.S. in the region) as well as the U.S. government selling drugs to its lower class citizens (the CIA was accused of this during the early 1990s).

At the end of the first of the three books was the imagery of the betrayal of the flag and the country by Captain America. The plots within plots are such that Castle is led to believe that Cap is responsible for the sales of the weapons, and Castle has to bring his war to the symbol (Captain America) of what is wrong with the U.S. In a cliffhanger ending to book 1, Punisher shoots Cap, as yet another forewarning of the story lines to come.

By "Act II" Cap is dead (so we think, when in actuality a funeral is staged to make people think he was dead), and the Punisher goes looking further into what happened within the world of guns and drugs. He meets with a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) informant who is simple in his explanation of why he wants Castle to have the information: he is "through playing politics ... you'll [The Punisher] get the job done" (Jansen *Blood and Glory 2* 8). The guns are to serve as an effective way of running a proxy war throughout Central and South America, again harkening back to the days of constant U.S. interference in the region.[2] Later, as the informant is assaulted by rogue elements, Steve Rogers shows himself to the Punisher, and notes that they are both fighting for the truth. From this point to the end of the mini-series, the two fight as a unit for the common goal of ending the corruption within the U.S. government.

The discussion of the two and their counterfoil roles comes into focus when the Punisher and Cap are directly involved in taking down corrupt Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) employees who are ruthless in their job of killing anyone with information on the gun deals. As the two are taking on "the bad guys" the Punisher notes, "playing by the rules in Nam got you carried home in a mummy sack. Surviving in country was a matter of hitting below the belt." He then goes on to say "Eagle Scout [Cap] thinks differently: Acts like its still D-Day, charging up some beach to take the enemy head-on" (Jansen *Blood and Glory 2* 26).

The mini-series took on a rather disturbing view of what agents of the U.S. were willing to do for their results, regardless of what side they were on in the conflict over the soul of America. For Cap, the statement of looking for "someone to care that some of the good of this country still stands for is being raped" is a strong action (Jansen *Blood and Glory 2* 33). Cap's words are similar to the adage "all that is necessary for evil to triumph is that good men stand by and do nothing" (Kaplan 346.) For Attorney General Mollech in the series, the ruthless nature by which he takes part in a sacrifice with General Navatilas is unsettling. Most disturbing of all perhaps is his assistant Ms. Stone, who tortures a woman by putting a drill into her eye to obtain information of both Captain America and the Punisher (Jansen *Blood*

and Glory 2 43). The idea of Cap not using a weapon is also discussed when the two heroes enter the jungle of Medisuela. Cap asks the Punisher what he is carrying. When the Punisher rattles off the various edged weapons (again a throwback of sorts to Cap's ideal of hand to hand) he asks Cap "Let me guess ... you don't believe in weapons?" To which Cap replies that it is "[n]ot that. I just don't need them" (Jansen *Blood and Glory 2* 44). Both then set into the jungle to destroy the cocaine labs as well as find the missing weapons.

As the armed conflict continued, the Punisher again shows his willingness to do what it takes to get things done, whether it is driving a knife into someone's shoulder, then using them as a human shield or other forms of torture. Americans are uneasy when it comes to the concept of torture. When the photographs of Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq were released, many Americans found the behavior inexcusable, yet, in all fairness, the Iraqis committed acts far more horrific. The idea is that Americans (even to an extent, superheroes) need to be seen in a better light that the ones they are fighting. As he is fighting in the jungle, the Punisher seems to feel at home. Even Cap notes, "I'm at war again: a soldier fighting in a foreign land for the greater good of my country and theirs" (Jansen *Blood and Glory 3* 7).

For the forces aligned against Cap and the Punisher, their methods are simple: start a war to obtain U.S. entry. For the enemies of Cap and the Punisher, the goal of the invasion of the rogue DIA officers is either to show that there are rogue elements within the U.S. armed forces, or to start them as a the first wave of a general invasion. In this new media intensive society, with instant messaging and news, the U.S. government wants to avoid publicity, and so the message is altered to fit the needs, regardless of lives lost (Jansen *Blood and Glory 3* 18). For the Cap and Punisher, the ends are starker: the goal is to stop those running a war for personal gain. The idea is startling for Cap (but not necessarily for the Punisher) when he realizes that this conflict is "the Stars and Stripes fighting a war with the tactics of the Nazis" (Jansen *Blood and Glory 3* 31).

In the end sequence, the DIA rogue element is defeated, and Attorney General Mollech is caught trying to flee the country with money on a private jet. Cap becomes so enraged that he is beating Mollech with a vengeance, but as he notes, only he is aware that it will not go further. The Punisher states,

> Lower the shield man! Just walk away! Or you can never go back ... and it's lonely as Hell once you get here! There's nothing except the cold satisfaction of punishment. Every war I have gone into I've watched the symbols behind them all fail in the heat of battle. There aren't many things left to believe in.... Don't take one more away [Jansen *Blood and Glory 3* 44–45].

The exchange shows again that even with the Punisher representing a darker side of American nature, the need for some sort of moral compass is still there. Cap tells the Punisher that he needs to cut himself some slack as well, for the Punisher really does represent the greater need for justice (Jansen *Blood and Glory 3* 43–45). The Punisher demonstrates a lessening of the killer instinct. When Mollech pulls a gun, Castle merely shoots him in the knee, rather than killing him outright. The rationale is that the guilty should be judged in court, thereby reaffirming the principles of American Justice.

For the two characters, the comparisons are striking as they seem to represent the same thing, but in different actions. Both are cynical of the government, but still fight for the ideals that established the country. Both want justice, especially for those unable to obtain it themselves. Both seem to carry residual guilt for not protecting those closest to them. Interestingly, both learn from the other, and adapt in some form parts of each other's fighting and judicial tenets. And most obvious, both are born of war. It is how they adapt to war that sets them apart.

Not surprisingly, the symbolism of the two comics carries through time and again. For the Punisher the black and skull logos harkens back to the symbols of the dreaded SS (as was previously noted). For the ties between the two story lines, the borrowed usage is often overwhelming. For example, a black clad assassin who wreaks havoc on society in Captain America's world is the assassin Crossbones, who was part of the Red Skull's organization the Skeleton Crew (Conroy 227). To further complicate matters, Crossbones is the person originally associated with Cap's assassination in *Captain America 25* (Brubaker 22).

Within the *Punisher War Journal (PWJ)* (2006–07 series, specifically issues 2, 3, 7–11), the villains that original creators Joe Simon and Jack Kirby had Captain America fight against come back again. For starters, in *PWJ 3*, Captain America and Castle directly interact. For the first meeting of the two, it was when Castle (in pre–Punisher days) is training to go to Vietnam, and Cap is doing the training. It is a somewhat rare direct meeting of the two. The story line arced between the original meeting, in which Castle would not hit Cap (since he is a hero to Castle) and was punished by his squad mates for looking weak, and the present, in which Castle in Punisher mode, kills two super-villains who find themselves aligned with Cap in the anti–Superhero registration movement. Castle shows a certain unwillingness to make compromises for political expediency when he killed the two. Cap is incensed, as it shows that the Punisher cannot be trusted. In fact, Cap even states it as so: "This is what I get for cutting a deal with an animal like you" (Fraction *PWJ 3* 4). Punisher retorts, "You knew exactly who and what you were bargaining with. You needed someone to do your dirty work when the time came." Again we see the reccurring theme of maintaining the symbol while others get their hands dirty.

The Punisher goes one step further in his realization that an agreement between superheroes and supervillains has developed. After killing two supervillains that Cap was going to work with, Castle reflects on the predicament, "Of course I realize now that he must be like James Bond or Santa Claus. A character different guys play so America never has to go without a fighting spirit. A symbol. An ideal. Immortal. Uncompromised" (Fraction *PWJ 3* 18).

Even with the uncertainty of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, some soldiers who have written accounts have expressed the fact that despite all that they see as wrong with America and its policies, they still are willing to fight (Rico 301).

In the *PWJ* series, the concept of neo–Nazis comes into the story line, especially the commander Hate-Monger, who wears an all-white, Captain America inspired outfit. The focal point is the black star with white swastika on it. The ties to modern paranoia are rife, as Hate-Monger uses the threat of Al Qaeda to send Border Patrol units to one area while he attacks illegal immigrants in another. The use of Hate-Monger as a villain is also significant as the character was used in previous Captain America storylines in the 1960s and '70s. In those issues, as within the *PWJ* series, Hate-Monger is Hitler personified, or at least a viable substitute. These attacks give way to the Punisher infiltrating the organization, and then donning a variant of the Captain America outfit with a Punisher touch (the panel in which Castle designs the new Captain Punisher costume has the look of a child trying to paint the *Mona Lisa*, complete with tongue out in concentration). Unlike *What If? 51,* here the Punisher incorporates the skull into a red, white and blue color scheme. The key difference is the use of weapons, which is something Cap has constantly fought against. The Punisher states,

> Flame retardant light armor plating, ceramic plating for some real basic psionic interference, jerry-rigged sensor scramblers wired up the back, thermal and night vision, and guns, explosives, and knives in every damn pocket I could find. Best of all, the symbol. His and mine. The guy may have

> hated my guts, but I guarantee he'd have hated a warped little Nazi like Hate-Monger even more. It's the least any of us can do [Fracton *PWJ 8* 20].

Further, his use of the imagery is telling as he truly recognizes the symbolism: "This isn't a war against an army. It's waging a war of ideas. And on that kind of battlefield, Captain America can be an H-Bomb. I know. I've seen it" (Fraction *PWJ 8* 20).

The idea of hand to hand combat armed only with a shield (which can be used offensively) is far more idealistic and honorable than shooting someone from a distance. In fact it refers to the honorable "cowboy myth" of the man who is trained and is superior in deadly arts, but does not want to use violence. When he is forced by villains, the cowboy (or his substitute) is accurate. The key is that the opponent incites the violence, but is less skilled than the reluctant hero (Jewett and Lawrence 35).

The use of Cap as a symbol is recognizable everywhere, and it was also given prominence in the story line. In *PWJ* 9, Hate-Monger states why he chose the costume:

> I took the pig's (Caps) costume away from him. It's more than just taking a symbol back. We're taking America back, Frank, for regular, hard working law abiding Euro-Anglo-Aryan Christian white folk like you and me. That's not hate you're feeling. It's the patriotism we've been told for so long deserves to be kept in a cage [Fraction *PWJ 9* 13].

It is as though both are divvying up the symbolism established by Captain America for their own causes. In this aspect, the propaganda value of Cap is apparent.

The imagery and story line of the *PWJ* are telling. For one, the use of the concept of Nazis, in this case white supremacists, is symbolic, as the Punisher takes on the forces that Cap himself took on 65 years ago. But further than that, Punisher adds his own mark. When he engages in combat with Hate-Monger, it is the usual "Kill 'em all" attitude. He revels in it. "Goodbye magic voodoo mind warp machines. Hello violence" (Fraction *PWJ 10* 13). In the end, Punisher kills Hate-Monger with a bullet to the head. He also cuts the uniform of Hate Monger from the body as a way of gaining back the symbol of America and Cap.

The moral struggle that culminated in *Issue 11* was the most surprising. When faced with an alive and enraged Bucky (now in the guise of the Winter Soldier), who detests the fact that Punisher dared to adopt the Captain America colors and wishes to punish Castle for doing so, the Punisher reveals another facet of his life: when faced with the decision of taking up the image of Cap, Castle cannot live with the morality that comes with it. In fact, the direct lines are: "I don't want it bad enough. It's just too heavy for me to carry" (Fraction *PWJ 11* 26). This exchange refers not to the shield of Cap, but the burden of the responsibility. As he noted earlier, Castle does not want to become the man playing the character. In the end, and unlike the *What if?* book, the Punisher cannot come to terms with the idea of fighting in a moral regard. He hands over the costume to Bucky and goes back to fighting his war, his way.

The idea of Cap being something of an anachronism has developed in other areas as well. In his essays (later book) as an embedded reporter with the First Recon Marines in Iraq in 2003, Evan Wright discussed how the troops of one unit called one of their commanders "Captain America." In this usage, it was not a term of endearment. The captain was often gung-ho about combat, but when it came to the fighting he was either prone to hysterics or he was malicious in nature, to the point where he attempted to bayonet a prisoner of war. To that end he was reported by the subordinates in his unit (E. Wright 293–294, 305). Ironically, the unit written about would be the actual combat unit type that Castle would have been in.

Although the Punisher is not mentioned in the book, many of the Marines interviewed often referenced childhood comic characters or other forms of adolescent items as a catalyst for joining the military. One picture even noted a Marine reading a comic for relaxation (although the comic title is not mentioned).

In the Christmas season of 2006, Marvel released a special four-part New Avengers comic book series for the troops serving overseas. Done in conjunction with the Army and Air Forces Exchange Services (AAFES) system, the four comics used different characters to discuss soldiers' problems. In the one featuring Captain America entitled "Letters Home," Hydra took control of a satellite that has on board both a weapon as well as a communications array for emails between the troops and home. Given the fact that most superheroes are off with their families, it is up to Cap to get the situation settled. Cap gains help from the Silver Surfer (who sets off for the satellite), Ghost Rider (who goes to Australia for the stored emails), and, as he is storming a base in Arizona to gain access to the satellite uplink, Cap is surprised to find Castle waiting there for him. Castle stated that he was there as a former member of the Army Special Forces and is volunteering to help (Moore 24, 28–32). In the end, the messages are delivered, and a human element to Castle is revealed. It is sappy in one way, but it still succeeds in showing the human nature of men and women in combat.

Following the death of Captain America, *Wizard Comics Magazine* ran several articles in which the history of Captain America was discussed. One writer, Steve Englehart, wondered what it would be like to be Captain America in a time when America and its ideals are not welcomed around the world. A better question was posed by him asking what Cap would do in this era of terrorists, CIA detention centers, and the need to protect America from an enemy that doesn't want to play by civilized rules, regardless of what those rules may or may not entail (Ben Morse *Wizard 187*, 34, 36). For writer Brian Michael Bendis, Captain America seems to represent the collective emotional state of the U.S., and, when the U.S. is hurt, Cap is the point of that collective grief and emotion. For these writers, the concept of Cap being a methodical character that is more willing to rationalize the ends is a counterfoil to the Punisher. The Punisher is detailed in his plotting and execution of his plans, and he is not a devotee of political discourse, but of action. In the end, both seem to avoid politics.

As the series Captain America moves forward in the wake of his death (one that even Captain America creator Joe Simon lamented, as he stated that America still needs a symbol), who are the candidates to succeed him? Although the Punisher went so far as to redesign a combat uniform that would incorporate Caps ideals, he could not do it. The answer was partially on the cover of *Captain America 34*, painted by Alex Ross, in which Cap is handling a handgun. Bucky Barnes had in fact taken Steve Rogers' place. The "new" Cap in fact surprised his opponents by shooting them (albeit in non-lethal areas). The demonstration of force was an interesting one. Perhaps the need for an icon that is willing to use overwhelming force is not far on the horizon after all.

Notes

1. Bernhard Goetz (the Subway Vigilante) became a symbol for ordinary folks fighting back against criminals when in 1984 he shot back at four men on a New York subway who were intent on robbing him.

2. In the twentieth century, the U.S. military actively invaded Nicaragua four times, Cuba four times, Haiti several times, and pressured other countries. For further information, refer to Max Boot's *the Savage Wars of Peace.*

References

Ambrose, Stephen. *Citizen Soldiers*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.
Barr, Mike (writer), Frank Springer and Pablo Marcus (artists). *Captain America 241*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1980.
Boot, Max. *The Savage Wars of Peace*. New York: Basic, 2002.
Brubaker, Ed (writer), and Steve Epting (artist). *Captain America #25: Director's Cut.* New York: Marvel, 2007.
_____. *Captain America #34*. New York: Marvel, 2008.
Captain America story in *All Winners 8*. Reprinted in *Marvel Masterworks: All Winners, Vol. 2.* New York: Marvel, 1942, 2006.
Chichester, D.G. (writer), and Mike Manley (artist). *Captain America Annual Part Three: the Von Strucker Gambit*. New York: Marvel: 1991.
Conroy, Mike. *500 Comic Book Villains*. Hauppauge, NY: Barrons Educational Services, 2005.
Fraction, Matt (writer), and Ariel Olivetti (artist). *Punisher War Journal* (issues 3–10). New York: Marvel, 2006–present.
Fraction, Matt (writer), and Leandro Fernandez (pencils). *Punisher War Journal 11*. New York: Marvel, 2007.
Furman, Simon (writer), and Paris Cullins (pencils). *What If? 51 What If Punisher Became Captain America?* New York: Marvel Comics, 1991.
Fussell, Paul. *Wartime*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
Jansen, Klaus (artist), D.G. Chichester and Margaret Clark (writers). *Punisher/Captain America: Blood and Glory, books 1–3*. New York: Marvel Comics, 1992.
Jewett, Robert, and John Shelton Lawrence. *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003.
Kaplan, Justin, ed. *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2002.
Moore, Stuart (writer), and John Stanisci (pencils). *The New Avengers: Letters Home. Marvel Salutes the Real Heroes, the Men and Women of the U.S. Military* (AAFES edition). New York: Marvel, 2007.
Morse, Ben. "The Big Questions." In *Wizard 187* (May 2007) 26–27.
_____. "Who Will Be Captain America?" In *Wizard 187* (May 2007), 28–29.
Rico, Johnny. *Blood Makes the Grass Grow Green: A Year in the Desert with Team America*. New York: Presidio, 2007.
Schrijvers, Peter. *The GI War in the Pacific*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.
Various. *Captain America Annual 3: The Von Strucker Gambit* (vol. 1, no. 10) New York: Marvel Comics, 1990.
Wright, Evan. *Generation Kill: Devil Dogs, Iceman, Captain America and the New Face of American War.* New York: Penguin, 2004.
Wright, Gregory (writer), and Tod Smith (artist). *Punisher: No Escape.* New York: Marvel, 1990.

Captain America and Captain Britain

Geopolitical Identity and "the Special Relationship"

Jason Dittmer

Captain America and Nationalism

Captain America has often been proposed as an example of nationalist propaganda, and given his wartime origins as a Nazi-smashing, flag-waving, drug-enhanced super-soldier, this is not a hard argument to make (Murray). However, as numerous other essays in this volume have expressed, the Captain America unfrozen by the Avengers in 1964 seemed to serve a completely different narrative purpose than the Captain America unleashed on Hitler in 1940. Instead, he was an idealist, preferring peace to violence, but willing to stand up for the ideals that, from his perspective, made America great — ideals that included multiculturalism and other pluralist accounts not readily found in the World War II comics, or the "commie-smasher" variant of the 1950s. A direct connection from the apparent moral clarity of the 1940s and its "Good War" (Terkel) — to the social upheavals of the 1960s, and that period's increasingly illegitimate war in Vietnam — *ToS*[1] and *CA* provided a unique opportunity to explore the changing nature of America. In this example of a time-honored science fiction narrative, a "man out of his time" struggling to make sense of a formerly familiar landscape, Captain America serves less as a top-down propaganda tool than as a device for questioning assumptions about American behavior, politics, and society. This is a useful framework to adopt when considering Captain America because use of the charged term, propaganda, implies a privileged, essential truth (in this case about America) that is hidden through the reading of comic books. This denies the multiplicity of readings possible, both of America and of *CA* comic books.

In adopting this perspective on Captain America, this essay shies away from traditional Frankfurt School-oriented perspectives that view popular culture as a way of indoctrinating the work force into participating in their own subjugation (Adorno). Rather, this essay adopts a more ambivalent perspective on popular culture, seeing it as one of the many avenues through which hegemonic truth regimes that contribute to the constitution of national subjects are instituted (Gramsci; Foucault). Thus, rather than the Marxist view of popular culture, in which people are led to believe they are something different than a member of their class (in superhero terms, their true identity), this essay adopts a post–Marxist view, in which class identity is just one of many dimensions to a person's identity This view espouses that the dominance of some aspects of that identity over others in processes of (geo)political decision-making is the result of historically contingent processes.

Of particular importance to modern identities is a historically unique social category, the nation. Indeed, scholars have long studied the technologies and processes through which nations have come into existence, and subjects have come to understand themselves as members of those collective identities (Anderson). Nations have only existed in the way that we define the term today for a few hundred years; there is nothing normal or natural about the post–Westphalian system of nation-states that has emerged as the dominant way of mapping the world. This mapping visualizes the centrality of the nation (and its cousin, the state), and gives them cartographic pride of place. Alternative geographical imaginations (such as the global, class-based north-south binary that is popularized in development and world systems theory — see Slater) are minimized in importance and are unlikely to be popularized as they appear to contradict the cold hard fact of the world political map. Thus, the role of publishing and other technologies in mediating the nation-state is key to its establishment as the fundamental geography of the past several centuries.

Henri Lefebvre argued that space was produced through three parallel acts of creation. The creation of material spaces is the most tangible act in the production of space; in the case of the nation-state this is perhaps most obvious in the form of immigration posts and passports, which together are a technology used to exclude foreigners from national spaces. These particular material spaces buttress ideologies of space, such as the nation-state system imposed during the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the outcome of which created explicitly territorial states imbued with sovereignty for the first time (Vincent). These ideologies must be created, generally either in the halls of government or in academic venues. The final act of creation is that of artistic, or otherwise representational practices, that are disseminated to inform subjects and legitimate the material practices described initially. An example of this, again chosen to fit the example of the nation-state system, would be the aforementioned world political map, which elides all sense of socio-cultural difference except for that constructed through one's location on one side of a border or another. Thus, all three acts of creation, although nominally separate, interact to produce spaces, both material and imaginary.

CA serves as another example of this mediated geography. From the character's inception, Captain America was intended to be a rescaling icon — a figure that literally embodies the national identity, thus rescaling the vast abstract collective of the nation and rendering it tangible and knowable in the form of a single person (Dittmer, "American is Safe"). Through the character's dedication to his country, and its people, he modeled proper American behavior, ensuring that his behavior was marked as American by his star-spangled, red, white, and blue costume. While it would be ludicrous to say that *CA* was responsible for people considering themselves American (or associating certain values with American-ness) it is not too much to say that the creative staff of *CA* produced texts that contributed to ongoing societal debates in which the meaning of America was contested and hegemonic formulations crystallized into common sense.

Given this understanding of geography and popular culture, as well as the way Captain America is associated with American identity, the interactions of Captain America and Captain Britain become more than just another superhero team-up, rather they become symbols of the geopolitical relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. Differences between the two heroes are meant to be emblematic of differences between the two nations, and indeed the heroes needed to ring true to their audiences, as they were each intended primarily for domestic consumption. The commercial imperative of both comics' publisher (Marvel Comics) did more than just contribute to an authentic[2] representation of

the nation; it also framed the way the production of what would come to be *Captain Britain Weekly* (*CBW*) went forward, leading to some conflict and resentment from British comics fans.

The Creation of Marvel UK and Captain Britain

In 1972, Marvel Comics (*CA*'s New York based publisher) launched an imprint meant to cater to the British market. Although its purpose was to provide an outlet for Marvel reprints to be circulated in, the United Kingdom (the previous outlet for this material having stopped production in 1969), several modifications were required to the Marvel model. First, the comics were released weekly rather than monthly, which was the American standard. Second, they were generally in digest format, featuring several ongoing strips, each of seven or eight pages. Third, they were generally in black and white, although color was not exactly uncommon (Gravett).

The first such comic to be produced by Marvel UK was *The Mighty World of Marvel*, which included reprints of already-published *Fantastic Four*, *Spider-Man*, and *Hulk* stories, broken up into smaller, weekly episodes. Another popular comic published by Marvel UK was *Spider-Man Comics Weekly*, which again repackaged American stories. This was all quite successful, but the British comic book readers demanded the first-class status that they saw American comics fans receiving: first-run material, set in their own country. And so they received *CBW*, a comic book digest like previous series, but with a feature character in first-run stories, written and published purely for the British market. The remainder of each issue included reprints of American tales from *Nick Fury* and *Fantastic Four*.

Captain Britain by now has a long and convoluted history, the result of his intertwining with the soap opera-like narratives of the X-Men branch of the Marvel Universe during the 1980s and 1990s. However, in his original formulation he was very much a conventional superhero, with striking similarities to Spider-Man[3] but still distinctively a national hero like Captain America, as demonstrated through his costume: red, with a golden lion on his chest and blue accents on his face and shoulders. The Union Jack decorated his wrists and forehead. Having received his powers from Merlin, in the form of an amulet that, upon his touch, changed his physical body from that of a puny physics student, Brian Braddock, to that of super-strong, incredibly agile Captain Britain, he embarks upon a career of fighting crime, utilizing his indestructible (and mysterious) quarterstaff.

The reaction of British comics fans to the creation of this hero is unambiguous in two respects[4]. First, following on previous research on comics outside of the American context (Dittmer), readers were thrilled with the recognition of their community in the superhero. For instance, although (or perhaps because) many readers were fans of Captain America, they took particular pleasure in having a national superhero, fighting to protect them, rather than New Yorkers. In a letter to the editor, one reader wrote, "I like the setting for the story and especially the true-life idea of him meeting in 'the Flying Fish' [Brian Braddock's pub] with the rest of his university buddies.... It's also good to see that care has been given (art wise and story wise) to the place names and the other London/English details" (Friedrich, *CBW* 33 18–19).

Another letter writer saw Captain Britain as British beachhead in the Marvel Universe, saying

> Captain Britain should meet up with the Black Knight and then, possibly through him, The Avengers. He could also team-up with Shang-Chi while he is in Britain. My next suggestion will probably be very popular. Let Captain America meet Captain Britain, and perhaps you could write a two-part story in which one part could be in Captain America's comic. Bring back Union Jack, only this one could be the grandson (or granddaughter) of the one currently starring in The Invaders. You now have an excuse for bringing more new British superheroes into the world [letter to the editor in Claremont, *CBW 9* 23].

This unambiguous enthusiasm for the show's Britishness was matched by the unambiguous disappointment in the lack of British writers and artists actually producing the comic book, as is evidenced in the following letters to the editors.

> First, when [UK] Marveldom begged for a series all its own, I don't really think this American-produced strip is what we had in mind. The general idea was for strips entirely produced in the U.K. by British writers and artists [letter to the editor in Friedrich, *CBW 22* 16].
>
> I like the idea of a British superhero, but so far Captain Britain has shown very few British traits. His powers seem to be the same as those of Captain America [letter to the editor in Friedrich, *CBW 27* 9].
>
> Since when has Captain Britain taken to chewing on dictionaries? Since Gary [Friedrich] took over [as writer] in issue 11, that's when. And if Gary thinks that the "Thor-Surfer"[5] small talk is Cap's scene, or Britain's for that matter, he's better put his 100% made-in-America hamburger down, take off his rose-colored specs and read up on Great Britain today [letter to the editor in Friedrich, *CBW* 22 17].

Indeed, at times the cultural imperialism of Americans trying to write a British nationalist comic book is glaring, for instance at one point Captain Britain refers to a "soccer" stadium. These kinds of gaffes certainly worked against the interests of Marvel UK, diminishing their financial returns and undermining the staff's attempts to situate themselves as insiders with their audience, a practice that was very effective for Marvel in the United States (Wright).

The Special Relationship in the Late 1970s and Early 1980s

The relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom has not always been special, as is most obviously seen in the American Revolution and the War of 1812. However, following the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century, the relationship between the two allies solidified and became bureaucratized, particularly in the realms of defense and intelligence policy. Indeed, the first public use of the term special relationship to describe the link between the U.S. and the UK came in Winston Churchill's famous Iron Curtain speech in 1946 (Dumbrell).

Most political scientists view the special relationship as resulting from increasing functionalist linkages forged in the shadow of Soviet power, which marked a powerful impetus for trans–Atlantic cooperation. However, the cultural turn in the social sciences has enabled scholars to open themselves up to the possibility that the performance of a common elite culture can drive these integrative processes alongside other, more realist concerns. Certainly there is evidence among non–Anglophone U.S. allies of concern over their perceived second-class ally status in the face of a U.S./UK bond that persists despite several proclamations of divorce by pundits and observers over the years.

Of course, the special relationship is not an equal one. The United States during the last half of the twentieth century was undoubtedly the world's strongest economic power, and despite the existence of a military challenger in the USSR, was nevertheless the world's preeminent

superpower. The British often question the benefits they receive from participating in this relationship (most recently over the British role in the 2003 Iraq invasion), and this reflects the fundamental power differential between the two countries. However, unquestionably there have been moments in which British power has been enhanced by their ability to have their concerns so closely linked to that of the Americans. This was noted by Henry Kissinger (79), an advocate of the special relationship, when he argued the U.S./UK bond incorporated "a pattern of consultation so matter-of-factly intimate that it became psychologically impossible to ignore British views."

In the summer of 1976, when the first issue of *CBW* hit the newsstands, the special relationship was in need of some fence-mending. Conflict over the extent of alliance in the context of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, combined with an increasingly European orientation to UK foreign policy, had left relations between the two countries strained. Of particular note also was the American refusal, despite numerous British requests, to intervene against the Greek dictatorship's saber-rattling that resulted in the eminently predictable Turkish invasion of Cyprus. The UK, having learned the lesson of the 1956 Suez Crisis, was effectively stopped from unilateral intervention by American stonewalling. Prime Minister Callaghan (1976–1979) arrived simultaneous with the first publication of Captain Britain, even being featured in a *CBW* storyline (see below).

During his premiership, Callaghan strived to put the U.K. in the role of intermediary between the U.S. and Europe (Dumbrell). This was a latent tendency in British foreign policy prior to Callaghan; it was in fact Churchill who had argued that the U.K.'s foreign policy could be visualized as three interconnected circles, representing the special relationship, the Empire (later the Commonwealth), and Europe (Wallace). The centrality accruing to the U.K. as a result of its ability to speak to all these actors was merely being applied more vigorously by Callaghan than had been done prior. The problems that Callaghan faced were perhaps typical: being taken for granted by the United States and being seen as the American lapdog by the Europeans (a position with which Tony Blair is likely familiar). However, perhaps the biggest drain on Labor Party support for Callaghan's trans–Atlantic policy came about as a result of the IMF crisis. Right at the beginning of his premiership, the U.S. attempted to moderate British government spending by requiring them to go to the IMF to repay debts and thereby accept IMF deflationary conditions. However, the subsequent arrival in office of Jimmy Carter, with his focus on human rights, helped to re-ignite Anglo-American cooperation. Carter visited his family's historical roots in northern England, and Callaghan's son-in-law served as ambassador to the U.S., providing a unique avenue of contact to the Prime Minister for American concerns. Indeed, there is some speculation that, following the IMF crisis, Carter was especially considerate of British desires (as witnessed in 1977 civil air agreements, which was particularly beneficial for the UK) as a way of smoothing the waters (Dobson).

The warm relationship between Callaghan and Carter was overturned not by any tremendous conflict between them, but rather by the end of their tenures as chief executive of their respective countries. Callaghan lost a general election in 1979 to the Conservative Margaret Thatcher, while Carter lost to Republican Ronald Reagan in 1980. The relationship between these two is legendary, and their personal friendship was mirrored by the increasing collaboration between the two countries, both in clandestine operations in Central America and in the arming of Iraq to oppose revolutionary Iran. Similarly, American backing for Thatcher's government in the Falklands War against the American-supported junta in Argentina cemented

the special relationship. However, Thatcher's pro–American policies were often moderated by her desire to continue Callaghan's vision of the UK as an intermediary between America and Europe, which often entailed her advocating European positions, such as opposition to his strategic defense initiative, to her friend Reagan. Conversely, Reagan's 1982 invasion of Grenada (a British Commonwealth member) over London's objections marked a nadir for the special relationship.

Thus, the special relationship in the late 1970s and early 1980s was marked by stronger-than-usual closeness between the U.S. and the U.K. The relationships between Callaghan/Carter and Thatcher/Reagan were robust and often surprisingly personal. Nevertheless, ruptures in the relationship between the two countries often emerged as a result of the power imbalance between them and the American willingness to exploit that imbalance, such as in the IMF crisis and the invasion of Grenada. Thus, the British sense of solidarity with the U.S. was dependent on a sense of difference[6]. As we shall see, that sense of solidarity, set in tension with a desire for independence from American hegemony, can be found in *Captain Britain Weekly* of the same time period.

Captain America in Captain Britain Weekly

CBW had a twelve issue story arc in early 1977 that revolved around the arrival in London of the Red Skull, a Captain America nemesis. The American super-spy organization known as S.H.I.E.L.D. (led by hard-nosed World War II veteran Nick Fury) arrives on the scene. It was invited in by the Ministry of Defense, who is unaware of the presence of the Red Skull, but has been tipped off to the existence of a communist computer network that has been established in London. While this collaboration reflects the real world linkages between the U.S. and U.K. defense and intelligence agencies in opposition to the Soviet Union, it also reflects the power imbalance between the two nations. As the S.H.I.E.L.D. heli-carrier (a huge, airborne aircraft carrier) arrives over London with no warning, it scares Londoners (Friedrich, *CBW 15* 6):

LITTLE BOY: "I'll bet it's a space ship, mummy — from Mars!"
POLICEMAN: "What the flaming heck is that?"
MAN: "We'd best get underground! We're bein' invaded!
POLICEMAN: "Stay calm! Don't panic! They've made no threatening move yet!"

Later, Londoners are informed of the origin of the heli-carrier and they reply with a mixture of hurt feelings and respect for America's role in World War II (Friedrich, *CBW 17* 4):

MAN #1: "Nice of 'em to tell us — before we all ran for cover!
MAN #2: "Yeah! Some friendly mission it is that scares seven million people to death!"
WOMAN: "Oh, don't make such a fuss! Remember that Colonel Nick Fury was a great hero in the war?!"
BOY: "Aw, he's only a Yank! I want to see Captain Britain!"

Captain America is brought in by S.H.I.E.L.D. to help with the mission, and he is warned about Captain Britain, who is suspected by the British authorities of being associated with the computer network. They meet for the first time as Scotland Yard is trying to arrest Captain Britain and reveal his secret identity. Captain America intervenes, earning the ire of the police, and Captain Britain turns on him immediately, trying to get back in Scotland Yard's good graces (Friedrich *CBW 16* 3):

INSPECTOR THOMAS: "See here — I don't want to seem inhospitable to a world famous figure like yourself— but you're interfering with official police business and we can't have that — not even by the esteemed Captain America! So stand down, or I'll be forced to arrest you!"
CAPTAIN AMERICA: "No way! Even if this blows my chances to make goodwill ambassador of the year — I just can't indulge your official red tape! Time is far too previous [kicks gun from inspector's hand] — run for it, hero! Go on — I'll hold off these minions of bureaucracy!"
CAPTAIN BRITAIN: "Wrong, Yank! I'm in enough hot water! And it won't get any cooler by a foreigner attacking British officers!"

In this scene, Captain America envisages solidarity between the two national superheroes, while Captain Britain feels like that solidarity threatens his domestic relationship with constitutional authorities. The dialogue also implies a certain patriotic pride: Captain Britain had assaulted Inspector Thomas on the previous page, but when Captain America engages in the same behavior it is offensive to him. The battle between the heroes concludes when Captain America presents his papers from the British government, documenting his mission. From that point on, he and Captain Britain are colleagues-in-arms.

Superhero identities are only secured through their opposition to villains who embody values that are narrated as normatively inferior (Dittmer, "America is safe"). Thus, this new special relationship between the Captains America and Britain requires an oppositional force, much like the U.S. and UK forged their relationship in opposition to Nazi Germany, first, and the Soviet Union, later. As I have argued elsewhere (Dittmer, "Retconning America"), the Nazis have served as a useful opponent for Captain America for decades after the end of Nazism as a realistic threat. Because, unlike communists during most of the Cold War, the Nazis had no serious supporters, they can be woven into a narrative that provides a salutary identity for America being non–Fascist. This is true also in this *CBW* storyline, only with a twist. The Red Skull, an unreconstructed Nazi, organizes an army of the poor in London using the banner of Communism (Friedrich, *CBW 17* 6):

ORGANIZER: "And this gathering is but one of many meetings taking place throughout Britain! Each day our numbers increase! Soon, we'll be strong enough to attack the power-mad capitalists — and bring them to their knees! And you can be part of this moment in history! Listen to our glorious leader!"
RED SKULL: "Each day, conditions worsen! Rich men become richer while the poor wallow in a quagmire of endless poverty! But if you join me — we will overcome the inequities of our supposedly democratic leaders! In the new order — the Fourth Reich — all men will live as equals! So vows the Red Skull!"

In this way, the American creative team critiques British socialist tendencies by connecting support for British socialism to support for totalitarianism and weakness in the face of the allies' enemies. Indeed, the army of discontents quickly forms (Friedrich, *CBW 17* 6):

ORGANIZER: "Well, what's it to be? Will you remain in the gutter — or will you join us in our fight for human rights?"
LONGSHOREMAN #1: "He makes sense!"
LONGSHOREMAN #2: "Let's sign up!"
RED SKULL, to himself: "As always, poverty turns gullible men into pawns for those who crave power! And tyrannical, absolute power shall be mine here in Britain — the accursed nation whose stubborn will defeated the Fuhrer. How I loathe the British, and how I shall make them pay!"

Nick Fury and Lance Hunter (director of STRIKE, the British version of S.H.I.E.L.D.), believing the two Captains dead, as a result of a double agent within STRIKE, meet with Prime Minister Callaghan at 10 Downing Street in order to receive their orders, and yet again the strained, yet collaborative relationship between the U.S. and U.K. plays out (Friedrich *CBW 20* 4):

NICK FURY: "Just turn me loose — gimme a free rein, and I promise you I'll find the Red Skull — before he moves into your office!"

PM CALLAGHAN: "I dislike outbursts, Colonel Fury! I'm head of a government — the government of a country in which you are a visitor! However, I understand your anxiety! I'll co-operate with you as best I can!"

LANCE HUNTER: "Thank you, sir! I believe that Colonel Fury and I can work quite effectively together! We're both old hands at this game — professionals, if you will! And I'm sure the colonel fully realizes the need for co-operation in this matter!"

NICK FURY: "Okay, I get the message! I'm in your ball park, so I'll play by your rules! But I got big feet — so don't step on my tootsies if I get a hot lead!"

Thus, the relationship between Fury and Hunter is similar to that between Captain America and Captain Britain. Fury/America is scripted as being impetuous, active, and unwilling to be tied down by government or bureaucracy. Hunter/Britain is scripted as considered, passive, and restrained by a sense of propriety. Perhaps the most obvious example of this script is in the American heroes' refusal to view this mission as taking place outside their jurisdiction — their belief in the universality of their values leads them to view questions of British sovereignty and territoriality as a nuisance to be dealt with as peremptorily as possible. The British, on the other hand, see sovereignty as being the only way they can influence or moderate the actions of the Americans.

Later, Captain America beats one of the Red Skull's goons into providing the location of his secret hideout. This is highly unusual for the character of Captain America, and must be chalked up to the scripting of American identity for a British audience as excessive, but, perhaps, necessary. In narratives written for an American audience, Captain America's willingness to beat information out of someone would generally undermine his moral authority in a way that, perhaps, it does not in a narrative written for a British audience. However, the excessiveness of American endeavor underwrites the British identity as interlocutor between American power and the rest of the world[7]. On a similar note, Lance Hunter sedates Nick Fury to prevent him from calling in S.H.I.E.L.D. and ruining the forthcoming mission with American brazenness. The storyline comes to a head when the Red Skull abducts P.M. Callaghan and demands to be made the dictator of the U.K., in exchange for his not detonating a germ bomb that would kill millions in London. Captain America, again in a move inconsistent with his established character in American comics, wants to launch a frontal attack, while Captain Britain restrains him, concerned about the fate of London. The Red Skull escapes from Captain America and Captain Britain, but only after releasing Callaghan. Later he is tracked down and defeated by Captain Britain in a vertigo-inducing battle on the face of Big Ben.

This story arc shows some of the ambiguities inherent in having American creators working on a British nationalist superhero comic book. This could be interpreted as the same kind of extraterritoriality that Nick Fury and Captain America are variously accused of during the actual narrative. One reading of the narrative that was created could be that it was American power that needed to be restrained by a less emotional and less irrational British identity to achieve their common geopolitical objectives. Another reading could be that British socialism is a geopolitical weakness that leaves the U.K. one small push from flipping to the totalitarian side of the Cold War conflict, thus requiring American power to discipline it. It is not important (nor possible) to resolve which reading was preferred by the creative staff; rather, it is important to see that the instability of the comic book narrative reflects the instability of the 'special relationship' narrative itself.

Captain Britain in Captain America

In 1985 a storyline appeared in *CA* that once again took the Star Spangled Avenger to the British Isles. This storyline was much briefer than the previous one in *CBW*, but it is interesting because it was written for a primarily American audience (by an American creative team), in contrast to the Marvel U.K. production.

In the storyline, Steve Rogers is at home when suddenly he appears to be wearing the new uniform of Captain Britain, but a moment later it fades away. He doesn't recognize the uniform because Captain Britain's uniform was changed in 1981, and became the source of his powers. He recognizes the Union Jack pattern on the uniform though, and so he leaves for London to investigate. Upon arrival, Captain America is beaten by someone who appears to be Captain Britain, and he is chained in a dungeon. There he learns that it was not the real Captain Britain; rather, it was Modred the Mystic, who also beat the real Captain Britain. Captain Britain had magically transported his uniform to Captain America because he trusted Captain America to use it wisely, but Modred had magically brought it right back, and had donned it so that he could wreak havoc on the U.K. Modred's plan is to summon his archenemy (and Captain Britain's benefactor), Merlin the Magician, via the destruction he causes, and then defeat him. Captain Britain awakes in the dungeon next to Captain America, and together they free themselves just as Modred destroys the tower above them. Modred convinces Captain Britain to summon Merlin, but in order to do so Captain Britain needs to wear the uniform and get his powers back. He summons Merlin, but Merlin does not come, and this angers Modred, who animates the skeletons in the Tower of London's cemetery to attack the two Captains. They battle through and defeat Modred, and only then does Merlin appear. He takes Modred away to another dimension, despite Cap's protestations that Modred deserves a trial.

In this storyline, British identity is strongly connected to Arthurian legend and primordial claims to ethnicity. Indeed, Brian Braddock originally received the Amulet of Right that transformed him into Captain Britain from Merlin, although in the early stories, such as those outlined above, the Arthurian legend had a relatively minor role to play. It is only after 1981 that Captain Britain is reformulated as a much more mystic figure, leaping between dimensions, doing Merlin's bidding, and protecting the U.K.s of many dimensions from their various enemies as part of a trans-dimensional Captain Britain Corps. The timelessness associated with the UK in this narrative dovetails with primordial theories of identity that claim that ethnicity is an extension of ancient kinship ties lost in the mists of time rather than the product of contemporary social (re)construction. This is reflected in many histories of 'Britishness' that trace the identity back either to the Roman invasion of the islands, or, even earlier, to Celtic and other pre–Roman inhabitants. For instance, the British notion of common law reflects this primordial belief in the continuity of the political group over time.

In the *CA* tale, Captain America objects to Modred's removal to another dimension as being improper (Carlin, *CA 306* 22):

> *CAPTAIN AMERICA:* "What a minute, Merlin! What exactly are you going to do with Modred? I know that he has committed criminal acts, but under the law every man is entitled to...."
> *MERLIN:* "Spare me your wearisome recitation of human law. I am beyond those petty restraints, and so is my charge. Rest assured that I will attempt to re-educate Modred, and when I succeed I shall restore him to this mortal plane."
> *CAPTAIN AMERICA:* "He's gone! I hope we've done the right thing, Britain."
> *CAPTAIN BRITAIN:* "Relax America! Merlin is a force for good. He made me what I am. Besides, what could chaps like us do to oppose someone like him?"
> *CAPTAIN AMERICA:* "Were justice on our side, Captain Britain, we could conquer any foe!"

This dialogue reflects a fundamental difference from the way in which American and British geopolitical identity was formulated in *CBW*. There, Captain America was brash and not concerned with rules as much as efficacy. Here, it is Merlin, embodying the timeless, primordial British identity, that refuses to submit to the laws of man, and it is Captain Britain who accepts the legitimacy of that ancient power. Captain America, however, is in this narrative the plucky hero committed to enforcing the concept of justice in the face of overwhelming power. Arguably, this is the exact opposite of his representation in the pages of *CBW*. It is impossible to say whether this reflects the differing audiences that the creators were hoping to engage with, or is simply the logical outcome of Briton Alan Moore's retooling of the Captain Britain character (and therefore not at all related to the American writer of the *CA* story arc).

Conclusions: Embodying the Special Relationship

National superheroes are intriguing because of the way in which they embody the collective nation and render that unknowable group of people knowable through the beliefs and actions of a single body. The representations of the nation, as well as the lessons rescaling icons such as Captain America and Captain Britain teach, regarding how to exist as a member of that nation, can be key to broader understandings of national politics. An example of this is the recent *Civil War* Marvel crossover event in which Steve Rogers was assassinated at the end of a storyline interrogating the ethical dimensions of the War on Terror and the U.S. Patriot Act. Far from being just a fictional event in the life of a fictional character, the death was covered by newspapers all over the world (see Sanchez), because it was seen as highly symbolic of the death of American ideals at the hands of fanaticism. Storylines such as *Civil War*, or the special relationship stories described in this essay, contribute to the creation of geopolitical space in the manner that Lefebvre described: through their provision of artistic underpinnings for ideological and material gains in territory made by specially empowered actors, such as politicians, pundits, and the like.

As demonstrated above, though, the production of these artistic underpinnings is itself a political process that is inflected with power. The British national hero was brought into the Marvel Universe by a creative staff, chosen for the job because the writer (Chris Claremont) was born in the U.K. (However, his father was in the U.S. military, and he moved away while still quite young.). Interestingly, this American-based creative team portrayed the American national superhero in unexpected ways in their effort to win over the British market to their new national hero. This implies that more than just notions of propaganda are at play here; the commercial imperative seemingly emerged as the dominant factor in the characterization of the heroes. However, it is important to note that this was done within the context of the special relationship — the friendly, but fundamentally unequal, collaboration between the United States and United Kingdom. The various readings of the comic books made available by the creative team can be seen as critical of American power, but without a fundamental questioning of that power. It is less likely that American writers and artists would have portrayed a hypothetical Captain USSR as morally superior to Captain America in the same way that Captain Britain was, as it would require a more substantial diversion from the geopolitical context in which production was undertaken.

With this in mind, the comics described above are helpful as a reminder of the ways in

which context is critical, not only to the process of textual consumption, but also to the processes of textual production. The team-up narratives featuring Captain America and Captain Britain are reliant on an intuitive understanding of the American and British geopolitical identities on the part of the audience. Further, it is understood that readers from each country would have differing perspectives on those identities and that, given the commercial context of production, the narratives would have to cater to each audience. Ultimately, this splinters any notion that Captain America (or Captain Britain) reflects an essential, true America (or U.K). To see this, all one has to do is compare the Captain America in *CBW* with the Captain America in his own comic book. Further, a comparison of Captain America over time in his own comic book would reveal similar shifts in his character that deny a singular subjectivity either to the hero, or to the country he represents.

Notes

1. Captain America regained his own title in 1968 after sharing space with Iron Man in *Tales of Suspense* since 1964.
2. "Authentic" is here meant to refer to broad acceptability, not to an essentialized identity.
3. Many readers complained about the similarities between Captain Britain and Spider-Man — his secret identity was a science student bullied at school; Captain Britain himself was hated by authority figures (in Captain Britain's case a Scotland Yard inspector rather than a newspaper editor).
4. The following is based on a discourse analysis of the letters to the editor found in *Captain Britain Weekly*, a method utilized prior to study audience interpretation of comic book texts (Dittmer & Larsen).
5. "Thor-Surfer speak" refers to the faux–Shakespearean language often used in Marvel comics of this era, especially in titles of stories.
6. It is worth noting that all solidarities are dependent on this sense of difference. It would be unnecessary to declare solidarity with someone if you were actually in the same position as them.
7. This could perhaps be summarized with the "good cop, bad cop" cliché.

References

Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Verso, 1972.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.

Carlin, Michael, Paul Neary, and Dennis Janke, et al. *Captain America 306*. New York: Marvel Comics (June 1985).

Claremont, Chris, Herb Trimpe, and Fred Kida, et al. *Captain Britain Weekly 9*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 8, 1976).

Dittmer, Jason. "'America is Safe while its Boys and Girls Believe in its Creeds!' Captain America and American Identity Prior to World War 2." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25: 3 (2007): 401–423.

_____. "Retconning America: Captain America in the Wake of WWII and the McCarthy Hearings." In Wandtke, T. (ed), *The Amazing Transforming Superhero: Essays on the Revision of Characters in Comic Books, Film, and Television*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007, 33–51.

_____, and Soren Larsen. "Captain Canuck, Audience Response, and the Project of Canadian Nationalism." *Social and Cultural Geography* 8: 5 (2007): 735–753.

Dobson, Alan. *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Dumbrell, John. *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Friedrich, Gary, Herb Trimpe, and Fred Kida, et al. *Captain Britain Weekly 15*. New York: Marvel Comics (January 19, 1977).

_____. *Captain Britain Weekly 16*. New York: Marvel Comics (January 26, 1977).

_____. *Captain Britain Weekly 17*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 2, 1977).

_____. *Captain Britain Weekly 20*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 23, 1977).
_____. *Captain Britain Weekly 22*. New York: Marvel Comics (March 9, 1977).
_____. *Captain Britain Weekly 27*. New York: Marvel Comics (April 13, 1977).
_____. *Captain Britain Weekly 33*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 25, 1977).
Foucault, Michael. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Allen Lane, 1977.
Gramsci, Antonio. *Prison Notebooks*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.
Gravett, Paul, and Peter Stanbury. *Great British Comics*. London: Aurum, 2006.
Kissinger, Henry. *The White House Years*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1979.
Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. New York: Wiley, 1991.
Murray, Chris. "*Pop*aganda: Superhero Comics and Propaganda in World War II." In Magnussen, A., and H.C. Christiansen (eds.). *Comics & Culture: Analytical and Theoretical Approaches to Comics*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2000, 141–156.
Sanchez, Julian. "The Revolt of the Comic Books." *The American Prospect*, 9 November, 2007. Available at: http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the_revolt_of_the_comic_boooks (last accessed November 11, 2007).
Slater, David. *Geopolitics and the Post-Colonial: Rethinking North-South Relations*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2004.
Terkel, Studs. *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II*. New York: New, 1997.
Vincent, Andrew. *Theories of the State*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1987.
Wallace, William. "The Collapse of British Foreign Policy." *International Affairs* 82: 1 (2005): 53–68.
Wright, Bradford. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Special thanks to the British Academy, which funded this research through a grant.

History of the Marvel Zombies and Colonel America among the Marvel Zombies

Mark R. McDermott

On the surface Captain America seems to have played very little role in the *Marvel Zombies* franchise. In the alternate universe, where Earth was destroyed by a zombie plague, Cap, here named "Colonel America," was among the first heroes to be infected. Colonel America did not seem to retain much of his heroic characteristics when Earth's former protectors ate every last person on the planet. At the end of the first *Marvel Zombies* miniseries, Zombie Colonel America is done in at the hands of his archenemy. Yet, in *Marvel Zombies 2*, the Colonel's return, even in mere symbolic form, seems to be the catalyst to saving the last surviving humans in the universe.

Trying to analyze a series through the perspective of a minor character may seem like a fool's errand. Especially when the series is an extended exercise in sick humor, intended to have little redeeming value besides entertaining the very dedicated Marvel fans, who bore the pejorative "Marvel zombie." The author is reminded of Mark Twain's caveat from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, "Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot," or in this case, eaten.

"Where's Dr. Strange when you need him?" "Ate him." Son of Origins of Marvel Zombies

Since their debut in 2005, the Marvel Zombies have become one of Marvel's most popular franchises.[1] Each comic featuring the zombies went through several reprintings, followed by hardcover trade collections, which themselves went through up to six reprints. Each new printing featured new painted covers by Arthur Suydam, with a "zombiefied" send-up of a classic Marvel cover. Fans of the series have been well aware that collecting all 39-and-counting variant covers marks them as the same "Marvel zombies" being mocked by the series, just as *Star Trek* fans incorporated William Shatner's "Get a life" rant, from *Saturday Night Live*, into their fanboy ethos.

Considering how open Marvel was to self-referential humor, especially in titles like *Not Brand Echh* and *What The—?!*, it seems odd that they did not make a play on the phrase "Marvel zombies" for the two or more decades of its currency. Marvel was similarly slow out of the gate when *Comics Buyer's Guide* columnist Bob Ingersoll frequently derided Marvel's use of

"teenage mutant ninjas," in 1984. Two fans, Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, created a surprise cultural phenomenon by immediately spoofing the phrase in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. *TMNT* spurred dozens of meta-spoofs starring talking animals whose names seemed the result of a round of Mad Libs, including: *Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters, Pre-Teen Dirty Gene Kung-Fu Kangaroos,* and *Mildly Microwaved Pre-Pubescent Kung-Fu Gophers*. In 1989, long after the fad had peaked, Marvel finally offered the one-shot *Power Pachyderms* (originally advertised as *Adult Thermonuclear Samurai Elephants*).

Marvel had, of course, already featured a few zombies in its 70-year history. The cover feature of Atlas-era horror comic, *MENACE! 5* (July 1953), was "Zombie!" Written by Stan Lee and illustrated by Bill Everett, it was the story of the late Simon Garth, who had returned to life, through voodoo, as a traditional "revenant" zombie. The next year, Atlas signed on to the Comics Code Authority, which specifically forbade portraying zombies, ghouls, vampires, and werewolves. The Code was revised, in 1971, to allow the use of other monsters with a basis in classic literature, but not zombies. Roy Thomas revived Simon Garth in *Tales of the Zombie 1–10* (1973–75), a black and white magazine that was thus exempt from the Code.

Marvel used a bit of hoaxing to keep the Zombies a surprise when they debuted in 2005, unlike publishers today, who promote new comics in advance solicitations to retailers and fans, through various news sites and magazines like *Wizard*. The idea is to pique enough interest to generate advance orders, without giving away too many plot details. This is difficult when magazines are solicited months in advance. Writer Mark Millar had created the Zombies for the Fantastic Four of the Ultimates imprint, wherein familiar Marvel characters were revised to be more accessible, without forty years of back-story. The Ultimate Fantastic Four got its powers from a teleportation accident, rather than from trying to beat the Russkies into outer space.

The success of the Ultimates line led to fan expectation of a crossover between its characters and the traditional 616[2] heroes. The solicitations for *Ultimate Fantastic Four 21* suggested this was where it would happen: its preview cover showed the younger and older Reed Richards' looking at each other across a dimensional viewer, with the story arc's title "Crossover" in the corner. The promotional copy read:

> Marvel's two universes collide. Meet the Fantastic Eight! Even in their short careers, the Ultimate FF have seen a lot of amazing things — but nothing will prepare them for the world they're about to enter! Reed Richards has used his scientific genius to contact an Earth in a surprisingly familiar parallel dimension — and he's ready to visit! [Goldstein].

When asked whether the story was the long-rumored 616-Ultimates crossover, scripter Mark Millar, returning to the title he launched after a run of stories by Warren Ellis, provided noncommittal answers:

> Again, I'm saying as little as possible, but what happens is that Reed starts getting emails from another dimension with a warning of an impending crisis. Details of how they can open a bridge between these two universes are quickly conceived and then much madness ensues.
>
> Would a crossover between the Ultimate and Marvel Universe really be that bad? Nobody complained when the Justice League met the Justice Society. Just sit back and enjoy the story [Brady].

The online preview showed only the first few pages of the issue, in which, the Ultimate FF stop a gang of time-traveling terrorists from killing the first animal to emerge from the ocean. The team returns to the present day, and gets chewed out by Captain America and the Ultimates, who were that universe's version of the Avengers.

Only when the printed book came out did we find the advertised crossover. Reed is shown to have been corresponding with his counterpart in an alternate universe, who appeared to him, and the reader, to be the Reed Richards of Earth-616. Ultimate Reed had completed a dimensional transporter that allowed him to pay a social call. But when he transports, Reed finds himself in the basement of a wrecked building, strewn with skeletons and half-eaten corpses, in a devastated New York City. The issue ends with him encountering the Zombie Fantastic Four, and Zombie Reed telling him (and the reader) "Ever get the feeling you've been had?" (Millar 25).

Ultimate FF 22 showed, in flashback, a flash of lightning and a Zombie Sentry from yet another universe, falling into Manhattan. The use of Robert Reynolds, the Sentry, as the carrier of the zombie plague added further to the "Crossover" hoax. Sentry's debut mini-series, in 2000, promoted him as a previously unpublished pre–Marvel hero, created by Stan Lee (controversially, *Wizard* and Newsarama.com reported the hoax as fact).[3]

Zombie Reed's narration explained, "They said it all started with a flash in the sky and a ripple through the clouds. Nobody knows what caused this, exactly, but some people think it might have been a punch."[4] Colonel America and the Avengers were first on the scene investigating, and he, with Ms. Marvel and Hawkeye, were first to be attacked and infected by Sentry. "Within 24 hours, we'd consumed the entire planet" (Millar 3). One panel on this page shows Richards being infected by Colonel America, a narrative that was altered in the *Dead Days* one-shot.

Ultimate Reed flees the Zombie FF, but is attacked by a group of zombie heroes, including Colonel America. He is rescued by an uninfected Magneto.

In *Issue 23*, Magneto tells Reed that, ironically, he had been sheltering three human survivors in a subway tunnel. The two realize that Zombie Reed had enticed Ultimate Reed to build the dimensional gateway so the "infected" could invade a new world — sure enough, at that moment, the Zombie FF had crossed over, and were attacking the rest of the Ultimate FF. The survivors determined they needed to get to the Baxter Building, escape to Ultimate Earth, and destroy the gateway. Their flight, through a phalanx of zombies, was aided by the arrival of Ultimate Sue, Johnny, and Ben, who had imprisoned the zombie team and figured out where their Reed had gone. The heroes and survivors fight their way to the Baxter Building, where Magneto volunteers to stay behind and destroy the gateway.

The introduction of the Marvel Zombies was handled rather carefully, perhaps in case of a backlash against comic book icons being portrayed as undead cannibals. The word "zombie" was not even used in "Crossover," but did appear "Previously in *Ultimate Fantastic Four*" in a summary in Issue *23* (Millar 1). No one was shown being eaten or even bitten.

"Colonel" America did not get much play in this story, except for the implication that he was the first to be infected by the Zombie Sentry, and the online preview pages for *UFF 22* still referred to him as "Captain America." This may have been intended to suggest to previewing readers that "Crossover" actually took place on mainstream Marvel Earth, or it may have been a last-minute change, to establish a point of divergence for the Zombie Universe.

"At least you had the Amazing Friends for an amazing breakfast!" Marvel Zombies *summary.*

Marvel Zombies (2006)

While the "Crossover" arc in *Ultimate Fantastic Four* was still coming out, Marvel announced that Robert Kirkman would write a spin-off *Marvel Zombies* mini-series. His credential for this franchise was his most popular title, up to then, *The Walking Dead,* begun in 2003. This ongoing series was set in the "Zombie Apocalypse" genre, with bands of human survivors fighting off familiar, slow moving, insatiable zombies. Kirkman had also written several Marvel books, and was at the time the regular writer of *Marvel Team-Up*. He had also written a *CA 28* story for the 2002 series, which was a tie-in to the "Avengers Disassembled" crossover event, published in 2004.

Marvel Zombies 1 featured a painted cover by Arthur Suydam, on which a Zombie Spider-Man was web-slinging with a victim, a homage to *Amazing Fantasy 15*. The series picked up where the *Ultimate Fantastic Four* story ended, with Magneto at the destroyed gateway to the Ultimate Universe. He is surrounded by Colonel America and a dozen other zombies. The Colonel makes perhaps his only characteristic speech, saying, "I know you're not looking forward to being devoured, but I give you my word — if you surrender, I'll make sure you die painlessly first" (Kirkman 2). As Magneto attempts to fly away, the Colonel grabs his leg. Magneto notes, "Oh good. You brought the shield," as his magnetic powers grab the shield to neatly slice off the top of the Colonel's skull. Colonel America still has enough faculties to shout, "Look at what the punk did to me! If we catch him — when we catch him — I get double rations!" (5). The Colonel only gets the shield back after Magneto uses it to fully decapitate Zombie Hawkeye.

Momentarily in hiding, Magneto receives a radio communication from Fabian Cortez, reporting that his Acolytes, and other uninfected mutants, are safely at his orbital stronghold, Asteroid M. But before he can join them, Magneto is bitten by the Wasp, and consumed by the zombies in a full of page of teeth pulling at entrails.

Actually, this scene was repeated only a few times in the franchise because there were so few people left to eat. Despite the shock value of its subject, the sequences actually were subdued, compared to movies in the zombie genre.

Once they've eaten, the zombies have a few moments of lucidity to ponder their situations. Spider-Man goes into his guilt spiel, about having eaten his wife and aunt; Zombie Hulk reverts to Bruce Banner (he now Hulks out when he's hungry); and Magneto's leg bursts his stomach. Colonel America catches up with the gang, holding some of his grey matter in his hand, suggesting that they don't even need all of their brains to keep functioning. As the zombies discuss whether they'll just go hungry from now on, Power Man spots the Silver Surfer in the sky.

In Issue *2*, the Surfer flew off before the other zombies could see him. Colonel America decides they could spend their time looking for any pockets of civilians. Splitting from the group, Giant Man (Hank Pym) goes to his lab, where he has hidden the uninfected, sedated Black Panther, snacking on bits of his limbs to keep his head clear. The Wasp discovers her husband's secret, and in the ensuing fight, he bites her head off, spitting it out to reinforce the fact that zombies can't stand the taste of zombie flesh.

Meanwhile, Zombie Iron Man and the Colonel rejoined a crowd of zombie heroes in

Times Square. As the zombies ponder ways to scout out humans that might still be in hiding, discussion reveals that Colonel America had been president of the United States. He mentions that he "didn't serve a full term," (Kirkman 19) and he was not made privy to any secret bases where government or military officials might have hidden. The Silver Surfer returns to announce that Galactus is coming to eat the planet, and the zombies who can fly try to attack the Surfer.

Issue 3 starts with the Surfer's Power Cosmic slicing Iron Man in half. Zombie Thor manages to knock the Surfer off his board, and the Colonel leads a ground-based zombie attack, shouting, "Get him!! Keep him off balance — don't give him a chance to devise a strategy against us!" (Kirkman 5) The battle ends when the Zombie Hulk bites off the Surfer's head. Only he, Colonel America, Spider-Man, Giant Man, Power Man, Iron Man and Wolverine get to eat what's under the Surfer's outer shell, which endows them with shares of his Power Cosmic. They immediately turn on the other zombies to see if they'll taste any better "crispy fried."

Black Panther is hobbling through the streets, after escaping Giant Man's lab. He's carrying the Wasp's head, which can still talk and beg T'Challa for a taste of his flesh. The two are met by the Acolytes, trying to find Magneto. After the standard fight between Marvel characters upon first meeting, the Acolytes reluctantly agree to take Panther and the Wasp's head to Asteroid M.

The seven cosmically powered zombies have killed most of the remaining zombies, and discuss their next move, but they are interrupted by Galactus, who announces his intent to eat this planet, but first, has anybody seen his herald?

The zombies attack Galactus in Issue *4,* but are easily repulsed. Here, Giant Man takes what should have been Colonel America's line: "We'll find a way to defeat him!" (Kirkman 4). The zombies give up the attack, the Colonel noting that Galactus didn't pursue them because "We stopped being worthy of his attention the second we stopped trying to prevent him from achieving his goal" (7). The zombies gather at Hank Pym's lab to assemble an amplifier for their newfound powers, and a few days later, they return to Times Square to find a cadre of zombie villains attacking Galactus.

In *Issue 5*, the zombie "heroes" pool their stolen Power Cosmic into their amplifier, and are actually able to bring Galactus down. But first they have to fight through zombie villains, including Venom, the Super Skrull, and Doctor Doom. The zombies have an easy time dispatching their enemies with the Surfer's powers, but Colonel America is surprised to find the Zombie Red Skull putting up a fight: "You never could hope to best me in a physical fight — what makes you even try? Has the hunger consumed you that much? Is your judgment that clouded?"

But as the Colonel's shield chops off the Skull's left arm, the villain retorts: "You need me to spell it out for you? You've never had such an obvious weakness before!" (9).

And with his right arm, the Skull scoops out the last of Colonel America's brain. Zombie Spider-Man blasts the Skull's head off, which, lying on the pavement, gloats, "So worth it — all of it.... Just for this," before it's squished by Giant Man (Kirkman 10). Galactus still rises to warn the zombies that they will regret their actions, but instead they set on him, crack open his armor, and devour the World-Devourer.

The narrative shifts to "Five Years Later," and Asteroid M setting down in the remains of New York City. The Acolytes debark, accompanied by Black Panther who is sporting Forge's cybernetic limb replacements, his wife, Lisa, and their infant son, K'Shamba. The Zombie Wasp's head, fitted to a cyborg body, confirms that there is no sign of the zombies on Earth.

On another planet, an alien ruler is informed that "The Galactus comes," the dire calamity that destroyed other, nearby worlds is now imminent. In the night skies above, Zombie Spider-Man, Giant Man, Hulk, Wolverine, Power Man and Iron Man appear, wearing their own versions of Galactus' armor, and Giant Man announces, "It's feeding time, boys!" (21).

"Frightful," *Ultimate Fantastic Four (2006)*

One month after *Marvel Zombies* concluded, Mark Millar's *Ultimate Fantastic Four* began a story arc with the imprisoned Zombie FF, now calling themselves the "Frightful Four," after old nemeses of the original FF. Ultimate, Johnny Storm is discovered to have a Lovecraftian creature that would destroy the Earth if it hatched, gestating in his body. Reed, Sue and Ben go hat in hand to ask for Doctor Doom's help, but in their absence the Zombie quartet breaks out of confinement, and dines on several Baxter Building staffers. They get to the dimensional gateway, intending to bring their zombie friends to the Ultimate Universe, but are halted by Doom, who had exorcised the creature from Johnny's body, but by mispronouncing the Atlantean incantations, failed to kill it. Doom salves his wounded pride by incapacitating the zombies, and then sacrifices himself, by personally escorting the creature and zombies to the Zombie-verse. Doom arrives at the moment the zombies are picking Galactus' bones. His last words, as they turn to attack him, are, "Hmph. Well, this should be a challenge" (22–23).

"Eat the Neighbors" (2006)

In the months before the next Zombies story, Marvel published a hardbound collection of the first *Marvel Zombies* series, aimed at fans who forego the tedium of collecting monthly comics, and "wait for the trades." One advertisement for the book, in *Wizard 180* (Oct. 2006), was a parody of the many one-page ads for Hostess snack foods that starred Marvel and DC characters, during the 1970s. Titled "Eat the Neighbors," the comic starred Zombie Colonel America, Iron Man, and Spider-Man searching for victims. Responding to Spider-Man's complaining, Colonel America says: "Quiet, Zombie Spider-Man! At least you had the Amazing Friends for an amazing breakfast! Zombie Iron Man and I had to share Puck, so we're still starv — Eh?" The zombies find a little boy and girl, who think they've been rescued. Instead, the heroes eat them as "Hostess Meat Pies."

Marvel Zombies/Army of Darkness *(2007)*

The next Zombie project was an inter-company crossover, with Dynamite Entertainment's licensed comics, starring Ashley J. Williams, the zombie-fighting hero of Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead*/*Army of Darkness* movies. Writer John Layman filled in the details of the day the Zombie plague struck. The series opens with Ash falling through a dimensional rift, similar to Zombie Sentry's arrival, but landing in a dumpster. A homeless woman, possessed by the Necronomicon, warns him that, "This world will die and an army of the dead shall rise" (Layman 6).

Ash finds a *Daily Bugle*, and figuring out that this world is full of comic-book heroes, he seeks help, by going straight to the top, the Avengers. Ash's attempt to convey the gravity of the situation isn't helped by his rudeness, so the Avengers brush off his warning, and

the Scarlet Witch transports him to a pond in Central Park—just as a pink lightning bolt rips through the skies. Ash makes it to the impact site just ahead of the Avengers, and Spider-Man swings by to offer a hand. Colonel America asks him to get Ash out of the area, and Ash warns Spidey that he had just come to this dimension from the afterlife, where some of the souls lined up before the Pearly Gates were attacked, and eaten, by Zombie Sentry. Ash shot Sentry with his "broomstick," but the zombie was just knocked into the 2149 Universe. When Spidey and Ash return to the scene, they find that Colonel America, Hawkeye, Black Widow, and Power Man are already infected, and have immediately begun eating human prey. Still wrapped up in webbing, and convinced these zombies are the "Deadites" he fought before, Ash convinces Spider-Man that their only hope lies in him locating this universe's copy of the Necronomicon. But Spidey is attacked and infected by Zombie Colonel America, and Spider-Man drops Ash, who this time misses a dumpster and is set upon by some hungry zombie Avengers.

In Issue *2* of the new series, still in control of his faculties, Spider-Man bluffs the zombie Avengers, by threatening to eat Hawkeye's brain, and claiming Ash for himself. Zombie Colonel America declares, "We might need Clint (Hawkeye) later. And we're still a team, even if our priorities have changed. Go for it, Spidey. You want to dine on jackass tartare and not share ... be our guest" (Laymon 5). The last panel on that page shows the Colonel wishing Spidey "Bon appetit." One Wikipedia contributor claimed the Colonel's pose, in this panel, was a parody of the gung-ho Ultimate Captain America's quote, "You think this letter on my head stands for France?" in *Ultimates 12*, "Alternate Versions" (2003). When last seen, in this issue, the Zombie Colonel is cutting a victim in half with his shield, Black Widow is snacking on a poodle, and Spider-Man leaves Ash to check on Aunt May and Mary Jane. Ash, who saves Dazzler from Zombie Winter Soldier, figures Doctor Strange is likely to have a Necronomicon.

In Issue 3, Ash and Dazzler are joined by the uninfected Scarlet Witch, who tells them that the Zombie Colonel has called an Avengers alert, so that they could infect the rest of the roster. Aboard the S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier, the three, with Dr. Strange, enter his library, where Ash interrogates some of the talking books, and learns the Necronomicon is actually held by Doctor Doom.

In Issue *4,* the zombie plague spreads out of control, when Quicksilver is infected by the shape-shifter Mystique, posing as his sister the Scarlet Witch. Zombie Quicksilver speeds around the world, infecting heroes in Britain, Russia, Japan, and even the Savage Land. Meanwhile, Ash and his companions take an Avengers quinjet to Latveria, which is besieged by Zombie Goliath (Bill Foster), land where Ash's attitude quickly gets him banished to a dungeon. Doctor Doom has determined the zombie plague is extra dimensional in nature, not supernatural. Ash escapes his lockup and finds Doom's library and the Necronomicon. The talking book confirms that it had nothing to do with the zombie plague; it just sent a warning to Ash to screw with him. The Necronomicon taunts him by paraphrasing Mary Jane Watson, "Face it, tiger ... you crapped out!" (Laymon 19).

In *Issue 5*, the zombies have apparently finished off the rest of the Earth, and Colonel America leads their massed attack on Doomstadt. Ash coerces the Necronomicon into re-animating the people killed, as Deadites, creating the prophesied Army of the Dead to fight the plague zombies. The resulting battle buys Doom, who is already infected, enough time to transport the surviving Latverians to another dimension. Doom allows Ash to escape before destroying the gateway, and Ash makes it to a new universe, where he finds Marvel Werewolves just finishing up Galactus' carcass.

Marvel Zombies: Dead Days *(2007)*

While the *MZ/AoD* miniseries was being published, Marvel also issued a one-shot *Dead Days* comic (July 2007) that filled in events in the *Army of Darkness* crossover, without directly referring to it.[5] Written again by Kirkman, it opened with the just-infected Spider-Man getting to his apartment, where the zombie virus finally overpowers him, and eats Mary Jane and Aunt May. The narrative then shifts to Asteroid M, where Magneto's dialogue with Fabian Cortez reveals that they were tricked into allowing the zombie plague into their universe by someone offering them a deal, to "thin out homo sapiens — to give mutants a fighting chance" (Kirkman 5). Instead, the zombies are killing humans and mutants alike.

In this story, Colonel America shows some of his leadership abilities. After the Avengers have eaten a few hundred New Yorkers, he calls them to attention, to help them recognize that the gnawing hunger subsides after they've eaten, and that this is their chance to get back to Avengers Mansion, to try to figure a way out of their predicament.

At the Baxter Building, Zombie She-Hulk bypassed the Fantastic Four's security codes to get in, and eat the Richards' children, before Invisible Girl could destroy her. The FF take the Fantasticar to the S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Helicarrier, where Nick Fury addresses the struggling resistance. He notes that "only metahumans are affected — but that may just be because us normal humans are being completely eaten and can't fight off these monsters" (Kirkman 18).

Having stashed Black Panther in his lab to be eaten later, Zombie Giant Man arrives at Avengers Mansion to find that the Colonel and the rest of the team had saved him a piece of Jarvis. Hank Pym is the one who is most upset at the idea that this may be their lot, and that their world is dying.

Aboard the Helicarrier, Reed Richards examines the zombie virus, and finds himself starting to think of the zombies as an improvement. "They use far less energy — most bodily functions are shut down — not necessary any longer — yet they still retain mobility and all of their intellect. Yet little more than their brain is actually functioning. It's really quite fascinating" (24). Meantime, Tony Stark has started working on a dimensional gateway to evacuate any survivors.

A double-page melee has Zombie Colonel America, down on the ground, explaining to Thor, "You don't understand — we *tried* to fight this — we *did* — but we just *can't!* This is what we are now! There is *nothing* we can do!" (27).

Aboard the Helicarrier, Reed calls the rest of the FF to the lab, and claims that the zombie virus is not a plague, it is evolution. Reed infected the rest of his team as they entered, so he could experience, firsthand, being infected by them in turn. The Zombie FF find Tony Stark has almost completed his dimensional gateway, and decide that finding a new world to eat is a great idea. So, instead of eating the non-superpowered Tony, they infect him. Escaping to the room with the gateway, Nick Fury has Thor smash the mechanism, before the FF can break in. The Zombie FF infects the rest of the heroes in the room, but eats Fury as punishment. Zombie Reed decides to take the broken machine to the Baxter Building, and to try to fix it so they can reach another world to feed on, setting the stage for the *Ultimate Fantastic Four* arc.

Black Panther *(2007)*

The next zombie story involved characters from the mainstream Marvel Universe. *Black Panther 27–30* (June–Sept 2007), takes place just after the *Civil War* crossover event. Reed

and Sue have taken a leave of absence from the Fantastic Four, and given temporary membership to T'Challa and his new bride, Storm, of the X-Men. Fighting a monster bug from the Negative Zone, the Panther chances using two magic talismans, the Solomon Frogs, to send it back. Instead, the bug *and* the FF are sent to a Skrull planet, in the Zombie Universe ... and the Galacti zombies are just arriving.

In true Marvel style, the Galacti have been bickering amongst themselves, and making bad jokes, while attacking (e.g., in *Black Panther 28*, "Hulk say: *Get in Hulk's belly!!!")* (Hudlin 20). The FF ally with the Skrulls to fight the zombies.

The zombies figure this group of humans must have some device they could use to invade a new universe of humans. However, the 616-FF barely escapes, as the Galacti also learn, after eating all the Skrulls, that they can get some roughage by pooling their Galactus energy to eat the whole planet.

Marvel Zombies 2 *(2007–2008)*

Marvel Zombies 2 1 opens with the Zombie Galacti at "the edge of the known universe," where Giant Man proclaims, "I can't believe we ate the whole thing!" (Kirkman 2). It is forty years later, and the Galacti have zombie-fied other beings for company, including, Thanos, Phoenix, Firelord (a later herald of Galactus), and Gladiator of the Shi'ar Imperial Guard. Having finished off the entire universe, the zombies start arguing, and Zombie Thanos learns, too late, that one should never get the Hulk mad, zombie or no. Iron Man recalls the dimensional gateway so the zombies decide to go back to Earth, and fix it. Setting off on the long journey, with a rest stop to eat Ego, the Living Planet, some of the zombies notice that, as they go without feeding for long periods, the hunger seems to fade.

On Earth, a Black Panther's grandson is exploring the wreckage of Manhattan. He stumbles upon Zombie Hawkeye's head; still "alive," but mad from years of isolation, and no longer hungry. He takes Hawkeye to New Wakanda, the Acolytes' settlement carved out of Asteroid M. An aging Black Panther is its leader. All is not well; the children of the Acolytes are threatening to take control, and the Wasp, her head fitted to a newer cyborg body, prevails upon T'Challa to help Hawkeye, by having his head attached to her first cyborg body. Fabian Cortez' son, Malcolm, uses the harboring of the zombies to rally the Acolytes in a call for new leadership. That night, T'Challa is attacked in bed and mortally wounded by an Acolyte assassin. The Wasp saves him in the only way possible, by biting Black Panther and making him a zombie.

In *Issue 2,* Zombies Panther and Wasp are locked in isolation; it seems the cure for zombie hunger is simply going cold turkey for a few weeks. Malcolm Cortez, who had sent the assassin after T'Challa, seizes the opportunity to take over New Wakanda, and agitates to have the remaining zombies destroyed. A confrontation with Cortez is interrupted by the arrival of the Galacti. Hulk starts grabbing and eating, but is restrained by Zombie Giant Man, who considers the idea of a captive breeding program. Zombie Spider-Man, now stricken by conscience, fires a Galactus energy bolt that takes off part of Giant Man's skull, at the same angle that Colonel America was stricken. The zombies choose up sides, and have it out, Marvel style. Zombie Panther leads the fight to the edge of the colony, where a force field is put up to keep out the Galacti who are in favor of eating everyone immediately — all except Gladiator.

In Issue *3,* Zombies Spider-Man, Power Man and the Wasp take a severe beating from

Zombie Gladiator, until he is brought down by Forge, who is wearing a modified version of Iron Man's original armor. The other Galacti give up the fight, and head for the Baxter Building. While the zombie defenders of New Wakanda are being literally sewn back together, Forge reveals that he took the gateway device from the Baxter Building years ago, so the Galacti would come back for it. Robert Reynolds (an aged non-powered Sentry of this universe) reveals that, some years back, an expedition had found viable pieces of zombie brain tissue. After Black Panther's son T'Channa had died, Reynolds and Forge secretly experimented, placing the gray matter in T'Channa's body, and finding it was the remains of Colonel America's brain. T'Channa, now zombiefied, wears a Colonel America uniform, but is capable only of uttering war comic clichés.

In Issue *4*, the Zombies Spider-Man and Power Man react to the Zombie Colonel as if he were the real thing, trying to break up a fight with the angered Black Panther. When the Zombie Galacti arrives, the defenders temporarily lower their shielding to confront them outside, but Zombie Iron Man slips in. Even he is taken aback by what appears to be the Colonel, among the human survivors. But when Zombie Bruce Banner awakens from sedation, and slips his restraints, he accidentally lowers the shielding, letting the Galacti inside. Zombie Giant Man grabs one of the humans, then realizes he too is no longer hungry.

In Issues *5*, all the Galacti realize they've lost their appetites, and decide to spare the human survivors. Cortez is unwilling to forgive, but that discussion is interrupted by a very hungry Zombie Hulk. He quickly destroys Zombies Phoenix and Iron Man, while Colonel America attacks, shouting "The bigger they are, the harder they fall," and "United we stand!" (Kirkman 10, 12). Reynolds offers to let the Hulk eat him, so he'll revert to Bruce Banner, and the survivors can destroy him.

Three weeks later, the remaining zombies have buried their comrades, and helped rebuild New Wakanda. Cortez meets with the zombies around the dimensional gateway, and reveals that it worked fine, he had been sabotaging it all this time. Now he uses the gateway to send the last of the zombies to another dimension, where they will be someone else's problem.

Two other Zombie-related projects could not yet be referenced by the author: (1) the 2006, one-shot *Ultimate Civil War Spider-Ham Crisis* featured the funny-animal character, Peter Porker, the Spectacular Spider-Ham. Going on a quest to find who stole all the Marvel characters' thought balloons, and replaced them with captions, Spider-Ham crosses into the Zombie-verse, and becomes "Undead Ham," and (2) *Marvel Zombies: The Book of Angels, Demons & Various Monstrosities* was a 2007 extension of the *Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe* line, with a few pages of text summarizing the *Marvel Zombies* storyline.

Marvel has announced a third *Marvel Zombies* mini-series for later in 2008. The new series would involve some of the zombies left on Earth after the Galacti departure, crossing over into the mainstream 616 Marvel Universe (Rogers).

Marvel Zombies in Zombie Lore

The flesh-eating zombie is a relatively recent addition to the horror movie pantheon. George A. Romero first conflated the soulless shambling zombie of voodoo lore, with flesh-eating ghouls, in 1968s *Night of the Living Dead*—in fact, in that movie, his monsters were called "ghouls." While zombie films offer the chance to show some of the most gruesome scenes possible in a movie, they also have comedic potential; witness the dazed zombies wandering

a shopping mall in *Dawn of the Dead*, the slacker attitude of *Shaun of the Dead*, or the gore humor of Peter Jackson's *Dead Alive*.

Mark Millar's alterations to the zombie formula established similarities to Dan O'Bannon's *Return of the Living Dead* (1985). Both sets of zombies retained their personalities, could talk, and retained their physical abilities for as long as decomposition would allow. And it required much more than a blow to the brain to stop them. This setup allowed Kirkman to create similar scenes of sick humor, such as Daredevil, and later Black Panther, contemplating the gaping holes where their hearts and lungs used to be, *a la* Al Capp's Fearless Fosdick.

While the *Ultimate Fantastic Four* stories hinted at it, *Marvel Zombies* depicted all its characters in their "classic," mostly 1970s, incarnations. The Hulk is still the purple-pantsed "Hulk Smash!" monster we know and love, and Tony Stark's downfall is that he still carries his Iron Man armor in his briefcase. Both Captain Marvels are in evidence: the Kree warrior and the African American woman who took his name after Mar-vell's death. The Silver Surfer is Galactus' herald, yet the zombie Galacti of Series 2 are joined by Firelord, a later herald. In *MZ/AoD*, Ashley Williams saves Dazzler, in her disco-era outfit, from the more recent Zombie Winter Soldier, and Luke Cage still wears his Blaxploitation style Power Man outfit, with the chest-baring yellow shirt and tiara.

Captain/Colonel America in the Zombie Universe

While the Colonel still played a key role in what would become the Zombie Universe, the underlying theme suggests that this universe "fell" partly because of superhero hubris. Ultimate Reed Richards started the whole franchise by sneaking off to a seemingly normal parallel world, unmindful of possible consequences. Zombie Universe Reed, driven mad by the death of his children, decides the zombie virus is a part of humanity's evolution, and infects the surviving heroes in the Helicarrier. In the "Frightful" story arc, Ultimate Doctor Doom miscalculated when dealing with the parasite in Johnny Storm's body, and had to accompany the Zombie FF and the parasite to the Zombie Universe to rectify his error. The Zombie Universe's Doctor Doom suffered similar reversals, trying to keep the zombies from his castle, no thanks to Ash's bungling and thinking with an organ other than his brain. As Ultimate Reed was suckered, so was the Zombie-verse Magneto suckered into bringing the plague to his Earth, on the pretext of aiding his mutant cause.

Colonel America, meanwhile, played his good soldier role, by leading the Avengers to investigate the original incident in Manhattan, and, as a result, was the first to fall to the zombie plague. Perhaps this is another example of hubris, the Colonel's unshakable certainty that there was no problem he couldn't handle. This pointed out a fundamental flaw in the character's makeup. As "America's Super Soldier," his strength lay in improvising defensive countermeasures. He was rarely one for long-range planning, or for directing operations. Despite being one of the founders of the Marvel hero community, Cap still led the front lines, while Marvel's "Illuminati" tried to control the damage from bad decision-making.

Colonel America also appears to have been the fulcrum that differentiated the Zombieverse from the 616 Universe. Aside from its characters existing in their "classic" versions, the major deviation seems to be Colonel America, who had briefly served as president of the United States. The story is unclear as to whether the Colonel was president when the zombie plague struck, or perhaps his election was an alternate ending to the story in *CA 250* (Oct.

1980), in which Cap was urged to consider, but ultimately decided against running for President. Perhaps a commentator with military experience could address whether a "Captain" in the army represents an accomplished field commander, while a full-bird "Colonel" is more of an administrator.

It may seem a stretch to suggest that the zombies in *Marvel Zombies 2* seemed lost without Colonel America in their midst as a rudder. Yet, on their way back to Earth, the zombies bickered, in the usual Marvel way. After the attempt to penetrate the shield around New Wakanda proved to be too much effort, the Galacti just gave up and headed to the Baxter Building. So it was not in a vacuum that the Galacti were stopped short, however briefly, by the sight of a figure twice Colonel America's size, wearing a mock-up of the Colonel's costume.

With *Marvel Zombies'* array of zombie homage covers, and the many other homages, planted like Easter Eggs throughout the artwork, it may not seem a stretch to suggest that T'Channa, with Colonel America's brain tissue, and a modified Cap costume, was intended to resemble Isaiah Bradley, the wartime "black Captain America," from the 2003 miniseries "*Truth: Red, White & Black*." It is worth noting that an alternate timeline story, in *CA 28 vol. 4* (Oct. 2004), has Isaiah Bradley as president in the year 2026.

When T'Channa attacks his father T'Challa, Zombies Spider-Man and Power Man try to restrain him, with Spider-Man shouting "Colonel — Don't you remember us?" (Kirkman *MZ2 4* 5). Even Iron Man, leading the zombie faction determined to eat the last people in the universe, stops abruptly when he sees the ersatz Colonel. It could be argued that the sight of the dead heroes' moral leader, however degraded from the original, provided the few seconds it took for the zombies to change their minds and work with the survivors.

Marvel has killed and resuscitated Captain America so many times that very few fans doubt that Steve Rogers will return by *CA 50 Vol. 5*. But in several stories dealing with Cap's "permanent" death in the future, or in alternate times, his impact on his world is most keenly felt. The 2007 miniseries, *Captain America: The Chosen,* had a dying Cap passing his will and fighting spirit on to hundreds of soldiers, firefighters, teachers, and other ordinary humans, who make a difference in their world. Alex Ross and Jim Kruger's *Earth X* trilogy (1999–2003), had Cap dying to safeguard the rebirth of Mar-Vell as humanity's savior, and reincarnated, with other deceased heroes in *Paradise X*, as the "Avenging Host," charged with bringing souls into a new paradise created in the Negative Zone (writer Jim Kruger had also intended Cap to end up at the throne of this paradise, but the series was cut short due to declining sales). Marvel has also published stories that detailed possible endings for the entire Marvel Universe, at the hand of Thanos, Galactus, or Fred Hembeck. Despite the gore and sick humor of the *Marvel Zombies* franchise, Colonel America, is able to save his universe and provide some slight form of redemption for his zombie cohort.

Notes

1. First printings of each *Marvel Zombies* title regularly placed in the top 30 of Diamond Comic Distributors' monthly comic sales estimates, as calculated at www.cbgxtra.com. The peak was 92,000 copies for *Marvel Zombies 2 1*. The Zombie stories in *Ultimate Fantastic Four* drew in *Zombie* fans and *UFF* fans to sell 102,500 copies of *UFF 30;* add to that revenue from T-shirts, licensed action figures and MiniMates toys.

2. As more comics involved alternate realities, Marvel began numbering its universes, sometimes based on the year or issue number in which that universe debuted. The traditional Marvel Universe is Earth-616, for the date of *Fantastic Four 1*. The Ultimates universe is Earth-1610; the Marvel Zombies depopulated Earth-2149.

The numbering scheme was revealed in the 2005 *Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe: Alternate Universes.* This essay will identify the characters involved as "616" or "Mainstream," "Ultimate," and "Zombie."

3. This was the comic book equivalent of the *Blair Witch Project* or other similar mockumentaries presenting fictional content as fact.

4. This narration seems like a dig at the "Superboy Retcon Punches" that precipitated DC's *Infinite Crisis*, but that series started two months after *Ultimate Fantastic Four 22* appeared. References to the Retcon Punch flooded fan discussion boards after *Batman Annual 25* (May 2006) explained how it brought Jason Todd back to life. Additionally, some forum posts claimed Kirkman intended for Superman to be the carrier of the plague, as Sentry was Marvel's Superman analogue.

5. Besides a chance to sell more popular comics, this may have been done as a safeguard against losing the rights to reprint or refer to *Army of Darkness*, being a crossover with a licensed movie property. When Marvel published *Marvel Zombies: The Covers* in 2007, the *MZ/AoD* covers had Ash replaced by other zombified characters.

References

"Alternate Versions of Captain America." *Wikipedia*. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternate_versions_of_Captain_America, accessed June 6, 2008.

Brady, Matt. "A Fantastic Few Minutes with Mark Millar." Newsarama.com, April 21, 2005. Accessed May 14, 2008, at forum.newsarama.com/showthread.php?t=32193.

Comic Book Resources online: accessed May 22, 2008. http://www.marvel.com/news/comicstories.647.

Goldstein, Hillary. "*Ultimate Fantastic Four* #21 Preview." June 6, 2005. IGN.com. comics.ign.com/articles/622/622516p1.html, accessed May 14, 2008.

Hudlin, Reginald, Francis Portela, and Victor Olazaba, et al. *Black Panther* (2005 Series) *27–30*. New York: Marvel Comics (June–October 2007).

Ingersoll, Bob. "The Law is a Ass" (column), *The Comics Buyer's Guide 563* (August 31, 1984). Updated May 15, 2000, at *World Famous Comics*. www.worldfamouscomics.com/law/back20000516.shtml, accessed May 29, 2008.

Kirkman, Robert, Mark Millar, and Reginald Hudlin. *Marvel Zombies: Dead Days.* New York: Marvel Comics, 2008. (Collects *Marvel Zombies: Dead Days, Ultimate Fantastic Four 21–23* and *30–32*, and *Black Panther 28–30*.)

Kirkman, Robert, and Sean Phillips, et al. *Marvel Zombies: Dead Days*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 2007).

_____. *Marvel Zombies 1–5*. New York: Marvel Comics (February–June 2006). (Also published as a trade book, *Marvel Zombies,* in 2006.)

_____. *Marvel Zombies 2*, *1–5*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 2007–April 2008). (Also published as a trade book, *Marvel Zombies 2,* in 2008.)

Layman, John, and Fabiano Neves, et al. *Marvel Zombies/Army of Darkness*, *1–5*. New York: Marvel Comics / Dynamite Entertainment (May–August 2007). (Also published as a trade book, *Marvel Zombies vs. Army of Darkness,* in 2008.)

Marvel Comics Staff. *Ultimate Fantastic Four.* Marvel Comics Publishing Catalog. www.marvel.com/catalog/Ultimate%20Fantastic%20Four, accessed May 14, 2008 (archived solicitation copy for the *Ultimate Fantastic Four* series).

Millar, Mark (writer), Greg Land (pencils), and Matt Ryan, et al. "Crossover," *Ultimate Fantastic Four 21–23.* New York: Marvel Comics (September–November 2005).

Millar, Mark (writer), Bryan Hitch (pencils), and Paul Neary (illustrator). "Persons of Mass Destruction." *Ultimates 12*. New York: Marvel Comics (November 2003).

Millar, Mark, Greg Land, and Matt Ryan, et al. "Frightful." *Ultimate Fantastic Four 30–32*. New York: Marvel Comics (July–October 2006).

Richards, Dave. "Dead Man's Party: Kirkman & Phillips talk '*Marvel Zombies.*'" *Comic Book Resources* (October 15, 2005). Accessed June 19, 2008, at *http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=5782*.

Rogers, Vaneta. "WW Philly: Fred van Lente on *Marvel Zombies 3.*" Newsarama.com. http://forum.newsarama.com/showthread.php?t=158856, accessed June 30, 2008.

Ultimate Fantastic Four #22 (October 2005), preview of Page 2. Comicbookresources.com. http://www.comicbookresources.com/news/preview.php?image=previews/marvelcomics/ultimatefantasticfour22/2.jpg, accessed June 18, 2008.

Political Interpretations and the Death of Captain America

"Captain America Must Die"

The Many Afterlives of Steve Rogers

David Walton

In 1974 it was hardly surprising for a fan browsing through the first page of his favorite comics at the local newsstand to discover a tormented antagonist declaring that the title character absolutely must die, and *CA 176* was no exception in that respect. What might have genuinely surprised readers was to find this time the antagonist demanding Captain America's death was none other than Captain America himself.

When writer Steve Englehart equated Captain America's retirement with death it was not mere hyperbole but the logical extension of an argument Stan Lee began when he retroactively revealed in *Avengers 4* that Captain America's real world absence from newsstands since 1954 was owing to the fact that he had been missing from the Marvel universe and presumed dead since the final days of World War II. In fact, Lee had already begun to develop the implications so that, when an editorial note beamed, "Sure, we know you've heard it before ... but have you ever heard it from Captain America" (*CA 176* 1), older fans could honestly say they had. At the conclusion of 1967s *ToS 94* Stan Lee had teased that the subsequent issue would feature "The Death of a Legend" and the next month he offered a strange tale in which Captain America unmasked before a mobster and declared, "The time has come for Captain America to finally die — so that Steve Rogers can begin to live" (Lee *ToS 95* 6).

Captain America's fractured understanding of his relationship to Steve Rogers represented a historical problem that Lee's revival brought to light. By passing over his failed 1954 revival attempt, Lee effectively read Captain America's absence into the Cold War. While his return signaled the redemption of the American historical narrative from the Communist threat that had frustrated the nation's post-war ambitions. Lee's suggestion, that Captain America could exit, and re-enter history, measured the political crises as the space between history and its fulfillment, rather than as a marker of decline. Captain America's identity crisis gave this gap a voice.

Over the years, *CA* writers have continued to tap Lee's creative well by returning to the death metaphor to negotiate historical crises. While critics debated whether Captain America's 2007 assassination was a meaningful social criticism, or another example of how meaningless death had become in comics, they unanimously failed to acknowledge the significance of death and absence-as-death, in Captain America's tradition. From Cold War concerns to the post 9/11 world, and beyond, Lee had provided a vehicle to crystallize shifts in the American political climate and respond to them.

Lee's transformation of the proverb "a time to live and a time to die" into the title "A Time to Die ... A Time to Live" (*ToS 95*) inverted and collapsed the historical gap into a negotiable space, which Captain America could travel in either direction. Lee's revival introduced an ambiguous speaker, who originally occupied this set of ellipses, as "once the man known as Captain America" (Lee *Avengers 4* 5). The speaker could not be understood to be Steve Rogers because his name did not reappear in a Marvel comic until a year after Captain America's resurrection.[1] If the fractured trinity of Steve Rogers, the ambiguous speaker, and Captain America represented Lee's historical crisis, the reintegration of Captain America's personality promised to narrow the gap between history and its fulfillment. That is why to respond to his own suggestion Captain America must indeed die, and why an American history is written in the space between the death of a national icon and the many afterlives of Steve Rogers.

"The Second Coming"

"The chronicle of comicdom turns full circle," Lee declared in his introduction to *Avengers 4*, "reaching a new pinnacle of greatness" (1). If this was typical Lee hyperbole, it nonetheless reflected his faith that, while history might occasionally come full circle it never traveled in circles for long, but continued to progress upward and onward until its inevitable fulfillment.[2] "Those who would grind us underfoot," Lee's Captain America tells the Red Skull, "can never hope to keep us from reaching our eventual destiny" (*Captain America 101* 17). At the same time, Lee's reading of Cold War anxieties into World War II implied a cyclical understanding of history, and his projection of America's victory over Nazism on to the Communist threat suggested escape. The second coming of Captain America redeemed the linear American narrative from cycles of history through repetition with variation.

With the retroactive revelation that Captain America's teenage sidekick Bucky Barnes had died in the same incident that led to his suspended animation, Lee had invented just such a cycle for history to be redeemed from. Modern teenager Rick Jones' resemblance to Bucky provided a medium for Captain America to negotiate history's claims on the present, striking Captain America as a sign that "in a way, Bucky can still live again" (*Avengers 4* 11). Captain America weighed his initial optimism against the possibility that history was doomed to repeat itself, taking Jones on as a protégé but resisting his assumption of Bucky's uniform (*Avengers 7*), and vetoing Iron Man's attempt to make him a full time member of the Avengers (*Avengers 10*). His anxiety proved irrelevant to the historical process when the retroactive creation responsible for Bucky's death, Baron Zemo, kidnapped Jones to lure Captain America to his stronghold for a final confrontation (*Avengers 15*).

Captain America's response to Zemo's death emphasized Lee's confidence in the self-correcting mechanisms of history. "No man may perpetrate evil without paying the price," he tells Jones, "if destiny could speak, it would say, 'By my hand shall always die a villain'" (*Avengers 15* 20). If destiny inevitably passed sentence on villains, individuals at cross-currents with history were often casualties as well. Captain America might have made the transition from World War II to the Cold War when the Avengers discovered him in the Arctic, but Steve Rogers was still figuratively lost in the tides of time. Rogers' suppression represented the paradoxical crisis of desire, which both initiated and threatened the historical narrative, a crisis which could never be fully resolved in the space between history and its fulfillment.

If destiny could not yet allow the realization of Steve Rogers, it could not afford his silence

either. It forced his desire to the surface with the second coming of Captain America's lover. A chance encounter with Agent 13 of S.H.I.E.L.D. reminded Captain America of French resistance fighter Peggy Carter, who was actually Agent 13's older sister (Lee *ToS 75*). Captain America had been kept from searching for the missing Peggy Carter when an exuberant brand of Allied soldiers had hoisted him on their shoulders and carried him through the streets of Paris like a flag in a victory celebration. This gesture read Captain America's mask as the impassable space between Rogers and Carter (Lee *ToS 77*).

Peggy's Carter's second coming, as Agent 13, which suggested unmasking as a vehicle to redeem Rogers' personal narrative from history, lead him to reveal his true identity and propose marriage. When Agent 13 not only refused his proposal, but also continued to withhold her true name, Rogers' subsequent reading of Captain America, as the triumph of duty over desire and death over life, prompted his plot to kill Captain America through disclosure (*ToS 95*). Because Captain America's mask was not only the space between Rogers and Carter, but also history and its culmination, Rogers' plot was ultimately a misguided and futile attempt to prematurely force history's final revelation.

S.H.I.E.L.D. Director Nick Fury's cool and collected response to Captain America's unmasking was a stark contrast to Rogers' impatience. Only Fury's timely use of a robot double saved Rogers from assassination, but it was as much what he refrained from doing as what he did that rescued the historical narrative. A police officer had cued readers to respond to Captain America's revival "just like fate planned it this way" (Lee *Avengers 4* 10), and Fury's decision to let circumstances play themselves out, rather than reason with Rogers, reflected his confidence in the continuing tide of destiny: the tide that had carried Captain America away from Bucky Barnes and Peggy Carter and toward the larger national destiny. Rogers' recognition that "a man can't ever stop being what he was meant to be" (Lee *ToS 96* 10) favored faith in the historical process over personal initiative, spelling out the consequences of distrust in no uncertain terms. Rogers had plotted to kill Captain America, and inadvertently had killed himself in the process.

If Lee's faith in destiny had spoken to a Cold War culture anxious for history to remove the Communist threat, it was less comforting to a Vietnam generation rapidly losing confidence that America was on the right side of history. Still convinced that America could escape from cycles of history, Lee responded to Rick Jones' return not as the herald of destiny, but as a marker of intentionality. As the voice of fate grew less pronounced, it would prompt Captain America to redeem Bucky's memory from the cycle of history through the medium of logic. When Jones assumed Bucky's uniform again, Captain America repeated his concerns almost verbatim, but this time Jones resisted his mentor's reasoning, and Captain America reluctantly conceded the point (*CA 110*). The next time Captain America willed his death, it would be less a reactive gesture than a creative decision.

Rogers was inspired to action when he was attacked by a cadre of assassins from the terrorist organization Hydra. Realizing that, as long as his identity was public knowledge, he was a target, he responded by staging Captain America's death in another ambush. He left behind a bullet-riddled costume and a latex mask with his features, suggesting Steve Rogers had been a false identity all along (*CA 111*). As Captain America explains his plot, "though the world will still realize that Captain America lives, none may be sure who is behind the mask ... and so, Captain America has a secret identity once more" (Lee *CA 113* 20).

Where Lee's first ambiguous speaker had measured the distance between Captain America and Steve Rogers, his new speaker formed a conduit between them. By the time Rogers reverted to his given name, Lee's *tabula rasa* had marked a new negotiable space between plotted and

plotter, a significant passage for a generation whose confidence in collective change was growing as quickly as its faith in institutions had declined.[3] When Captain America willed himself into the narrative, just as agents of Hydra lowered the Avengers into living graves, he not only reversed their respective roles from their first encounter, but his contrasting assumption of agency also cast fate in a more ambiguous light than their accidental discovery of him.

Lee's model of historical crisis might have been invented through Cold War lenses, but his use of the death metaphor to shift his focus from destiny toward liberal individualism proved just how negotiable his ellipses were. His measurement of the interval from history until its fulfillment, as the space between Steve Rogers and Captain America, read integration as redemption. If Lee's Captain America had been deferential and his Rogers selfish, their amalgamation fused personal conscience to public responsibility. Around the same time that Lee published his story, a letters page controversy erupted that would challenge Marvel to define exactly what Lee's transformation really meant. Even though that responsibility would fall on another writer's shoulders, it meant that Captain America would need to "die" again, cementing his periodic absences as a permanent tradition.

"Third Party Solution"

When reader Albert Rodriquez declared the days of "hero worship" and "the so-called patriotic fighter" (*CA 110*) were over, he set off "the patriotism controversy," a letters column debate that spanned three years and was symptomatic of a new historical crisis that Lee's movement toward individualism only intensified.[4] Rodriquez's guilt by association linkage of Captain America to the Establishment clearly struck a nerve with fans all across the political spectrum, eventually prompting Lee to respond with a lecture from his hero on the value of dissidence (*CA 130*). If well received, it was still too much of an abstraction to clarify Captain America's relationship to the powers that be, and did little to halt the title's rapid decline. "The problem across the board at Marvel was [that] this was the '70s — prime anti-war years," writer Steve Englehart said, "and here was this guy with a flag on his chest who was supposed to represent what most Americans distrusted" (personal website). With the illusion of national homogeneity, which had been an underlying assumption of Captain America's 1964 revival, in ruins, Englehart returned to Lee's model of absence to redefine the patriotic fighter in the post–Vietnam era.

Englehart began his run with a title that spoke clearly to the question on readers' minds, "Captain America — Hero or Hoax?" (*CA 153*). The cover featured Captain America harassing a young black man, only to be confronted by his African American partner Sam Wilson, a.k.a. the Falcon. Torn between his girlfriend's militant Black Nationalism and Captain America's more inclusive vision, allegations that Captain America had engaged in a terroristic spree across Harlem challenged Wilson's insistence that his partner represented all Americans. When he tracked down the impostor, a horrified Wilson unmasked him only to discover Steve Rogers' face staring back at him.

A Captain America doppelganger, so similar that even his partner could not tell them apart, was a poignant metaphor for a confused nation trying to sort its founding principles from its history. Englehart returned to Lee's model of absence from *Avengers 4* to account for the difference, reinterpreting the 1950s Captain America and Bucky as paranoid schizophrenics, placed in suspended animation in 1954, and revived in the present day.[5] Englehart revealed

that the 1950s Captain America had been so enamored of Steve Rogers that when he discovered the super-soldier serum formula he altered his mannerisms and his appearance to match him. Seeing himself as Rogers' political heir, the revived 1950s Captain America unwittingly set out to kill Rogers to preserve his legacy.

Englehart's ironic exploitation of Lee's model treated the competing Captain Americas' responses to missing time as a reaction to difference. The 1950s Captain subscribed to a derivative patriotism that attempted to convert all philosophical and temporal differences into a single line that could not be crossed. His conflation of racial distinction, with dissent and dissent with treason, prompted him to interpret Harlem as a Communist stronghold. Rogers, by contrast, was able to negotiate contemporary values against his own because he had not undergone or manufactured the final transition from lived experience into history. Rogers could thus defend conscientious objector Dave Cox[6] to fellow time transplant Peggy Carter,[7] arguing "his beliefs aren't the ones I was taught, but I guess things do change with time" (*CA 163* 28).

Rogers' revelation of himself as the original Captain America exposed his self-proclaimed successor's reactionary conservatism and his own New Deal liberalism as mutually exclusive ideals, bringing his counterpart to the uncomfortable understanding that he had "loathed what he should have loved" (Englehart *CA 156* 26). Franklin Roosevelt's champion prevailed not because American values were fixed at that point in history, but rather because the New Deal embodied responsiveness to changing circumstances. Because Communism is not Nazism, Vietnam is not World War II, and pacifism is not cowardice, Englehart suggested that the true Captain America must argue from history, like Rogers, rather than from within it as his counterpart. Rogers' encounter with his doppelganger pointed him to the contemporary crisis of separating good from evil without recourse to labels. Faced with an America where private ambitions were being filtered through third parties and packaged as public interest, he was forced to question whether even his own symbolic authority was complicit with political corruption.

Captain America's existential crisis came to a head when Englehart transformed one of Marvel's clichéd, subversive organizations into a metaphor for government transparency, and recast its "Secret Empire" as the invisible merger of private, corporate, and political interests, "dedicated to domination without the people they dominate being aware of it" (*CA 173* 11). The Empire infiltrated American society so successfully that they nearly destroyed Captain America's reputation by proxy. They filtered a negative advertising campaign through a privately formed committee to position their own lackey as a sanctioned contrast to his tarnished independent agency. The Empire's plot culminated with a smoke and mirrors shell game, using the false suggestion of overwhelming force to convince the American public to turn over its constitutional form of government. Captain America discovered the Empire's reach extended as far as it had when he pursued their leader, Number One, from the White House lawn into the office of the president. There, an implied Richard Nixon unmasked off-panel, before committing suicide[8] (*CA 175*).

Nixon's behind-closed-doors revelation and his off-panel exit were indicative of an epistemological crisis that increasingly isolated the moral individual. Where Lee's "deaths" had been staged on open battlefields, Englehart moved the metaphor to the closed courtroom, with Captain America retiring like a judge to his chambers. "I've asked myself if Captain America must die — and if I had the courage to carry out the verdict," he tells a pensive audience as he emerges, "and the answer to both these questions is yes" (Englehart *CA 176* 32). Captain America had taken on the lonely burden of being his own judge, jury, and executioner.

Englehart recast Lee's ambiguous speaker when Rogers returned to action as the self styled "Nomad, the Man Without a Country." The name suggests the no man's land between faith and fatalism that neither Captain America nor Steve Rogers could travel alone. Initially excited about the potential to re-invent himself through his new persona, Rogers' radical individualism was tempered when his long time fantasy of wearing a cape resulted in his tripping over it, while in pursuit of the terrorist Viper (*CA 180*). More complications emerged from Nomad's relative anonymity: a crisis that culminated in the police forcefully removing him from a hostage standoff (*CA 182*). Nomad might have given Rogers more creative latitude, but he could no longer move through the public sphere as freely as Captain America had.

Faced with the potentially negative consequences of both anonymity and status, Rogers could no longer fall back on simplistic assumptions about the long term consequences of his decision to retire Captain America. When the Red Skull returned and killed a young acquaintance, who had taken up the mantle of Captain America, Rogers realized that his retirement had been overcompensation for his own failure to recognize Number One as a threat equivalent to the Red Skull, simply because he had operated under the banner of American interests. If he had neglected to make appropriate distinctions between governmental packaging and substance, conflating Captain America's symbolic authority with political corruption was no less a mistake.

Rodriquez's eulogy for the patriotic hero had been only partially correct. Captain America's "death" was imminent, not because the days of the patriotic hero were past, but rather because patriotism was being redefined. The failure of both the 1950s Captain America and Nomad to balance the claims of patriotism with personal identity suggested that neither national homogeneity nor radical individualism were sufficient to resolve the new historical crisis, thus placing Steve Rogers, as the thinking individual, between America's idealistic origins and its collapsing institutions. "He is Captain America," Englehart says. "Steve is the guy who lived that life. You can get someone else to put on the costume, even believe in the same ideals, but Steve took all that on and carried it through the years" (19 Dec. 2007 email interview).[9]

If it was Rogers' carrying his personal experience into the present that allowed him to compare his 1950s counterpart's racial attitudes with Nazism, and an America "manipulated by demagogues with sweet, empty words" (*CA 176* 14) to pre-war Germany, it was Lee's ellipses that allowed him the fluidity to navigate the treacherous political labels of the 1970s. While Lee had treated Rogers' retirement as an unqualified mistake, Englehart emphasized the process as much as the destination, treating Nomad's brief career as one of the "many risings and advancing of the spirit" (*CA 183* 32). Nomad had offered Captain America safe passage through Lee's ellipses from death into life again, allowing him to function not only as his own judge, jury, and executioner but as also the executor of his estate.

"Of Dreams and Blood"

As Englehart's Secret Empire of the 1970s gave way to Reagan's Evil Empire of the 1980s, Captain America's existential crisis could hardly have seemed further removed from the national temper embodied by the president's definitive address to the British House of Commons, in which he framed critics of Cold War policy as self-deluded. At the height of the nuclear arms race, J.M. DeMatteis responded with the suggestion that the resurgent Cold War culture, and

its competing counterculture, could be traced to America's origins "born of dreams and blood" (*CA 292* 22). Both the product of war and a symbol of the American Dream, DeMatteis' Captain America gave a voice to the growing gap between idealism and violence that the Cold War narrative threatened to close.

DeMatteis intended Captain America's crisis of conscience to culminate with his renunciation of violence as a medium for change, and prompt a year long story arc that dealt with the Marvel universe's response to his pacifism. Abandoned by his closest friends and allies, Rogers would ultimately be assassinated by his protégé and partner, Jack Monroe. Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter objected to DeMatteis' depiction of Steve Rogers after it had been written, forcing a substantial rewrite and reduction of *CA 300* that led DeMatteis to resign the title in protest.[10]

"I think that storyline, had it gone forward the way I envisioned it," DeMatteis says, "would have been a very powerful statement that would have attracted attention from the media, caused some healthy controversy and, most important, inspired some serious discussions about a 'hero' who thinks he can solve problems by dropping a building on someone's head" (6 Jan. 2008 email interview). Shooter's response was indicative of what DeMatteis' vision might have meant had it been realized, a countercultural response that worked at both the genre and the national level. There could hardly have been a more appropriate outlet to challenge the uniformity of the Cold War narrative than the uniform politics of superheroes.

Captain America's skepticism about the consequences of individuals writing a uniform history began as early in DeMatteis' run as his confrontation with a moral purist who attempted to alter reality to fit his vision of America (*CA 264*). And it continued to intensify as Captain America recognized his own narrative's failure to keep the territory of blood from invading the world of dreams. When Primus kidnapped Rogers' childhood friend, Arnie Roth, he lashed out at Primus' mutates, until Roth warned him the creatures were not monsters but humans who had been the subject of experiments. Rogers successfully appealed to their buried humanity, but S.H.I.E.L.D. agent, Runciter, burst onto the scene with guns blazing, mowing them down without a second thought, which illustrated the potentially destructive consequences of the militancy that was becoming second nature to Rogers (*CA 277*). When acquaintance Sam Bernstein jokingly put him in a chokehold at a party, Rogers nearly injured him (*CA 284*), and when the 1950s Bucky was revived and came seeking Rogers' help, Rogers brutally attacked him, on the assumption it was a trick (*CA 281*).

At the same time that Rogers was struggling to keep his worlds separate, DeMatteis humanized the 1950s Bucky's struggle to transcend Cold War politics with the name Jack Monroe, and a past to accompany it.[11] When Rogers gave Monroe his Nomad identity and took him on as a protégé, it not only provided the Cold War outcast with a mentor to curb his violent impulses, but forced Rogers to give the growing gap between blood and dreams a voice. DeMatteis skillfully linked the cycle of violence, embodied by the Cold War culture, from its Edenic beginnings to its potential apocalypse, with titles suggestive of original sin and a nihilist villain, Viper, tied to the serpent imagery of Genesis.[12] Shifting emphasis from the political to the spiritual dimensions of her nihilism, Viper plotted to exterminate all human life by means of a reconstituted bubonic plague. If the outcome was suggestive of the nuclear arms race and the politics of mutually assured destruction, the means implied violence as a self-replicating virus, spread through a vehicle as natural as breathing.

This natural transmission emphasized two competing explanations for the gap between blood and dreams. Either this gap pointed to the space between mankind's divine potential

and its violent impulses, as allusions to original sin would suggest, or the rift was purely biological and could only be closed by the embracement of death. DeMatteis offered a diverse body of nihilists who were united only by their cynicism, including the Red Skull, his daughter Mother Superior, Baron Zemo's son Helmut, and an unconnected self-loathing domestic abuser tempted by "oblivion's seductive smile" (*CA 284* 20). DeMatteis' inclusion of the abuser pointed to nihilism as a local problem, fed by death narratives in varying degrees, including Monroe's belief in law enforcement as a final solution.

DeMatteis re-envisioned the Red Skull as a cosmic nihilist whose schemes for world domination were merely a pretense for "the dance" (*CA 298* 18) with his arch nemesis. Now dying of cancer, the Skull saw Rogers as his "opposite face" (15), and had him poisoned and rapidly aged so they could return to oblivion together as "two gods entwined ... through all eternity" (*CA 299* 7). The Skull's conception of himself and Rogers as two deadlocked superpowers was eerily reminiscent of the Cold War as it was being plotted by the United States and the USSR. Titles inspired by Yeats' "The Second Coming" suggested that peace through strength was not paving the way for a millennial reign, but for the rise of an antichrist.[13]

DeMatteis had pointed to the problem of escaping the narrative boundaries that limit human potential when the celestial being, known as Mr. Buda, plucked the four individuals who had served as Captain America from the time stream to accommodate Jeff Mace's identity crisis. Mace had retired the third Captain America because America had no pressing need for a symbol in the interim between World War II and the Cold War. Now dying of cancer, Mace's concern that history had passed him by suggested that individuals bound to a linear historical narrative were in danger of falling in between the gaps. When Buda provided Mace with the opportunity to "usurp the very essence of the original Captain America" (*CA Annual 6* 34) and reclaim the historical narrative for his own benefit, he ultimately chose to reclaim his personal narrative from history instead.

Steve Rogers had a comparable transcendent moment when he faced "the transgressions of the past seeking redemption" (*CA 292* 16), Jesse Black Crow, a Native American mystic who reasoned that Rogers' blood atonement would create a new America for the benefit of all peoples. Unable to fight Crow's magic on his own terms or surrender, Rogers could only fight until the death until "a door flings open in his soul" (DeMatteis 21), prompting him to kneel before Crow and offer his shield. Impressed by the gesture, Crow declares that the earth spirits were satisfied. Girlfriend Bernie Rosenthal's subsequent proposal to Rogers suggests that the future was not plotted in the blood narrative that Crow had assumed, but rather by reclaiming the personal narrative from history as Mace had done.

Rogers' escape from the narrative of violence was marked by his refusal to deliver the Skull's desired destiny in the form of a killing blow, even when he believed the Skull had killed his loved ones. Cradled compassionately in his worst enemy's arms, the Skull's final mark on history is a small scratch on Rogers' exposed cheek that anticipated what would have been Rogers' conversion to pacifism (*CA 300*).

Monroe's role as assassin might have pointed to the return of the narrative that Captain America had just escaped, but Rogers' final fate reflected his continuing refusal to confront that narrative on its own terms. In DeMatteis' outline, Steve Rogers survived his assassination, "free to live a new, anonymous life that reflected his new perspective" (6 Jan. 2008 email interview). Rogers' lifestyle was the culmination of his longstanding argument that "whenever they make the decent choices, pursue the grandest ideals, reject selfishness in favor of compassion — all men become Captain America" (*CA Annual 6* 36). Rogers had never fully

realized his Captain America identity until his death experience converted overt symbolism into personal reality.

After he had given Jeff Mace peace of mind, Mr. Buda argues that his mission was to follow "the intricate patterns of the Universal Spirit," and lead individuals to an understanding of "the majesty that lies unstained in each human heart" (DeMatteis *CA Annual 6* 39). The Universal Spirit was DeMatteis' ambiguous speaker; it was the silent inner voice that prompted Rogers to bow to Jesse Crow and linked, not only Rogers, but all humanity to the numinous Dream that found corporeal form in Captain America. Crow's responsiveness to the Universal Spirit led to his understanding of Rogers (and by implication all mankind) as his "brother" (*CA 292* 15), and would have found realization when Crow succeeded Rogers as Captain America.

Where Reagan's choice of venue for his "Evil Empire" speech looked back to the British-American alliance during World War II to frame the Soviet conflict, DeMatteis drew on Steve Rogers' wartime service as a source of tension between the promise of a war to end all wars and the continuing cycle of violence. DeMatteis linked that cycle to narrative boundaries that frustrate human potential, proposing the American dream as a foil for history's exclusive vision of heroes and villains, winners and losers. If the Cold War narrative threatened to close the gap between blood and dreams through the idealization of violence, DeMatteis countered by linking the dream to its flesh and blood hosts.[14] Lee had read Captain America's passage from death into life again, as pointing toward mankind's inevitable destiny, but DeMatteis shifted focus from Lee's letters with the suggestion that history would ultimately have to acknowledge humanity, and not vice versa.

"The Body in Question"

As Mark Gruenwald assumed writing duties for *Captain America* in the mid–1980s, American-Soviet relations might have continued to cool, but the consumer culture was only getting hotter. Gruenwald shifted focus from the resurgent Cold War narrative to the market values that were being channeled into it, with the implication that convincing a nation it needed its arms race might not be so different from convincing a culture it wanted its MTV — or its anti-hero, the rising star of the superhero community. Gruenwald turned to the death metaphor twice to measure Steve Rogers' opposition to the ideological, cultural, and physical pull of historical/market forces.

Appropriately enough one of Gruenwald's earliest stories was entitled "The Body in Question" (*CA 308*) because his Captain America operated as willpower, acting against the temporal, spatial, and moral limitations of a physical existence. When Captain America resorted to lethal force to prevent a terrorist from firing into a crowd of unarmed civilians (*CA 321*), he publicly apologized because he felt that, however necessary, the shooting still fell short of America's ideals (*CA 323*). Captain America's understanding of lethal force, as "the ultimate denial of freedom" (*CA 321* 4), linked the temporal-spatial limitations which had forced his hand to the natural forces corrupting democracy. Where Lee had emphasized Captain America's acknowledgment of history's self-correcting mechanisms, Gruenwald pitted him against the forces of chaos, entropy, and decay at work in the historical process.

Gruenwald interpreted Captain America's lack of a detailed history as a desirable relief from "external molders of internal values" (*Marvel Age 95* 5), framing the consumer culture

as the representation of the outside influences he resisted. He invented the perfect foil for Rogers, the self-styled "Super-Patriot," John Walker, an obnoxious media hound, who had a press agent, toured the country on a rock 'n' roll patriotism tour, and adjusted his image according to the latest polls. Billing himself as "the hero with his pulse on the eighties," Walker accused Captain America of being out of touch with "what makes the country and the people tick" (Gruenwald *CA 323* 14). Where Walker read national values as a spectrum in constant motion with the hands of the clock, Rogers tapped into timeless American ideals that predated its national origins. This set the stage for an explosive confrontation between history and that which stands outside of it.[15]

If Steve Rogers was the incorruptible mind, acting on the corrupted body, Walker was the reverse; while Rogers saw contingencies as problematic, Walker looked to historical conditions for validation. Walker's sense that, with the end of the Vietnam War, he lacked an appropriate outlet for his patriotism made him especially susceptible to market forces. When a presidentially appointed commission argued that Captain America was an intellectual property of the United States government, Rogers' resignation gave his most vocal critic the opportunity to take up the mantle of Captain America. Rogers' refusal to be tied down to specific policies that might compromise Captain America's "effectiveness as a symbol that transcends mere politics" (Gruenwald *CA 332* 13), and Walker's competing suggestion, "If Uncle Sam wanted me to be Mickey Mouse, I'd do it" (*CA 333* 10), read the conflict between history and that which stands outside of it as a dispute between legalism and creative vision.

"Steve Rogers chose to be Captain America," Gruenwald argued, "and worked hard at defining just what a Captain America was" (*Marvel Age 95* 5). Walker's assumption of the Captain America identity came across as a figurative attempt to put new wine into old wineskins, with his hulking frame visibly stretching the Captain America costume to its limits. When Rogers resurfaced as "The Captain" sporting a red and black costume, inspired by the original costume's design, he appeared more visibly recognizable as Captain America than his official counterpart (*CA 337*).[16] "The Captain" functioned as an ambiguous speaker, similar to Englehart's Nomad, but where Nomad had represented Rogers' attempt to distance himself from Captain America, "The Captain's" failure to do so suggested Rogers' creative success in forging the Captain America identity according to his own unique vision.

Walker's failure to transcend mere politics nearly reached critical mass with the revelation that the Red Skull had been manipulating the Commission's activities from behind the scenes. Surviving his death, via a cloned body of Steve Rogers, the Skull now adopted wealth and political influence as his weapons of choice. Without recourse to Rogers' timeless values, both Walker and the Commission lacked the necessary apparatus to detect the plot unfolding in their midst. The Skull's conspiracy pointed to the need for a national symbol who could read threats from a perspective external to the marketplace of values, which had exposed the Commission to manipulation through the same means by which they had exerted control. Rogers' exposure of the Skull's plot led the Commission to acknowledge that, while Captain America might technically still be the legal property of the United States government, he was the intellectual property of Steve Rogers. Even Rogers' most vocal critic affirmed their judgment. "You may not have come up with the name or stitched the uniform together," Walker argued, "but you created the role of Captain America—his code of conduct, his reputation, his legend" (Gruenwald *CA 350* 44).[17]

If Gruenwald's first reading of Captain America's passage through Lee's ellipses suggested that internal values would eventually yield external validation from the marketplace his second

reading was decidedly less optimistic. By 1994 the Cold War had thawed and the consumer culture appeared to be cooling down, yet, even if greed was no longer praised as a public virtue, a generation that had been raised as materialists had come into its own disposable income. With the comics speculator market, which had been fueled by those materialists, now in decline the industry went into a sales freefall. "No one felt the disappointment and confusion of the '90s more than Mark," comics historians Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones have noted, "because Mark loved the characters and the comics, not the money" (368). Gruenwald channeled all that love and frustration into his final *CA* storyline, in which he systematically stripped every form of marketplace validation from Steve Rogers.[18]

When Rogers learned that the super-soldier serum, which granted him his superhuman athletic prowess, was deteriorating, he was faced with the choice to live out a normal lifespan or suffer paralysis and death within the year. Caught between a young speculator, stealing comics, and the victimized comics dealer, whose love for comics is directed at antiheroes, on the same day he learned of his condition (*CA 425*), "Fighting Chance" was both the culmination of Gruenwald's continuing interest in external molders and a troubling commentary on the market forces that had overfed and starved a medium.

Gruenwald had turned once before to the super-solider serum as a metaphor for the creative longing to transcend market forces, with his "Streets of Poison" arc. When a freak accident forced Rogers to flush the serum from his veins with a total blood transfusion, his refusal of a reverse transfusion looked longingly to the emancipation of vision from circumstance (*CA 378*). "I think too many people put emphasis on the mechanism by which he became Captain America," Gruenwald argued, "and have not thought enough about the man who decided to take it" (*Comic Art and Graffix Gallery*).[19] With the revelation that the serum was self-replicating, Gruenwald suggested that the total emancipation of vision from circumstance was impossible, but both Rogers' time spent as "The Captain" and his time without the serum functioned as temporary respites from market forces that allowed Steve Rogers to clarify his vision with minimal interference from outside agencies.

"Fighting Chance" was the next logical step in Gruenwald's concern with external and internal molders, turning to Steve Rogers' failing body as an ambiguous speaker, separating his creative vision for Captain America from the reality of his legacy. Gruenwald illustrated the gap with villains who corroborated the decay at work in Rogers' body, at the societal level, most notably with the return of his first *Captain America* invention, Madcap. Once an invincible trickster figure, modeled after the 1980s slacker youth (*CA 307–8*), when Madcap returned, longing for the oblivion none could grant him, his death wish was the culmination of a consumer culture grown restlessness of materialism, but lacked other outlets for expression (*CA 442*).

It seemed as though all that was left was for the collapsing consumer culture to take down the heroes who had resisted its influence along with it. When the villain, Everyman, plotted to kill Captain America, along with every other Golden Age hero, he disguised himself, appropriately enough, as a hero named Zeitgeist (*CA 442*). Gruenwald's homage to the Golden Age returned to the genesis of the superhero as the unadulterated creative act. At the same time, Rogers' terminal condition pointed to the inevitable fall from that state, linking his race against time to an idealistic young man's lost innocence. Receiving word that he had only twenty-four hours to live, Captain America's assessment of his legacy was darkened by a continuing string of frustrations that culminated with the revelation that a former associate, who had idolized him since he was a boy, no longer believed in heroes because his mother had

recently been shot on her way to church. "Despite all my good intentions and constant struggles the world is still filled with crime, war, injustice and tyranny," Rogers lamented as he lay down to die, "let my epitaph read, 'He didn't do enough!'" (*CA 443*).

Rogers' reading of his "failure" was symptomatic of the fall from Captain America's timeless ideals into the market pressures of history, or from democracy in principle to democracy in practice. Where Gruenwald's Golden Age homage contextualized that fall with a return to the symbolically pure creative act, Captain America's "death" looked to the fallen creative action in order to mediate between the competing claims of the ideal and the reality. The Avengers' discovery of the exoskeleton, which had simultaneously trapped and sustained Captain America's creative energies" abandoned next to an open window suggested that his exits from history allowed him to temporarily occupy the space between the vastness of the human imagination and the limits imposed by a physical existence. Perhaps when Gruenwald's last will and testament called for his ashes to be distributed in the first trade collection of his *Squadron Supreme* maxi-series, he offered the most significant interpretation of Captain America's death. While the market forces, symptomatic of the death and entropy at work in the natural world and on democracy, could not ultimately be surpassed, he suggested, the creative/democratic vision Captain America accessed through Lee's ellipses makes those market forces subject to constant negotiation.

"Full Circle"

By the time Lee united several characters under the banner of the Avengers, in 1963, it was becoming apparent that Marvel was coming into its own as a cohesive fictional universe, but, until Captain America's 1964 revival, the Marvel Revolution lacked what one writer would later refer to as "a central unifying spirit" (Gillis *What If? 44*).[20] Within a year of his return, Captain America had become such an incredible presence that Lee dissolved the Avengers' founding membership to leave him in charge of a new roster (*Avengers 16*), a presence that only continued to intensify until Frank Miller could speak to his position in the Marvel Universe as "a solider with a voice that could command a god — and does" (*Born Again* 154). When that same god's hammer fell from the heavens unattended (*Fantastic Four 536*), in 2006, it signaled the beginning of Marvel's *Civil War*, a deconstructive text that revisited Lee's unification project from *Avengers 4*.

The premise of *Civil War* was a congressional act requiring super-humans to register with the government, and operate as federal employees. This pitted the pro-registration forces, led by Iron Man, against the anti-registration forces, led by Captain America. The conflict culminated with Captain America's decision to surrender, when he surveyed the damage the warring factions had inflicted. In *Avengers 4* Lee's ambiguous speaker reluctantly hovered for a moment between Steve Rogers and Captain America, before assuming the latter's mask. His decision to publicly unmask as he turned himself over, with the suggestion that arresting Steve Rogers was "a very different thing" (Millar *Civil War 7*) than arresting Captain America, functioned as a poignant reversal of that moment.[21]

When Joe Quesada told writer Ed Brubaker that Marvel had big plans for Captain America following *Civil War* he decided, "the most interesting story ... would be to take Captain America from the Marvel Universe" (*Marvel Spotlight: Captain America Remembered*).[22] Brubaker's Captain America was mortally wounded when he leapt in front of a sniper's bullet to save a

federal marshal, and was shot at point blank range by his hypnotized lover in the ensuing panic (*CA 25*). The confusion surrounding the circumstances of Captain America's death illustrates the function of his frequent exits from history, which has always been an attempt to wring order from chaos. Brubaker's suggestion that he is writing "a story where America needs to find Captain America" is like Lee's revival, a response to the anxiety that accompanies transition, an attempt to find the unifying vision that will lead America safely through the historical process.

Lee's exploration of the space between history and its fulfillment was itself a return to Captain America's origins. From the moment he burst onto the scene in *CAC 1*, slugging Hitler in the jaw, nearly a full year before America entered World War II, Captain America has been defined by not just reflecting contemporary concerns, but by *entering* history. Co-creator Joe Simon had to convince his skeptical publisher, Martin Goodman, to allow him to depict Hitler on the cover because of his concern that, in the space between the comic's production and its publication, the German dictator might be killed (*Marvel Age 95* 11). It was the space between national crises that led to *CAC* first cancellation in 1950, and Lee's failed attempt to close the space between Nazism and Communism, that prompted its second cancellation in 1954. And it was ultimately Captain America's problematic entrance into history that made the implications of his exit from it possible.

At the same time the Avengers' discovery of Captain America looked longingly to the passage from anxiety into history, his identity crisis emphasized the necessity of conflict to that movement. Because conflict is symptomatic of the desire that moves history forward, Lee implied, Captain America and Steve Rogers could never be fully reconciled. In death, the conflict between the national symbol and the individual continued, with an official burial at Arlington National Cemetery and a secret burial in the Arctic waters, where Steve Rogers had once found rest. "One era ends and a new one begins," fellow Avenger Janet van Dyne remarks to Tony Stark as he gazes on Rogers' sinking casket, "we're going to have to accept that now, right Tony?" (Loeb *Fallen Son* 5). If Steve Rogers' return to the depths from which he once emerged anticipates yet another second coming, for now at least Tony Stark's silence is the muted voice of that most ambiguous of all speakers, history. The chronicle of comicdom had come full circle.

Notes

1. Even when Lee first used the name Steve Rogers in *ToS 6,* it was only in the context of his origin story. Captain America's secret identity would not be mentioned in the present day Marvel Universe until fellow Avenger Hawkeye called him "Rogers" (*Avengers 21* 2).

2. Lee was so enamored of progress that he adopted the New York state motto "Excelsior," meaning "higher," as the sign-off for his Bullpen Bulletin columns.

3. Lee appears to have been unsure how to deal with Rogers' assumption of a new identity. Immediately following his plot Rogers could not even think of an alias for a hotel registry (*CA 114*), and his best effort was not much better when he applied for a job as "Roger Stevens" (*CA 120* 9). Captain America eventually went undercover as rookie police officer Steve Rogers with no reference to his exposed identity (*CA 139*). When confronted Marvel implied in a letters column that it had plans to resolve the issue involving S.H.I.E.L.D., but never followed through (*CA 143*). Eventually Steve Englehart had the Space Phantom erase the entire world's knowledge of Captain America's double identity (*Avengers 107*).

4. The term "patriotism controversy" was coined by comic book enthusiast, college student, and future Marvel scribe Steve Gerber, in a letter published in *Captain America 118*. The last official reference to the patriotism controversy is in *CA 140*.

5. Continuity-minded editor Roy Thomas had suggested Englehart explain how Lee's "Commie-smasher" Captain America could have operated during the 1950s, since Lee's 1964 ret-con placed Steve Rogers in suspended animation during that time.

6. Englehart revealed in the *CA 169* letters column that he had been honorably discharged from military service as a conscientious objector, and that the genesis of Cox's invention was a conversation with another writer praised for relevance, who had suggested a conscientious objector couldn't work in comics.

7. Englehart reintroduced readers to Captain America's unnamed lover from World War II in *CA 162*, revealing that she had suffered such a state of shock when Captain America was presumed dead that she had shut out reality. Carter provided a sounding board for Rogers' adjustment to modern life and reflected Englehart's continuing interest in reactions to lost time as difference.

8. "I decided on my own not to name or show Nixon," Englehart says, "and it certainly wouldn't have changed the story much, if at all, because it wasn't about Nixon, it was about Cap" (20 November 2007 email interview).

9. "You can have another Green Lantern, another Flash," Englehart says. "You could even have another Batman, because despite Bruce Wayne's driven life, being the Batman is a role, a job, a calling. But being Captain America is a belief. And that's why writing a Steve who's less than that falls so flat. If he's not a human being who's also, in some way, transcendent, he's not Captain America" (19 December 2007 email interview).

10. "Let's face it, if you have one of your main characters saying, 'There's got to be a better way to live while, in all the other books you publish, the rest of your characters are busy punching, hitting, and dropping buildings on people's heads," DeMatteis says, "it creates a little internal conflict ... looking at it from Jim's POV, I totally understand why he reacted as he did. I just didn't agree with that reaction" (6 January 2008 email interview).

11. The 1950s Captain America, by contrast, remains unnamed. At the time DeMatteis made Monroe a supporting character the 1950s Captain America was thought to have perished from self-inflicted wounds several years prior (*CA 236*).

12. "Before the Fall!" (*CA 281*), "On Your Belly You Shall Crawl, and Dust You Shall Eat!" (*CA 282*), "America the Cursed!" (*CA 283*)

13. "The Centre Cannot Hold!" (*CA 295*), "Things Fall Apart!" (*CA 296*)

14. When asked if the theological concept of the Avatar influenced his depiction of Captain America, DeMatteis responded that while he "wasn't intentionally putting something in the stories to mirror the concept of the Avatar ... both [Steve Rogers and Jesse Black Crow] have avataric aspects to them — a fusion of something larger, something more spiritual and cosmic, with a human host" (12 January 2008 email interview).

15. Gruenwald argued, "Captain America's values are timeless ... they go back to our founding fathers and if you go back even further than that, they go back to ... the birth of democracy itself, which I guess was in Greece" (*Comic Art and Graffix Gallery*).

16. The Captain's costume was designed by Tom Morgan.

17. When Walker returned as the U.S. Agent wearing Rogers' "The Captain" uniform, his militancy had clearly been tempered somewhat by his experience in Rogers' shadow. "I'm a new man," he would later tell Rogers, "a kindler, gentler berserker" (*CA 386* 25).

18. When Marvel temporarily eliminated its editor-in-chief position to divide editing duties among five different title lines (a change which lasted from 1994 to 1995), Gruenwald resigned from writing *CA* to edit the *Avengers* line under which *CA* fell. Many believe that if Marvel had not been restructured due to bankruptcy, Gruenwald would have been editor-in-chief.

19. Gruenwald was not alone in his concerns. Co-creator Joe Simon called the super-soldier serum "the weakest part of the character" (*Marvel Age 95* 11). After Captain America was revived Lee and Kirby played down the effects of the serum, focusing instead on his athletic training. Marvel even responded to criticisms by suggesting in a letters column that Captain America had subsequently "lost" the effects of the serum and that it would be dealt with in an upcoming storyline, although it never was (*ToS 67*).

20. In Gillis' alternate timeline the Avengers did not find Captain America and subsequently disbanded for lack of that "central unifying spirit," prompting the creation of a fascist state under the 1950s Captain America, who operated virtually unopposed until Rogers returned in the present day.

21. Millar's original pitch called for Steve Rogers to be de-powered and revert to his status as a 98-pound weakling, taking to his motorcycle to "discover America and rediscover himself." Executive editor Tom Breevort responded to Millar's pitch with the suggestion, "We can't really have a Civil War without some genuine casualties, so we'd better start thinking seriously about who we'd like to kill or mutilate in this thing" ("Civil War Memorial").

22. Brubaker recalls that Quesada discussed *Civil War* with him before the Marvel creative summits began. "He may have even mentioned the possibility that Cap would die or this or that would happen," Brubaker

says, "So I can't claim full credit for it, but the way the story was told and the way I integrated the ideas with my own ongoing Cap plot is something that goes back to January 2006. I started plotting out how to do this, and how to make it all work" (*Marvel Spotlight: Captain America Remembered*).

References

Brubaker, Ed. "The Man Who Killed Captain America." Interview. *Marvel Spotlight: Captain America Remembered*. New York: Marvel Comics (2007).

Brubaker, Ed, Steve Epting, and Frank D'Armata, et al. *Captain America 25, Vol. 5*, New York: Marvel Comics (April 2007).

DeMatteis, J.M. Email interview. 1 December 2007–12 January 2008.

DeMatteis, J.M., Mike Zeck, and John Beatty, et al. *Captain America 264*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1981).

_____. *Captain America 277*. New York: Marvel Comics (January 1983).

_____. *Captain America 281*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1983).

_____. *Captain America 282*. New York: Marvel Comics (June 1983).

_____. *Captain America 283*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 1983).

DeMatteis, J.M., Paul Neary, and Brett Breeding, et al. *Captain America 295*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 1984).

DeMatteis, J.M., Paul Neary, and Dennis Janke, et al. *Captain America 300*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1984).

DeMatteis, J.M., Paul Neary, and Ed Barretto, et al. *Captain America 292*. New York: Marvel Comics (April 1984).

DeMatteis, J.M., Paul Neary, and Roy Richardson, et al. *Captain America 298*. New York: Marvel Comics (October 1984).

_____. *Captain America 299*. New York: Marvel Comics (November 1984).

DeMatteis, J.M., Paul Neary, and Sam DeLarosa, et al. *Captain America 296*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1984).

DeMatteis, J.M., Ron Wilson, and Vinnie Colletta, et al. *Captain America Annual 6*. New York: Marvel Comics (1982).

DeMatteis, J.M., Sal Buscema, and Kim DeMulder, et al. *Captain America 284*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1983).

Englehart, Steve. Email interview. 5 September–19 December 2007.

_____. Personal website. www.steveenglehart.com.

Englehart, Steve, Frank Robbins, and Frank Giacoia, et al. *Captain America 183*. New York: Marvel Comics (March 1975).

Englehart, Steve, Frank Robbins, and Joe Giella, et al. *Captain America 182*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1975).

Englehart, Steve, Jim Starlin, and George Tuska, et al. *Avengers 107*. New York: Marvel Comics (January 1973).

Englehart, Steve, Sal Buscema, and Frank McLaughlin, et al. *Captain America 156*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1972).

_____. *Captain America 163*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 1973).

Englehart, Steve, Sal Buscema, and Jim Mooney, et al. *Captain America 153*. New York: Marvel Comics (September 1972).

Englehart, Steve, Sal Buscema, and John Veerporten, et al. *Captain America 162*. New York, Marvel Comics (June 1973).

Englehart, Steve, Sal Buscema, and Vinnie Colletta, et al. *Captain America 173*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1974).

_____. *Captain America 175*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 1974).

_____. *Captain America 176*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1974).

_____. *Captain America 180*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1974).

Friedrich, Gary, John Romita, and Sam Rosen, et al. *Captain America 143*. New York: Marvel Comics (November 1971).

Gerber, Steve. Letter. *Captain America 118*. New York: Marvel Comics (October 1969).

Gillis, Peter B., Sal Buscema, and Dave Simons, et al. *What If? 44*, New York: Marvel Comics (April 1984).

Gruenwald, Mark. Interview. *Comic Art and Graffix Gallery*. http://www.comic-art.com/interviews/gruenwal.htm.

_____. "Mark's Bits." *Marvel Age 95*, p. 5, 15, *Marvel Age 95*, New York: Marvel Comics (December 1990).
Gruenwald, Mark, Dave Hoover, and Danny Bulanadi, et al. *Captain America 425*. New York: Marvel Comics (March 1994).
_____. *Captain America 443*. New York: Marvel Comics (September 1995).
Gruenwald, Mark, Dave Hoover, and Sandu Florea, et al. *Captain America 442*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1995).
Gruenwald, Mark, Kieron Dwyer, and Al Milgrom, et al. *Captain America 350*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1989).
Gruenwald, Mark, Paul Neary, and Dennis Janke, et al. *Captain America 307*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 1985).
_____. *Captain America 308*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1985).
Gruenwald, Mark, Paul Neary, and John Beatty, et al. *Captain America 321*. New York: Marvel Comics (September 1986).
_____. *Captain America 323*. New York: Marvel Comics (November 1986).
Gruenwald, Mark, Ron Lim, and Danny Bulanadi, et al. *Captain America 378*. New York: Marvel Comics (October 1990).
_____. *Captain America 386*. New York: Marvel Comics (June 1991).
Gruenwald, Mark, Tom Morgan, and Bob McLeod, et al. *Captain America 332*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1987).
Gruenwald, Mark, Tom Morgan, and Dave Hunt, et al. *Captain America 333*. New York: Marvel Comics (September 1987).
_____. *Captain America 337*. New York: Marvel Comics (January 1988).
Jones, Gerard, and Will Jacobs. *The Comic Book Heroes*. Rocklin, CA: Prima, 1997.
Lee, Stan, Don Heck, and Wally Wood, et al. *Avengers 21*. New York: Marvel Comics (October 1965).
Lee, Stan, Gene Colan, and Dick Ayers, et al. *Captain America 130*. New York: Marvel Comics (October 1970).
Lee, Stan, Gene Colan, and Joe Sinnott, et al. *Captain America 120*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1969).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Art Simek, et al. *Avengers 4*. New York: Marvel Comics (March 1964).
_____. *Avengers 7*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1964).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Dick Ayers, et al. *Avengers 16*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1965).
_____. *Tales of Suspense75*. New York: Marvel Comics (March 1966).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Don Heck, et al. *Avengers 15*. New York: Marvel Comics (April 1965).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Frank Ray, et al. *Tales of Suspense 63*. New York: Marvel Comics (March 1965).
_____. *Tales of Suspense 67*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 1965).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Joe Sinnott, et al. *Tales of Suspense 94*. New York: Marvel Comics (October 1967).
_____. *Tales of Suspense 95*. New York: Marvel Comics (November 1967).
_____. *Tales of Suspense 96*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1967).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and John Romita, et al. *Tales of Suspense 77*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1966).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Syd Shores, et al. *Captain America 101*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1968).
Lee, Stan, Jim Steranko, and Joe Sinnott, et al. *Captain America 110*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1969).
_____. *Captain America 111*. New York: Marvel Comics (March 1969).
Lee, Stan, Jim Steranko, and Tom Palmer, et al. *Captain America 113*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 1969).
Lee, Stan, John Romita, and Art Simek, et al. *Captain America 139*. New York: Marvel Comics (July 1971).
Lee, Stan, John Romita, and Sal Buscema, et al. *Captain America 114*. New York: Marvel Comics (June 1969).
Loeb, Jeph, John Cassaday, and Laura Martin, et al. *Fallen Son: The Death of Captain America 5*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 2007).
McKenzie, Roger, Michael Fleisher, and Sal Buscema, et al. *Captain America 236*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1979).
Millar, Mark, Steve McNiven, and Dexter Vines, et al. *Civil War*. New York: Marvel, 2007. (*Civil War 7* quoted from this volume.)
Millar, Mark, Tom Breevort and Joe Quesada. "Civil War Memorial." Mark Millar's original pitch for *Civil War*. http://www.marvel.com/blogs/TomBrevoort/entry/814
Miller, Frank, David Mazzucchelli, and Joe Rosen, et al. *Born Again*. New York: Marvel, 2001.
Rodriquez, Albert. Letter. *Captain America 110*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1969).
Simon, Joe. Interview. "Simon Says..." *Marvel Age 95*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1990): 10–11.
Straczynski, J. Michael, Mike McKone, and Andy Lanning, et al. *Fantastic Four 536*. New York: Marvel Comics (May 2006).

Stevie's Got a Gun

Captain America and His Problematic Use of Lethal Force

Phillip L. Cunningham

In early October 2007, Marvel Comics released a teaser image of a bolder, flashier Captain America to debut in 2008. Drawn by the inimitable Alex Ross, the image features rather drastic changes to the legendary hero's appearance, most notably the replacement of his chain mail armor with a sleeker, shinier version and the addition of black accents, giving Marvel's icon a darker, more aggressive appearance. However, the most prominent change is the addition of military weaponry: a dagger and a sidearm. In fact, the only remaining vestiges of the Captain America of lore are his winged cowl with signature capital *A* emblazoned in the middle and his Adamantium shield.

Fan response to the redesign, which itself comes on the heels of the controversial apparent assassination of Steve Rogers, the original Captain America, has been mixed at best. On prominent forums such as Newsarama and Comic Book Resources, readers either have praised or have lamented these alterations. None of the changes, however, has drawn more criticism than the addition of a pistol. Many fans seem to be in agreement with Newsarama poster Nate 28, who writes, "Any Cap holding a gun is wrong. Costume doesnt [sic] bother me as much as a gun: Firearms and Cap dont [sic] sit well with me" (2007). However, Big Planet Comics employee John Hefner offers a more precise summation in a *Washington Post* article. Here, Hefner reacts to author *CA* writer Ed Brubaker's rationalization for equipping the new Captain America with a gun: "It's not true to the spirit of the character and it's a rather cynical and shocking idea to have it be this way to represent the times we live in.... Superheroes are fantasy in the first place. They're myth and metaphor, and when you try to mix true reality in there, the absurdity is inherent in the character" (Betancourt 2007).

Both Nate 28 and Hefner's comments echo what has long been true of Captain America: In many regards, he is one of Marvel Comics most problematic characters. Most of the issues surrounding Captain America stem from his resurrection in *The Avengers 4* in March 1964, in which the World War II hero was drawn out of suspended animation — a literal dormancy of ten years but a continuity-based dormancy of nearly twenty. In *Marvel: The Characters and Their Universe*, a chronicle of Marvel Comics' most popular characters, Michael Mallory notes that *The Avengers 4* is essentially a "black hole" in the otherwise relatively well-managed continuity (59). Here, Mallory highlights the fact that Captain America had been in suspended animation since 1945 after falling into the Atlantic Ocean while attempting to stop an experimental drone plane from being destroyed. In the effort, Captain America's sidekick, plucky teenager Bucky Barnes, is seemingly killed; however, the original Captain America and Bucky appear in *CAC* until 1954, when the comic's popularity was at its lowest. Marvel

has since "retconned," industry shorthand for enabling retroactive continuity, this "black hole" in C*A 153–156*, where it is revealed that the 1950s Captain America, more commonly known as "Captain America ... Commie Smasher," and Bucky are actually imposters, and in *CA 215*, where it is revealed that a masked hero formerly known as Spirit of '76 assumed the role until 1946 and another hero formerly known as The Patriot assumed the role until 1949. However, it has not quite rectified the other problem created by *The Avengers 4*: the repositioning of Captain America as a superhero.

Captain America's repositioning is testament to the character's greatest appeal: In one regard, Captain America's ability to adapt is one of his strengths. Lang and Trimble write of Captain America, "Captain America's heroic persona changed as the culture's needs and expectations of a hero changed. The level of complexity of the hero's character, his moral viewpoint, is altered as the society alters" (169). The scholars' comments ring true, for Captain America's resurgence was largely due to Marvel's decision to shift him from masked soldier to superhero. Though the first few years of his return featured stories in which he struggled to fit into modern society or was forlorn over his lack of superpowers, the public, by and large, had no difficulties accepting Captain America as a superhero. Unfortunately, casting Captain America as superhero also has left a wake of issues, namely (a) the tampering with or discarding of many of his earlier adventures and (b) a rather skewed and inconsistent stance on the use of lethal force, particularly in terms of gun use.

Mark Gruenwald and "The Chasm"

These problems converge in *Captain America 322*, a story titled "The Chasm." It is the second part of Captain America's conflict with The Flag Smasher, the leader of Underground Liberated Totally Integrated Mobile Army to Unite Mankind (ULTIMATUM), a terrorist group bent on destroying nationalist symbols that in the previous issue hijacked a plane carrying American passengers en route to London. In *CA 321*, Flag Smasher demands that Captain America surrenders himself or else he will have the hijacked passengers executed. Captain America infiltrates ULTIMATUM's secret base after subduing one of the Flag Smasher's armed henchmen and donning the henchmen's costume, which includes an Uzi submachine gun. Upon discovering the passengers in the base's monastery, Captain America attempts to thwart the armed guards with his shield. After striking the farthest guard with his shield, he witnesses in horror as the remaining guard opens fire upon the crowd. Without his shield, Captain America has no choice but to shoot the guard. After securing the passengers safe evacuation, a dejected Captain America vows, "When you are all safe, I intend to avenge [the slain ULTIMATUM terrorist]—and my honor!" (Gruenwald *CA 321* 22). Though he is a former soldier and though his killing of the terrorist is justified, Captain America is notably upset not so much at the brutal slaying of four hijacked passengers but more at the fact that he had to shoot an armed terrorist.

Captain America's internal dialogue at the beginning of "The Chasm," where he takes on the rest of ULTIMATUM in a rage-filled pursuit of Flag Smasher, reveals the rationale behind his anger:

> If ULTIMATUM had peacefully promoted their anti-nationalist philosophy, I would have defended their right to express their point of view. But instead they coerced people to listen to them and placed the lives of innocents in jeopardy. That was the first thing that made me mad. The second

> thing involved guns. You'll notice that everyone around here uses guns except me. I believe that guns are for killing, and killing is the ultimate violation of individual rights — the ultimate denial of freedom. I never carry a gun. I have never taken another person's life. Until three hours ago [Gruenwald *Captain America 322* 3–4].

Gruenwald's dialogue encapsulates what Captain America has come to represent to today's comic readers: a defender of liberty who is willing to fight hard, yet do as little harm as possible. Captain America as defender has long been an important part of his mythos and is implicit in his choice of a shield as a weapon. Jason Dittmer writes of Captain America's shield:

> Captain America is provided with a weapon unique among comic book heroes: a shield. This event is indicative of his association with the American geopolitical script. Most superheroes who use props carry glamorous offensive weapons; Captain America has a rather unglamorous (yet patriotically colored) shield. While Captain America has become quite good at throwing his shield as an offensive weapon (and always managing to have it bounce right back to him), it is important for the narrative of America that he embodies defense rather than offense [630].

Gruenwald's depiction of Captain America is aligned with what Dittmer posits here. In "The Chasm," as Captain America attacks ULTIMATUM — destroying many of their guns with his shield in the process — he connects his guise as Captain America to the American ideal: "That's right. I'm just one man. One man who dedicated his life to the ideals of freedom, justice and equality.... I represent the American dream — the notion that human beings should have the opportunity to better their lives and attain their noblest aspirations" (Gruenwald *CA 322* 3).

However, what makes Gruenwald's depiction of Captain America so troubling is that it virtually ignores Captain America's origins and *raison d'etre*. Captain America is, after all, the product of the Super Soldier process that transformed former weakling and struggling artist Steve Rogers into the brawny soldier, Captain America, whose purpose is to be "the first of a corps of super-agents whose mental and physical ability will make them a terror to spies and saboteurs" (Mallory 59). Captain America's origin is retold several times throughout the publication of his adventures and there are some minor deviations in each retelling. However, one consistency that has remained is that, after the process has been completed, a Nazi assassin kills Dr. Erskine, the scientist who developed the Super Soldier formula. Steve Rogers immediately dispatches the assassin with a tremendous punch that sends the assassin careening into the very machinery that gave Rogers the strength to deliver such a blow. The machinery explodes upon impact, killing the assassin. Thus, at his very moment of his conception, Captain America has taken a life.

Nonetheless, Gruenwald's Captain America largely remains the definitive version for most modern comic readers, especially given that Gruenwald's run on *CA* lasted a decade, from July 1985 to September 1995 (*CA 307–422*, *424–443*). Gruenwald's importance to Captain America and Marvel's continuity cannot be overstated. As Mallory notes:

> The Marvel Universe is an amazingly cohesive matrix with an almost Biblical sense of history and lineage. This remarkable achievement is all the more remarkable when one considers the sheer number of editors, writers, and artists who have kept track of the comings and goings within the Universe. During Marvel's production boom of the late 1980s and early 1990s, two staffers, Mark Gruenwald and Peter Sanderson, were responsible for cross-over continuity, making sure that appearances by characters in other series were consistent with that character's own series [59].

Gruenwald's lengthy run on Captain America is rivaled only by Stan Lee's turn at the helm, which set the tone for Captain America's shift from soldier to superhero. Lee is the writer on *CA 100*, the first issue of Captain America's self-titled postwar adventures, and he

immediately placed Captain America into the world of super-heroics.[1] In the first issue of his new series, Captain America battles alongside Black Panther against Destructon, a powerful robot menace created by his longtime rival Baron Zemo. Though Lee — like many *CA* writers — would revisit Captain America's wartime adventures, the series' emphasized his present-day adventures. As Mike DuBose suggests, this is largely due to a "postmodern awareness" on Lee's behalf: "This postmodern awareness severely changes the essential nature of Captain America's character. In his initial comic run, Captain America was a soldier. But as early as 1971, Stan Lee admitted that Rogers had outgrown the soldier role, saying the hero 'simply doesn't lend himself to the John Wayne-type character he once was'" (928). During Lee's tenure as writer of *CA*, the character continuously struggles with his place as a 1940s war veteran who has maintained his youth in a new, super-powered world. Whether it was Lee's intention or not, he set forth not only a constant internal battle for the character but also for future writers of *CA*, one that is writ large in Gruenwald's Issue *322*.

Wartime Captain America

As Lee suggests, Captain America once was a bit of a John Wayne-type, albeit a more even tempered one. While one might be apt to call Captain America a reluctant warrior, he was hardly a hesitant one: In the 1940s, Captain America had few qualms about using a gun against his often Nazi or Japanese antagonists. However, this should not be overstated, as present day *CA* writer Ed Brubaker unfortunately does in a *Washington Post* article: "If you look at Cap in the 1940s, they have him with a shield in one hand and a machine gun in the other, and Bucky [the Captain's World War II teen sidekick] has a flamethrower" (Betancourt 2007). Brubaker, who justifiably questions Marvel's decision to pacify Captain America over the years, perhaps oversimplifies the nature of Captain America's wartime gun use.

Brubaker — as well as those who attempt to justify the new Captain America's sidearm — bases his claim largely on the frequent depiction of a heavily armed Captain America on several comic book covers throughout the 1940s. On a few covers of *ASC*, *AW*, and *CAC*, Captain America, with shield in one hand, fires a machine gun at Nazi or Japanese enemies or looms largely over them with a gigantic bomb marked "USA." Brubaker specifically may be referring to the cover of *ASC* 5, in which Captain America shoots a Japanese soldier with a machine gun as his teenage partner Bucky sets another soldier ablaze with a flamethrower, Namor bends back a turret cannon, and the Human Torch and his flaming counterpart Toro race toward the scene. In total, Captain America appears on the covers of perhaps ten wartime era comics with some form of weaponry in hand, of which on seven occasions the weapon is a machine gun. He most frequently appears with a machine gun on the cover of *ASC 1–3,5* (four of the first in which he is shown firing a machine gun on four of the first five issues of the comic. All of the covers of *ASC*, save for the very last, and many of the covers of *CAC* were drawn by world renown illustrator Alex Schomburg, whom Stan Lee said "was to comic books what Norman Rockwell was to *The Saturday Evening Post*" (Lee 2006). Furthermore, most of these covers are drawn between 1943 and 1944, pivotal years in the United States' involvement in World War II, particularly in its Pacific campaign which led to the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. Thus, it is not surprising that most of the covers feature Captain America and Bucky typically shooting Japanese soldiers — though the Nazis do receive their fair share of violence as well.

As is often the case, however, most comic book covers often grossly exaggerate an aspect of the stories — usually a tragic death or some other surprising act — actually found within the comic book itself. Moreover, Schomburg's covers rarely highlighted a story that actually took place within the comic itself. Therefore, one cannot consider Captain America's use of weaponry on these covers as indicative of his actual canonical use of weapons. Ironically, Captain America typically is not shown with a machine gun on the cover in comics in which he actually uses one in a story. For example, on the cover of *CAC 18*, Captain America is shown tussling about with a Japanese swordsman as Bucky punches another in the background. However, in one of the stories, "The Mikado's Super Shell," Captain America actually mows down a "snarling mass of hate," a throng of unarmed Japanese soldiers emerging from a gun chamber, with a machine gun yet never encounters an actual Japanese swordsman (Lee *CAC 18* 13). In fact, the only *CA* cover to even remotely relate Captain America's gun use to the story is the cover of *CA 321*, a solid black cover depicting an enraged Captain America firing an Uzi.

Nonetheless, the covers of *ASC*, *AW*, and *CACs* do reveal one truism about Captain America: During his wartime exploits, he made frequent use of lethal force. In the 1940s, Captain America killed many of his adversaries though not solely through the use of guns. Many of the deaths exacted by Captain America are via his patented "sleeper punch," with which he usually sends his foes flailing off a precipice or careening into dangerous machinery. For example, in *CAC 26* (the second part of the two-part "Case No. 1745-A: The Princess of the Atom"), Captain America finally confronts Tagoro, an evil warmonger from a "tiny realm" of beings who are able to shrink themselves to microscopic levels or grow to gigantic proportions. Tagoro seeks to assassinate Dianne, the princess of the realm whom Steve Rogers and Bucky have befriended while stationed on Bird's Nest Island. The confrontation leads to a brutal showdown between Captain America and Tagoro, resulting in Tagoro's death: "But suddenly, [Captain America's] climatic, bone crushing, sleeper punch finds its mark and the mountainous figure of Tagoro goes crashing to the Earth!" (Cummings *CAC 26* 25). In *CAC 31*, "The Terror of the Green Mist," Captain America faces Fungi, a man-monster and apparent Nazi from the depths of a misty green swamp whose goal is to deliver "ruin, devastation, and famine to the very heart of the UN" (Fargo *CAC 31*1). In the end, Captain America fatally wounds Fungi by punching him onto a table full of glass instruments that pierce and dissolves him. The same fate meets the evil Dr. Necrosis in *CAC 36*, although in this story, "The Blood of Dr. Necrosis," Captain America throws one of the evil doctor's thugs at him, causing the doctor to fall onto a table of glass instruments. In other stories, Captain America pushes his foe off of a several story tall ladder, punches an adversary into a turbine, and knocks an evil scientist into a pair of electric cables. Though these deaths are brutal, they are often justified as necessary and just. The narrator of "The Case of the Clammy Things," which appears in *CAC 20*, states, "Justice triumphs as the criminal is electrocuted by the very cables with which he had planned to destroy the city..." after Captain America knocks the evil Dr. Jorlstread, who threatens to overtake London with zombie-like creatures, into a set of cables (Lee 13).

In other instances, Captain America made use of whatever weapon was available to kill his antagonists. For example, in "Ali Baba and His Forty Nazis" in *CAC 32*, Captain America and Bucky confront a Iraqi gang leader whose gang terrorizes Baghdad for its Nazi allies. As the duo confronts a pair of "giant Nubians," Captain America slashes one of them with a discarded scimitar. In "The Saboteur of Death" in *CAC 30*, Captain America subdues and kills

one of Nazi Van Broot's minions by stabbing the saboteur with the hypodermic needle the saboteur had intended for Captain America. In "Puppets of Death" in *USA* 9, Captain America slays The Great Varda, a puppeteer and Nazi conspirator, with a discarded bow and arrow.

Captain America also proved equally willing to dispel his opponents with a machine gun or rifle. However, despite what the covers suggest, Captain America never went into battle with guns blazing. Unlike Private Steve Rogers who carries a standard issue army rifle, Captain America never carries a standard sidearm or machine gun. However, there were several instances in which Steve Rogers was required to use his rifle or a machine gun in battle. In "The Ageless Orientals That Won't Die!" in *CAC 2*, the base at which Rogers and Bucky are stationed is invaded by a horde of "Oriental giants." Rogers fires his rifle at one of the giants, but to no avail, causing Bucky to lament "The same old story — that fellow lives on hot lead!" (Kirby *CAC* 2 7). In "Mystery of the Eyes of Death" in *CAC 50*, Rogers and Bucky are stationed on a base in India when it is attacked by Japanese soldiers. To save Bucky from a Japanese soldier wielding a grenade, Rogers shoots the soldier with his rifle.

However, since Captain America is equipped only with his trusty shield, he often uses a discarded or unmanned gun against his foes. In "The Mystery of the Floating City" in *AW 16*, Captain America uses a mounted machine gun to bring down a Nazi horde that has overtaken a secret, peaceful floating city. In "Invasion Mission" in *CAC 34*, Captain America and Bucky are sent to Italy to pave the way for American invasion forces. After Nazis discover the Allied forces gathered in Italy, the duo use a large turret to mow down the incoming Nazi forces. However, Captain America's use of guns is not solely limited to mounted weapons or turrets. In "The Murdering Medusa" in *USA* 6, Captain America shoots Nazi professor Anton Harvey, who has been murdering innocents with a Medusa-like mask, in the face with a discarded rifle.

Most importantly, Captain America barely registers any resignations about the use of guns or other lethal weaponry. During his wartime adventures, he only once hints at any form of remorse. In "The Mikado's Super Shell," as several unarmed Japanese soldiers rush at him as he attempts to bring down Paw the Mad Japanese Genius's stratospheric rocket gun, he has no other choice but to take them down with a machine gun he took from a recently disarmed guard. As he kills the soldiers, he laments to Bucky, "I hate to do this, Bucky, but war is war!" (Lee *CA 18* 13). However, his apprehension here appears not to be about toting a machine gun but about using it on unarmed men. Otherwise, throughout his many wartime appearances, he offers virtually no opposition to using weapons other than his shield.

Postwar Captain America

Stan Lee evokes aspects of the wartime Captain America while at the helm of *ToS* and *CA*. In one of the first stories featuring the revitalized Super Soldier, "The Strength of the Sumo" in *ToS 61*, Captain America ventures to Vietnam to rescue captured American pilot Jim Baker. After a brief encounter with The General, a gigantic sumo wrestler in charge of the Viet Cong forces, Captain America frees Baker from his bindings. As Captain America and Baker flee, Captain America urges Baker to shoot at their pursuers: "Now grab that chatter gun and follow me!" (Lee *ToS 61* 8). A few years later, when *ToS* becomes *CA* in 1968, Captain America actually uses lethal force for the first time since his wartime exploits. In *CA 102*, "The Sleeper Strikes," Captain America seeks to destroy The Sleeper, a doomsday

weapon created by his recently resurrected archenemy the Red Skull. After The Sleeper is activated, Captain America and his girlfriend, S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent 13, Sharon Carter, fly out to face it. They are ambushed in mid-flight by the Red Skull's minions, who destroy their retrofitted helicopter. As Captain America hurtles towards the ground, he shoots one of the Red Skull's agents with a wrist blaster supplied by S.H.I.E.L.D., remarking "[S.H.I.E.L.D. director Nick] Fury knew what he was doing when he insisted I wear this portable wrist blaster!" (Lee *CA 102* 12). In the next issue, "The Weakest Link," the Red Skull's henchmen kidnap Sharon Carter during a dinner date with Steve Rogers. As he pursues her captors, Captain America commandeers one of their boats and fires at them with a discarded firearm, stating "They think I'm a sitting duck — with nothing to fire back at them! But they won't think so much longer!" (Lee *CA 103* 11). Thus, as he did in the 1940s, Captain America seems to hold no real reservations about using a gun or deadly force.

During his run on *CA* in 1976 and 1977, legendary writer-artist Jack Kirby also utilizes a Captain America who is willing to use a gun if necessary. In *CA 194*, "The Trojan Horde," Captain America and his partner The Falcon take on The Royalist Forces of America (RFA), a terrorist organization intent on ending democracy in the United States. The RFA intends to detonate "Big Daddy," a gigantic "mad bomb" that, upon detonation, will drive the populace insane. Captain America and Falcon locate the secret RFA base and are captured in the process. As they escape, Falcon subdues a RFA guard. As Captain America retrieves the guard's weapon, he admonishes Falcon, "Enough! Save all that talent for the others! We've got to take them out!" He then fires the gun at the oncoming guard — though he does not actually hit any of them (Kirby *CA 194* 18–22).

Other postwar writers, while shying away from Captain America using a gun, do suggest a willingness to use lethal force. Longtime Marvel writers Roger Stern and John Byrne do so in *CA 254*, "Blood on the Moors," in which Captain America faces Baron Blood, a British vampire and former Nazi agent terrorizing London. After Baron Blood defeats his wartime ally Union Jack, Captain America rushes to defeat Baron Blood before sunset when Baron Blood will be at his strongest. Thus, as the narrator suggests, Captain America has only one dreadful choice:

> Cap struggles valiantly, but he can feel Baron Blood's strength slowly growing as the sun sets in the west. And he knows it is only a matter of time before the monster wins! It is then that he recalls Lord Falsworth's words... "There is only one way to totally destroy a vampire!" And in that moment, he knows what he must do! The deed is horrible to comprehend! But he knows he has no other recourse! [Stern *CA 254*, 27].

He then severs the vampire's head by plunging his shield through Baron Blood's neck. While Captain America shows a great deal of remorse, it seems largely because of the toll the battle had on Union Jack, who ultimately dies at the end of the story.

Captain America's nemesis the Red Skull seems to bring out the worst in Captain America, as shown in J.M. DeMatteis penned story "The Last Movie" in *CA 263*. The Red Skull has seemingly brought about the death of Lyle Dekker, whose soul is trapped within the Ameridroid, a gigantic android replica of Captain America. As Dekker breaks down a force field separating him and Captain America from the Red Skull, his Ameridroid body is destroyed in the process. The narrator describes Captain America's response: "The shout is pure anguish ... untainted rage! Without an instant's hesitation, Captain America sends his shield slicing through the air. He wants the Skull's head — and he'll get it" (DeMatteis 10). The shield shatters the Red Skull's head; however, Captain America discovers that this Skull is actually a

robot duplicate. Nonetheless, in a fit of rage, he shows a willingness to kill a great form of evil as he did previously with Baron Blood.

Pacifying Captain America

However, this era, the late 1970s–early 1980s, also serves as a period of pacification for Captain America. Prior to *CA 321–322*, the story in which he kills an ULTIMATUM terrorist, Captain America shows distaste for guns for the first time. In *CA 233*, a story titled "Crossfire," Captain America intervenes in a conflict between black gangster Morgan's hoods and the neo–Nazi group National Force, ironically led by a brainwashed Sharon Carter and the Grand Director, who is actually the 1950s Captain America imposter gone mad and under the influence of Dr. Faustus, another of Captain America's longtime foes. As the ensuing battle rages beyond Captain America's control, the National Guard intervenes as martial law is declared in the ghettos in which the two sides have been fighting. When a National Guard major attempts to force Captain America to report what happened, Captain America refuses and attempts to leave in order to stop further violence. The major points a pistol at Captain America, who then uses his shield to disarm the major. As his shield returns to him, Captain America says, "I don't like guns ... especially when they're pointed at my back!" (McKenzie 11).

To his credit, McKenzie does a fine job of building Captain America's dislike of guns over the course of the National Guard story arc: The National Guard and its frequent use of guns and terror dredges up painful memories for Captain America, evidenced in the narrative of *CA 232*, "The Flame and the Fury." After National Guard agents attack Peggy Carter, Sharon Carter's aunt, Captain America immediately defeats them. As the police arrive to take them into custody, the zealots activate incendiary devices within their costumes and are consumed by the flames. As Captain America views their ashes, he reflects upon his never-ending battle against the Nazis: "Captain America falls silent. He has seen the flames before: In Warsaw ... in Berlin.... But that was a lifetime ago. And he had defeated the hate mongers then.... Had watched as their dreams of conquest went up, quite literally in smoke. A lifetime ago.... And yet, sometimes, it seems like only yesterday" (McKenzie 7). With that said, however, there is virtually no other indication prior to McKenzie's run on the title to suggest that Captain America has grown wholly intolerant of weapons.

The number of writers on *CA* in the postwar years is perhaps a source of the problem. Other than lengthy runs by Lee, Kirby, and Gruenwald and a few J.M. DeMatteis spurts between 1981 and 1984, the title has had a host of short-term writers, many of whose runs do not last a year. Though most comics face frequent writer changes, these changes can and sometimes do create inconsistencies. Given the problematic nature of Captain America's complex continuity, these multiple changes clearly have affected the title. However, the late 1970s and early 1980s represent a clear attempt on Marvel's behalf to present a more pacifistic hero.

The "Death" of the Wartime Heroes

Captain America's inconsistencies with guns and lethal force are a product not only of the frequent changing of *CA* writers but also the waning draw of an overly patriotic soldier

as hero. This is evidenced in the dramatic failure of the late 1940s–early 1950s *CAC*. As Lang and Trimble suggest, the absence of a visible enemy sounded the death knell for Captain America Comics and other wartime era serials:

> One of the side effects of the war years was that Americans in general became more sophisticated. Soldiers returned to their homes, many to stay, but they had seen the world.... There were no more Nazis, only Commies, and though Cap took a lick at them too, somehow it wasn't the same. Nazis wore hobnailed boots and helmets. Communists weren't quite so easy to spot. That was what was so frightening: you couldn't tell them from the good guys. Sending Captain America after the Communists was like using a sledgehammer to cut out a tumor—not only was it ineffective, it also made a mess. Superheroes in general were pretty useless in the 1950s unless they were fighting monsters from outer space, and there were only so many of those to go around [164].

Bradford Wright concurs, stating "No successful superhero characters were introduced after 1944, and poor sales compelled publishers to cancel most superhero titles by the end of the decade.... [W]artime favorites like Captain America, the Sub-Mariner, the Human Torch, Green Lantern, and the Flash slumped to cancellation in the postwar market" (57–58). While the popularity of superhero comics waned, horror and suspense comics were on the rise. As Amy Kiste Nyberg notes, these types of comics proved to be a boon for fledgling comic publishers such as Educational Comics (which later became Entertaining Comics): "The new magazines [*Crypt of Terror, Haunt of Fear*, and *Vault of Horror*] sold well, and within a year E.C.'s financial problems were over.... The E.C. horror line, like all successful comic book ideas, was copied by other publishers and by 1954 there were more than forty horror titles a month being published" (118). Even *CACs* tried to cash in on this trend, ending its 1940s run, as previously noted, under the title of *Captain America's Weird Tales*.

The rousing success of horror and suspense comics would be short-lived, however. Their often profane content, coupled with fears of juvenile delinquency as a result of comic book reading, prompted a fervent backlash from concerned parties such as clergymen, educators, psychiatrists, and even senators. Leading the charge was psychiatrist Fredric Wertham, whose research on the effects of mass media violence, particularly on children, culminated in the publication of *Seduction of the Innocent* in 1954 (Nyberg 50). This book helped influence the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency to launch a full-scale investigation of the comic book industry in April 1954. After a lengthy process that involved the highlighting of some of the industry's most profane works, the subcommittee found that, while comic books could not be fully linked to juvenile delinquency, the comic industry nonetheless need some form of policing. With pressure mounting, the industry was forced to "adopt a strict self-regulatory code to which most of the publishers would adhere" (Nyberg 83). As a result, the industry formed the Comic Magazine Association of America in 1954 and adopted what has come to be known as the Comics Code.

The Comics Code—which featured strict limitations on violence, horror, nudity and dress, dialogue, religion, marriage and sex, and advertising—had a twofold affect on the industry. On the one hand, it signaled the end of the Golden Age of comic books, particularly titles such as *CAC*, which often featured a great deal of gun violence. As Lang and Trimble write, "The Comics Code almost proved to be comics' death knell. With the standards the Code enforced, there was very little comics publishers could present that appealed to the prurient interests of what they assumed to be their major audience: 12-year-old boys" (164). On the other hand, it paved the way for the industry's revitalization, witnessed by the ushering in of the Silver Age by DC Comics, which altered many of its older characters by modernizing them and incorporating science fiction into numerous other titles. Marvel eventually

followed suit, according to Wright: "As comic book makers negotiated the often conflicting pressures of self-censorship, political culture, and market demands, a compromise emerged in reluctant superheroes who struggled with the confusion and ambivalent consequences of their own power. Heroes like Spider-Man helped keep code-approved comic books relevant and profitable in the age of television and rock-and-roll, a prospect that had seemed quite unlikely only a few years earlier" (180). Thus, the seeds were sown for a less gung-ho version of Captain America to re-emerge in 1964.

Not only would the re-emergent Captain America refrain from gun use more so than before, he would also become more depoliticized. Dittmer writes of Captain America:

> Captain America is an example of popular culture's role in this process [of hundreds of millions assuming a common identity]. Significant to this role is Captain America's ability to connect the political projects of American nationalism, internal order, and foreign policy (all formulated at the national or global scale) with the scale of the individual, or the body. The character of Captain America connects these scales by literally embodying American identity, presenting for readers a hero both of, and for, the nation [627].

While this would certainly be true of Captain America during World War II and in the present, as will be shown later, it was not necessarily the case during the Cold and Vietnam Wars. In fact, save for rescuing captured pilot Jim Baker in *ToS 61*, Captain America rarely ventures into Vietnam again. Wright ascribes this to an editorial decision by none other than Stan Lee:

> As the Vietnam War escalated and antiwar sentiment spread, Stan Lee gradually reduced the Cold War references in the comic books. Noting the deepening political divisions in the country and the increasing politicization of young people, he concluded by 1968 that Marvel's best policy was to hold the vital center and avoid political commentary of any kind, so as not to alienate conservatives or liberals, hawks, or doves [223].

Lee's decision is prompted by fan letters, the vast majority of who, according to Wright, pled for Captain America to be held out of the conflict (244). Thus, during the Vietnam War, Captain America remained at home battling his arch-nemesis the Red Skull and the forces of Hydra, while also tackling real life social issues such as racism, poverty, and inequality alongside The Falcon.

The depoliticization process is completed in *CA 180*, "The Coming of the Nomad!" After becoming disenchanted with the American government after a Watergate-type scandal, questioning his own role in the nation's problems, and becoming fatigued from years of combating evil while sacrificing his own identity, Captain America boldly declares in *CA 176* that "Captain America must die!" (Englehart 1). Over the course of the next three issues, Steve Rogers abandons his Captain American identity, later adopting the guise of The Nomad in Issue *180*. In shedding his Captain America identity, Steve Rogers is registering his disapproval of the political process as evidenced in the narration at the issue's introduction: "At last, he feels as if he has found his destiny! Captain America lies behind him, buried in the rubble of politics, 1974..." (Englehart *CA 180* 1). Given his renouncement of his identity as Captain America and the government for whom he once fought, Steve Rogers is also, in effect, denouncing the use of guns, the weapons of the soldier he no longer claims to be. Ultimately, however, Rogers does resume the Captain America identity, an act that proves, as Lang and Trimble suggests, "the value of having a symbolic persona such as Captain America is in its representation of all the people — which cannot be thwarted by the small-mindedness of petty individuals" (168). Throughout the remaining decades, Steve Rogers would battle the government over the rights to the Captain America identity on two separate occasions; nonetheless, in the end, he would always eventually resume the guise.

September 11 and the Rebirth of the Soldier

Save for World War II, wars on foreign soil have failed to draw Captain America into battle. But what of the war at home? As one might imagine, the events of September 11, 2001, had a profound effect on Captain America, title and character. *CA*, which entered its third volume as a result of the Heroes Reborn storyline that saw several Marvel titles rebooted in an effort to generate new fans and eschew stringent continuity, had ended its third volume at Issue *50*, which, though dated February 2002, was most likely written around or before September 11, 2001. The issue included several stories of which the final one, "Relics," is the most poignant. Captain America faces a Red Skull impersonator who, as he reveals to Captain America as he is chained to a statue of an eagle, is actually a foreigner brought to America in exchange for revealing Nazi plans to acquire nuclear weapons. The impersonator threatens to detonate a small nuclear bomb he has obtained, but Captain America manages to break free of the chains and hurl the bomb far enough that it only destroys the building in which he was entrapped. As Nick Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D. agents arrive on the scene, they can find no trace of Captain America within the rubble. Nonetheless, a tearful funeral is held at which many of Marvel Comics greats gather to pay their respects to their fallen comrade. Whether intentional or not, as planes destroyed two towers of liberty, in the pages of *CA*, a nuclear bomb seemingly destroyed another.

Marvel went through a great deal in bringing about *CA*, Volume 4. As Cord Scott notes, "The first writers of the new line, John Ney Rieber and John Cassaday, were bringing Captain America back before the attacks. But, following the events of 9/11, they wrote the first five issues (a prequel of sorts) to deal with the terrorists that threatened the American way of life" (337). The storyline, simply titled "Enemy," follows Captain America's clash with terrorist Faysal al-Tariq, a terrorist who threatens to detonate a bomb in a church that will kill 200 residents of the small all–American town of Centreville. The first chapter of the arc sees Captain America searching for victims amidst the rubble of the fallen towers. On the way to S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters to head out on an assignment, Captain America intervenes in a conflict between an Arab-American store clerk and an angered citizen who lost his daughter in the collapse. As Dittmer suggests, the significance of his intervention is clear:

> While Captain America's intervention demonstrates America's commitment to multiculturalism and justice, his inner monologue serves not only as a proscription for American behavior and a statement of American military power, but also simultaneously constructs both the meaning of America and the terrorists' identity as parts of a freedom-loving/freedom-hating dichotomy that forecloses other possibilities [638].

As Captain America dons his symbolic costume to stop the enraged father, he ponders how America must deal with such loss: "We've got to be stronger than we've ever been. Or they've won. We can hunt them down. We can scour every bloodstained trace of their terror from the earth. We can turn every stone they ever touched to dust, and every blade of grass to ash. And it won't matter. We've got to be stronger than we have ever been — As a people. As a nation. We have to be America. Or they've won" (Reiber *CA 1 Vol. 4* 26–27). However, though he pleads for tolerance and strength, he plans on exercising very little of the former in his pursuit of al-Tariq. As Nick Fury warns him that al-Tariq is a "monster," he replies "So am I" as he leaps out of the plane, leaving behind the tracer Fury has given him (33–34).

Captain America finally confronts al-Tariq in Issue *3*. As al-Tariq holds the detonator to

the heavily wired church, Captain America springs into action. He flings his shield at al-Tariq, felling the terrorist who, nevertheless, maintains his grip on the detonator. As al-Tariq's fingers slip towards the button, Captain America seizes his wrist. In these tense moments, Captain America thinks, "To turn two hundred lives into clouds of blood and fire and shrapnel. The man you are can only pray — As the soldier strikes — To end the battle" (Reiber *CA 3 Vol. 4* 24). He kills al-Tariq with a forceful punch to the face, a blow reminiscent of his patented "sleeper punch" of the 1940s. Thus, when the need arises, the soldier is reborn, and the willingness to thwart evil by any means necessary returns. However, the victory is a pyrrhic one, for in confronting al-Tariq and his followers, Captain America discovers that they have been given the same tracers Nick Fury offered him on the plane to Centreville; thus, the United States is found complicit in this act of terrorism. As a result, Marvel evades some of the xenophobic, racist propaganda embedded within the early *CAC* and other wartime serials. In the end, this Captain America does not slay the enemy for the government but for the people.

Nonetheless, Captain America remains affiliated with the government throughout the course of *CA Volume 4* completing several missions for S.H.I.E.L.D. A military-affiliated man once again, Captain America also reincorporates his soldier instincts. This is evidenced in *CA 21 Volume 4* where he uses a gun for the first time since *CA 322*, nearly two decades earlier. In "Homeland: Part One," Homeland Security agents arrive to retrieve Captain America to serve on a military tribunal for Fernand Hedayat, a terrorist being transferred to Guantanamo Bay before standing trial for terrorism and treason. En route, their car is attacked by assassins trying to prevent Captain America from serving on the tribunal. As the assassins wound the agents, a plainclothes Captain America, who divulged his identity as Steve Rogers to the general public in Issue 3, grabs one of the fallen agents' sidearm; kicks open the car door, and fires at their assailants. He apparently shoots one of them, forcing the assassin to drop his machine gun as the assailants' van speeds away. However, in this instance, Captain America shows little remorse save for a brief pause as he picks up the assassins' discarded weapon.

Captain America's remilitarization is not surprising as World War II and the War on Terror are similar in one important regard: the United States' involvement came after an attack on its own soil. As psychologists Bill E. Peterson and Emily D. Gerstein posit, the levels of violence in comic books rise when an overt threat exists:

> In terms of authoritarian aggression, we argue that a villain symbolizes an out-group member whose criminal activity justifies retaliation on the part of the hero. Therefore, we hypothesized that superhero comics should incorporate more stories featuring overt conflict between heroes and villains during high-threat years as compared with low-threat years. Furthermore, compared with low-threat years, during high-threat years covers of comic books should depict aggressive actions by villains, which legitimizes the comeuppance of the villain in the interior pages of the comic [890].

Peterson and Gerstein's findings certainly ring true in terms of Captain America. As was the case with the Nazis and Japanese villains of *CAC*, the Arabic jihadists who serve as Captain America's main adversaries in *CA Volume 4* are portrayed as extremists whom Captain America must meet with equal force to bring about justice. Thus, it is of no coincidence that, outside of perhaps *CA 322* and a few other cases, Captain America's use of guns and lethal force is largely reserved for foes that mirror the actual enemies of the United States.

All things considered, the negative reactions towards Captain America's being equipped with a sidearm are somewhat irrational. First, as has been shown, he is a former soldier who made frequent use of firearms and other weapons throughout his career. Secondly, one must

consider that the new Captain America is not Steve Rogers.[2] Each time someone new has assumed the helm — notably John Walker, the U.S. Agent, who assumed the role in the mid–1980s — has been decidedly more aggressive than Steve Rogers. With that said, there has yet to be any evidence that the new Captain America's firearm use will differ greatly from his predecessor's. However, even if it were Steve Rogers under the mask, considering his adventures following September 11, 2001, this move is not wholly improbable. In times of domestic turmoil, Captain America has always shown a willingness to use a firearm or some other form of lethal force, for Captain America is the epitome of the American monomythic hero, "the selfless individual who sacrifices himself for others and the zealous crusader who destroys evil" (Lang 158). In the end, when the circumstances call for it, Captain America is the ultimate soldier, and as Douglas McArthur suggested, "Old soldiers never die."

Notes

1. Prior to *Captain America 100*, Captain America shared billing with Iron Man in *Tales of Suspense Featuring Iron Man and Captain America*, beginning with Issue 59 in November 1964 and lasting until Issue #99 in March 1968. What would have been *Tales of Suspense 100* became *Captain America 100*. The original Captain America series, *Captain America Comics*, began with Issue *1* (March 1941) and ended with Issue *75* (February 1950). However the last two issues of *Captain America Comics* (74–75) had been retitled *Captain America's Weird Tales*. The title would return in the mid–1950s as *Captain America ... Commie Smasher!* for Issue *76* (May 1954), *77* (July 1954), and the final issue *78* (September 1954). Captain America would then remain dormant until a "test-run" in 1963 in *Strange Tales 113* (November 1963). His formal reintroduction took place in *The Avengers 4* (March 1964).

2. The identity of the new Captain America was not revealed during the composition of this essay. *Captain America 34*, *Volume 5*, in which his new identity will be revealed, was not yet available. However, most readers believe that the new Captain America will be none other than the resurrected Bucky Barnes, whose body was apparently discovered by Russian scientists after the drone plane explosion. The scientists gave Barnes a bionic arm to replace the one destroyed in the explosion and programmed him to be an assassin codenamed the Winter Soldier. Bucky is now an adult, his body kept in stasis during periods of inactivity. In the present day, the Winter Soldier encounters Captain America in London, where he helps Captain America fend off a terrorist attack. One of Steve Rogers' dying wishes was for the confused Bucky Barnes to be helped.

References

Betancourt, David. "Good Guy with a Gun: A Superhero for the Times." 16 October 2007. Washington Post.com. 29 December 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/15/AR2007101501494.html?hpid=topnews>.

Cummings, Ray, Syd Shores, and Vince Alascia, et al. *Captain America Comics 26*. New York: Timely Comics (May 1943).

DeMatteis, J.M., Mike Zeck, and Quickdraw Studios, et al., *Captain America 263*. New York: Marvel Comics (November 1981).

Dittmer, Jason. "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitics." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95.3 (2005): 626–643.

DuBose, Mike. "Holding Out for a Hero: Reaganism, Comic Book Vigilantes, and Captain America." *Journal of Popular Culture* 40.6 (December 2007): 915–935.

Englehart, Steve, Sal Buscema, and Vinnie Colletta, et al. *Captain America 176*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1976).

_____. *Captain America 180*. New York: Marvel Comics (December 1976).

Fargo, Vince, Syd Shores, and Vince Alascia, et al. *Captain America Comics 31*. New York: Timely Comics (October 1943).

Gruenwald, Mark, Paul Neary, and John Beatty, et al. *Captain America 321–322*. New York: Marvel Comics (September/October 1986).

Kirby, Jack, and Frank Giacoia, et al. *Captain America 194*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1976).
Kirby, Jack, and Reed Crandall, et al. *Captain America Comics 2*. New York: Timely Comics (April 1941).
Lang, Jeffrey S., and Patrick Trimble. "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow? An Examination of the American Monomyth and the Comic Book Superhero." *Journal of Popular Culture* 22.3 (December 1988): 157–173.
Lee, Stan. "Press." 19 June 2006. Alex Schomburg: The Official Estate of Alex Schomburg Site. 1 January 2008. <http://www.alexschomburg.com/press_stan_lee.htm>.
Lee, Stan, and Al Avison, et al. *Captain America Comics 20*. New York: Timely Comics (November 1942).
Lee, Stan, and Don Rico, et al. *Captain America Comics 18*. New York: Timely Comics (September 1942).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Chic Stone, et al. *Tales of Suspense 61*. New York: Marvel Comics (January 1965).
Lee, Stan, Jack Kirby, and Syd Shores, et al. *Captain America 102–103*. New York: Marvel Comics (June/July 1968).
Mallory, Michael. *Marvel: The Characters and Their Universe*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004.
McKenzie, Roger, Sal Buscema, and Don Perlin, et al. *Captain America 232–233*. New York: Marvel Comics (April/May 1979).
Nate 28. "Marvel Reveals 'New' Captain America." Online posting. 11 October 2007. Newsarama.com. 29 December 2007 <http://forum.newsarama.com/showthread.php?t=132577&page=4&highlight=%22Captain+America%22>.
Nyberg, Amy Kiste. *Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998.
Peterson, Bill E., and Emily D. Gerstein. "Fighting and Flying: Archival Analysis of Threat, Authoritarianism, and the North American Comic Book." *Political Psychology* 26.6 (2005): 887–903.
Reiber, John Ney, John Cassaday, and Dave Stewart, et al. *Captain America 1*, Vol. 4. New York: Marvel Comics (June 2002).
Scott, Cord. "Written in Red, White, and Blue: A Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda from World War II and September 11." *Journal of Popular Culture* 40.2 (April 2007): 325–343.
Stern, Roger, John Byrne, and Josef Rubenstein, et al. *Captain America 254*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1981).
Wright, Bradford. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

A Genealogy of Evil

Captain America vs. the Shadows of the National Imagined Community

Christian Steinmetz

In March, 2007, Marvel Comics published *CA 25*, in which the title character is assassinated while being brought to a federal courthouse to face multiple criminal charges (Brubaker). The story gained a brief flurry of attention from the real-world media, shocked that the sixty-six-year-old superhero icon of the American nation had been killed, particularly during such a politically contentious period in history (Holmes; Robinson). Captain America's creators regard him as a symbol of the American ideal (Dittmer 629), so many of these reports speculated about what the political meaning the death of that symbol signified.

Such speculations derive from several scholarly studies of comic books, nationalism and ideology, which claim that superheroes like Captain America symbolize a conservative affirmation of the status quo (Emad; Wolf-Meyer). But these studies have always focused their analysis on the heroic protagonists, rather than the villains of comic books. In light of Captain America's death, this essay argues that, if we consider the Jungian shadow archetype (i.e. the villain) in popular comic book myths to be both a psychological and symbolic transgression of what we consider universal, we can reveal limits to the American nation. If myth is society trying to make sense of itself (Levi-Strauss), then it follows that the villains within such tales are symbolic of what our society finds unacceptable. Revealing the political meaning behind these symbols of evil can provide insights into the nation's transformation over an extended period of time.

I begin by outlining the theoretical framework for this kind of textual analysis. This framework starts with Anderson's concept of the nation as an "imagined community" and incorporates previous studies of comic books and ideology. Next, it combines Michel Foucault's "limit attitude" with Carl Jung's concept of the shadow, one of the archetypes present in our collective unconscious. Applying this model to a particularly nationalistic mythic text (in this case Captain America), and then disabling that myth's defense of de-historicizing and de-politicizing itself, can reveal limits to national ideology.

Following the theoretical review, I apply this framework to two case studies based on the endpoints of the Captain America timeline. The first study is of the beginning issues of *CAC,* written in 1941 before America entered World War II. Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, Captain America's creators, produced this initial run of issues. The second is the last two years of *CA Vol. 5* (2005–2007) prior to and including the character's death. Ed Brubaker exclusively wrote these issues, accompanied by several artists. By comparing the two case studies (Captain America's

origin and his end), a political meaning is revealed, demonstrating the shift in the American nation between 1941 and the present day. I conclude that this specific comic book myth is continually in the process of performing maintenance on the borders of the imaginary national space.

The Shadow Limits of Evil

While the concrete space of geographical borders may outline a state, a nation's boundaries are intangible, more of an imagined community than a material one (Anderson). This doesn't mean that a nation's limits are unable to be traced, just that they are defined more by culture than by their actual physical location (Smith). Since modern human beings still require myths to affirm their social context, we can understand common myths as a foundation for the culture that defines the imaginary space we today call a nation (Eliade 205; Smith 1–19). As Benedict Anderson has revealed, the convergence of capitalism, print media and different localized vernaculars gave birth to this idea of the nation. Since they narrate modern myths within our market-driven print industry, comic books are an ideal site to observe this manufactured nationalism.

Contemporary comic books are largely dominated by superhero stories, whose incredibly complex narrative continuity allows them to operate effectively as modern myths (Reynolds). In some cases, like DC Comics' Superman and Marvel Comics' Captain America, these continuities extend back almost seventy years in American history. As they've aged, superhero stories have been susceptible to historical events that have altered both their production and regulation. Occasionally comic books have promoted progressive reforms, as when they critiqued social values in the 1960s. More commonly, though, these narratives tend to adhere to the status quo of American culture. And the current trend of conglomeration within the comic book publishing industry has a propensity for keeping comics in the mainstream (McAllister 55–71).

Comic books' tendency to promote nationalism is not just symptomatic of an American condition; studies have determined that economics, government and culture have imposed ideology on comic book creators in Japan (Kinsella), China (Kluver) and India (Rao), as well. Superheroes narratives reveal that their ideology is mostly a conservative one that never allows the characters to establish a Utopia; thus, their fantastic fisticuffs can continue forever, protecting the status quo from change (Wolf-Meyer). So far, all of the research published on comic books and ideology has focused on their central superhero characters, mostly ignoring the constant stream of villainous antagonists on the receiving end of these status-quo-affirming thrashings.

In the case of Captain America, several studies have explored the title character and his support of American nationalism. He narrates American identity in a way that other icons (even comic books icons) cannot, often referred to by fans and creators as an idealized version of what Americans can (and should) be (Dittmer). In 1941, Captain America began as popular culture propaganda, demonizing Germans and Asians while urging the United States to enter World War II (Scott). This narrative was characteristic of what Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence refer to as the American Monomyth, an anti-democratic fantasy in which a super-powered Everyman saves society by stepping outside of institutions and violently beating on villains. The Golden Age[1] Captain America is the prime example of this

myth because he always acts courageously and selflessly, he renounces sexual relationships, he is isolated from his community, and he is frustrated with his government. These attributes have biblical origins, with a zealous commitment to destroying national enemies as a part of God's will. But that myth often assumes that power in the hands of the few can achieve more than the justice of community institutions, that the law is inherently flawed when it confronts real evil. It even presumes that the rest of the world needs this kind of American hero to defeat evil, a myth we've seen play out in everything from *Rambo* to contemporary international politics (Jewett). In light of this research, Captain America support other theories (e.g., that comic book superheroes support the status quo and are emblematic of both nationalism and conservative ideology).

While these claims indicate that the character of Captain America is symbolic of United States ideology, they do not trace the imaginary boundaries that give meaning to it. Instead of focusing on what he *is*, perhaps we can define the shifting borders of American ideology by revealing what he *is not*. The Captain had always had an enemy to fight, from Adolf Hitler on the cover of the first issue of *CAC*; to Communists in *Captain America ... Commie Smasher!*; to his present battles with cackling super-villains, modern-day terrorists, and even his fellow heroes. The sheer duration of the Captain America narrative makes it a useful text to trace the evolution of national identity from pre–World War II until the present day. A synchronic comparison of these endpoints may expose the transformation of America's antagonists throughout linear history.

Attempting such a historical reading of myth requires a preparation of theoretical tools, what Claude Lévi-Strauss might refer to as a *bricolage*. Myth can be understood as a language, so approaching it as a structured system of signs allows a deeper reading of its political meaning (Barthes 109–158). This study combines the Foucaultian limit methodology with Jungian psychoanalysis to examine Captain America's villains. Using this framework allows us to engage two separate moments in American history while understanding the same archetypes and oppositions occurring within the ongoing text.

Beginning with Foucault (76–101), this study approaches a text like *CA* with what the French theorist calls a "limit attitude," a commitment toward discovering the transgressions against what is accepted as both universal and obligatory. Myth empties itself of political meaning and appears to have ambiguous signification, making it seem natural to us (Barthes 128). But revealing its limits (that which is unacceptable within it) eliminates that defense and allows us to decipher a myth's ideological position. This requires a historical investigation, in this case taking a text developed over linear time and re-examining it synchronically, finding what real-world events led it to be constituted this way. A few comic book studies have taken a similar approach to analyzing the limitations placed on the characteristics and behaviors of a superhero protagonist.[2] I will, instead, examine the villainous transgressions committed against the superhero universe. Whatever is presented to us as evil is acceptable for the superhero to punish on behalf of his fictional community and the real world of consuming readers.

It is important that the texts of *CA* be placed within their given historical contexts because myth actually *disintegrates* history, emptying it of its original meaning, and replacing it with a de-politicized narrative that seems to have always been there (Barthes 109–158; Jameson 9–14, 19–20). Because of its timeless quality, myth cannot be understood by just reading it sequentially (Levi-Strauss 44–54). Its plot may change, but the structure and themes remain the same. Myth must be understood as a whole. This is especially true in comic book narratives,

in which the continuity of the comic book universe ends up taking precedence over actual history. It is necessary for comic book creators to continually adjust their continuity to compensate for the real-world passage of time. Otherwise, characters would have to age and experience historical events just as the readers do. Therefore, comic book myths are *repeatedly* in the process of transforming history into nature, making some characters seem to barely age when they're actually nearly seventy years old. Simultaneously, these comics are constantly in the process of de-politicizing themselves, replacing their now unacceptable utopian longings with modern, acceptable ones while pretending that the old ones never existed. Just reading the current issues of *Captain America* would not fully reveal their representation of the nation; they have transformed real history and their own narrative history (e.g., the modern Captain America never punched Hitler). This is why a comparison of synchronic points is necessary with a comic book myth. By recovering the history that the myth repeatedly disintegrates, we will refill the empty signifier with its original political meaning.

To augment this historical comparison, I will incorporate the Jungian archetype of the shadow into the Foucaultian limit attitude. In a Jungian sense, myths are expressions of archetypes that reside in our collective unconscious, articulated through imperfect symbols (Stevens 105–109; Jung 194–211). Myths actually reveal the contents of our unconscious, though in a distorted manner. Each symbol representing an archetype is an attempt to express it fully, but these symbols can only capture a limited number of characteristics inherent to the archetype. Thus symbols are continually updated in attempts to express those characteristics previously ignored (Jung 194–211). Like the process of de-historicizing myth, the management of archetypal symbols is inherent in comic book storytelling. Popular characters are updated (or "rebooted" in comics lingo) to be more relevant for contemporary readers, often disregarding their previous incarnations in favor of the new one. Within a Jungian interpretation, comic book villains are clearly symbols of The Shadow, an enemy complex that is often xenophobic, projecting a threat to personal and state existence (Stevens 64–67).

The shadow originates from a combination of cultural indoctrination and our repressed characteristics (Stevens 64–67). It can be argued that the shadow is a psychological explanation for the limits that exist within our semiotic structures. The transgressions we find in language and myth *are* the symbolic expressions of our archetypal, unconscious shadow. The shadow is an important conceptual tool when outlining the nation because it is simultaneously psychological and symbolic, just as our conceptualization of an imagined community is.

It is especially useful to consider how the shadow is confronted within these myths. Jung emphasizes that that integration of the shadow is preferable to its destruction if an individual or society wants to become psychologically whole (Stevens 91–97). If Captain America defeats his villains by physically beating them in combat, it is indicative of further repression of American anxieties. If, however, he attempts to reconcile with his villains, America has accepted that characteristic of the shadow as a part of its national identity.

This kind of application of archetypes and post-structural limits may seem like essentialism, proclaiming to define American ideology in full. But it cannot. Originally, mythic thinking assumed that we could understand the totality of the world through myth (Levi-Strauss, 1995 17–18). What we *can* consider are the tensions that exist in our myths, the characters or actions that cause conflict, and seem inherently unacceptable to us. These tensions change over time, both psychologically and semiotically, so the symbols we use to represent our collective fears leave traces of our political beliefs and our mutual agreements that certain people can be demonized and punished. With this in mind, deciphering these mythic

tensions within their historical context reveals the edges of the imaginary space that we call a nation. *CA* is an ideal case to begin with because of its mythic narrative, its existence within the capitalist market of publishing, the extent of its duration in that market and the inherent iconic meaning of an "ideal American" attributed to its title character.

Captain America in the Golden Age (1941)

In March 1941, Timely Comics published the first issue of *CAC*, nine months before the United States entered the Second World War. Caption boxes on the first page of the issue state, "As ruthless war-mongers of Europe focus their eyes on peace-loving America ... the youth of our country heed the call to arm for defense ... but great as the danger of foreign attack ... is the threat of invasion from within ... the dreaded fifth column..." (Simon *CAC 1* 1). These captions set up a symbolic split between external/foreign enemies and internal/personal ones. That split runs from the 1941 Captain America narrative to the current narrative that ends with Cap's death in 2007. While examining the limits to the American nation that these villains present, I will proceed with an internal/external framework of binary oppositions. Claude Lévi-Strauss (44–54) advocates for this kind of structuralist methodology in his work on myth, but I suspect that these divisions may break up in a research of the entire text of *CAC* and *CA*. The binary oppositions presented here are strictly for the purpose of presenting these findings in an organized manner because it is possible that further examination of this myth will show the text abandoning this internal/external theme.

The first external villain Captain America faces is none other than Adolf Hitler, who is being punched in the face on the cover of the very first issue of *CAC*. Hitler did not, however, appear in any of that issue's stories. He reappears on the cover to the second issue, again being attacked by the Captain, but this time he is featured in the comic's last story, in which a disguised Captain America and his sidekick Bucky sneak into Germany to battle him (Simon *CAC 2* 16–30).[3] This fictional Hitler plans to have a Nazi spy pose as an important financier about to sign a pact with England. "You vill not sign der pact!!" shouts Hitler at the spy. "Instead you vill sign mit Mussolini! Dot will swerve Europe to our side — leaving der democracies trapped!!" (Simon *CAC 2* 22). The issue ends with Bucky simultaneously jump-kicking Hitler and Herman Göring (second in command of the Third Reich), as they cowardly argue about who will take "the little guy" in the fight. Neither is brought to any kind of legal justice because R.A.F. planes promptly pick up Captain America and Bucky, and return them to America.

While Hitler and Göring are the most obvious symbols of American anxiety about World War II, in 1941 Captain America's external Axis enemies were more often symbols of Asian demonization. The same issue that features Hitler and Göring also has a story about "The Ageless Orientals Who Wouldn't Die," in which Asians are depicted as giant, malformed yellow fiends with claws and drooling fangs (Simon *CAC 2* 1–15). Eventually, Captain America discovers that the giants are Tibetan natives, being controlled by a corrupt American businessman. Another issue features Captain Okada, Oriental Master of Death, the commander of a submarine shaped like a giant dragon that "eats" Navy patrolmen off the coast of Hawaii (Simon *CAC 5* 13–28). Okada's henchmen are portrayed with bright yellow skin and claws, wearing only loincloths around their waists. In the sixth issue, Captain America's adversary is Fang, the Arch-Fiend of the Orient, a criminal who wants to assassinate Chinese emissaries

(Simon *CAC 6* 17–25). Again, the claws, fangs and unnatural skin color are prominent. Both Asians and Germans are depicted in these 1941 Jack Kirby drawn issues with ghoulish facial features, but the Asian characters are abnormally wicked looking.

The final external villain that Captain America faced was also connected to World War II and the Axis. At the end of the fifth issue, he journeys to Devil's Island, a French prison camp in which an American pilot is being held for assisting France against Germany (Simon and Kirby *CAC 5* 38–43). Pepo Laroc, a gluttonous French Nazi and part of the "New France," runs the camp. Laroc is shown torturing the American pilot with white hot metal pokers, but Captain America throws Laroc into a brick wall and frees the American. In the end, the pilot describes his predicament to Cap and Bucky, "Nazi pressure on the Vichy government in France will keep me here for life. I won't last long in this hell-hole — I must escape ... if I have to die, it will be for democracy..." (Simon *CAC 5* 43). Laroc is the only 1941 example of an external shadow that wasn't a direct member of the Axis. He is a clear symbol of a growing anxiety that the Nazis would corrupt our allies and turn them against us. This kind of corruption from within is even more evident in the examples of internal shadows found in these same issues of *CAC*.

Two common "internal evil" themes appear during this pre-war period. The first of these comes in the shape of a string of Nazi spies and American Nazi sympathizers. This theme begins in Captain America's origin story, when one of the army men witnessing the Super Soldier Serum experiment, which turns Steve Rogers into Captain America, reveals himself as a Nazi spy. He shouts, "Death to the dogs of democracy!" as he murders Professor Reinstein, the serum's inventor (Simon *CAC 1* 6). The transformed Rogers proceeds to pummel the spy until the Nazi stumbles into laboratory equipment and is electrocuted. So begins the many formulaic stories in which Captain America breaks up a Nazi spy ring, the leader of which accidentally dies or commits suicide on the final page. These cunning Nazi spies include a clairvoyant entertainer, a gang of Nazi sympathizers disguised as beggars, and a popular violinist whose music signals evil butlers to murder their anti–Nazi, United States Senate employers.

The most infamous of the internal Nazi villains is The Red Skull, Captain America's now longtime nemesis. Originally, he was a Nazi supporter who wore a green jumpsuit with a yellow swastika and a mask that made his head look like a red skull. Introduced in the first issue of *CAC*, the Skull was initially George Maxon, the owner of an aircraft corporation producing planes for the United States Army. Maxon is promised "the post of Minister of all American industry" if he helps Hitler take over America (Simon *CAC 1* 45). Like all the other Nazi spies who Captain America confronts, Maxon appears to die when he accidentally rolls over onto a hypodermic needle of poison. However, the Red Skull made two returns in 1941, and he has since gone on to be Captain America's best known adversary. The Skull often disguises himself as someone who is innocuous, and always misleads Captain America. In the seventh issue, when the Skull pretends to be a British theatre worker, the Captain states, "A Britisher, eh? Well I guess you may be telling the truth!" (Simon and Kirby *CAC 7* 6). The Skull proceeds to murder several important American army officers, always playing Chopin's "Funeral March" on a flute before killing each. In another appearance, the Skull, still wearing his Nazi costume, proclaims, "I'll rip this nation wide open.... I'll even make Hitler shake with fear!" Here, he demonstrates his adherence to fascism, but not necessarily to the Third Reich (Simon *CAC 3* 6). This became important for the post-war appearances of the Red Skull; it justifies his thirst for power as his motive, and not his Nazi ideology.

Other extravagant villains followed the Skull in 1941, though most were corrupt American citizens and not actually Nazi spies. This second theme of costumed criminals included The Butterfly, The Wax Man, The Camera Fiend, The Hangman and The Black Toad. When unmasked, these villains were always principal members of American society gone bad: financiers, doctors, teachers and sports and film entertainers. In most cases their motives are unclear, but sometimes they're attempting fraud or murder for financial gain. The Hangman's motive is the exception to this. After his capture, he states, "I wanted to be left alone with my work — If I were thought dead I wouldn't be annoyed by spies, racketeers and ruthless businessmen — so I killed to obtain that privacy!" (Simon *CAC 6* 41). He then turns over his super-silk formula to the United States government and commits suicide by jumping under an acid-spraying showerhead. Captain America finally decides to keep The Hangman's identity a secret because, "the formula is safe and he paid for his crimes" (Ibid).

This is the only instance during the pre-war period in which Captain America came close to integrating his enemy instead of destroying it outright. The Hangman was likely accepted (and covered up for) because his victims were all symbolic of the villains who Captain America punished every month: spies and corrupt American businessmen. In this respect, the Hangman was a vigilante operating under the same American Monomyth that Jewett and Lawrence apply to Captain America, a monomyth in which a single man can solve American problems by stepping outside of institutional law and punishing villains. The crimes Hangman commits do not transgress the universal; they embrace the same values as Captain America himself did at the time. Even with this similarity, the Hangman must commit a grisly suicide, in order to pay for his crimes. All of the other villains are punished in a manner that Jung would describe as a destruction of the shadow archetype.

Now that the symbols of the shadow have been identified and their characteristics listed, we can begin a historical investigation that refills them with their original political meaning that was erased by their comic book, mythic quality. These early issues of *CAC* are obviously filled with symbols of xenophobia, both external (German and Japanese) and internal (spies, corrupt citizens) threats to the American State. These political fears were a major part of the American nation, building up to entering World War II in December of that year. Looking closer at some of the examples, we can locate historical reasons for their political meaning.

Beginning with the recurring nemesis, the Red Skull, two characteristics of his evil had embedded political resonance. First, recall that the Red Skull's original alter ego was George Maxon, an airplane manufacturer who was producing planes for the United States Army. On May 16, 1940, just under a year before the Red Skull appeared in print, President Franklin D. Roosevelt requested a $900 million loan from a joint Congress to finance the purchase of 50,000 airplanes per year. In this address, Roosevelt suggested that Nazi Germany had more warplanes than all of its opponents combined and that their production capacity was greater than that of any other country. Roosevelt stated, "From the point of view of our own defense, therefore, great additional production capacity is our principal air requisite." Because the President made airplane construction a priority for the future safety of Americans, the mythic threat of an airplane magnate secretly being a Nazi spy would be a transgression against the American nation, as it threatened both production and security.

The Red Skull's modus operandi of performing Chopin's "Funeral March" before he murdered his victims also held political meaning. Since 1921, beginning with burial of the Unknown Soldier, that song had been played during the burial of American soldiers, particularly in commemoration of unidentified soldiers killed abroad. For a Nazi spy to perform

the music as a calling card before killing soldiers at home was a subversion of that tradition, an affront to the respect Americans paid to their servicemen. From these two examples, the Red Skull regains his original political meaning, as both an insult to the honor of the American Army and an anxiety that corrupt businessmen would weaken national security.

In the case of the frequent Nazi spy rings that Captain America was shown breaking up, such organizations were actually being busted, captured and arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.), beginning in 1938. Leon Turrou's *Nazi Spies In America*—a book detailing his work as an F.B.I. agent, using polygraph technology on Nazi spies—was released in 1939 (Turrou). The fear of Nazism wasn't just xenophobic; there was a palpable anxiety that American citizens themselves might support Hitler and destabilize national security. This shadow culminates symbolically in the pages of *CAC* with Pepo Laroc, the "New France" example of what could happen if the American government were to be defeated and replaced by a Nazi controlled regime, like Vichy, France.

This fear of corruption from within continued to be symbolized with the throng of costumed villains who Captain America faced, and who always turned out to be corrupt members of the American working infrastructure. The Red Skull's origin as a corrupt businessman also touched upon this fear. America was still recovering from the Great Depression in 1941, and selfish businessmen were not accepted kindly. The year before, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, in Washington, had collapsed, and the state was unable to collect on its insurance policy because insurance agent Hallett R. French had pocketed $800,000 of the premiums (Washington State Department of Transportation). The characteristics of self-centered Americans like Hallett French worked their way into the symbols of the shadow archetype, not exactly xenophobic, but still concerned with threats to the state.

However, the demonization of Asians—symbolized by the ghoulish enemies of Captain America—was purely xenophobic. The second Sino-Japanese conflict began in 1937 and Japan joined the Axis in 1940. As a result of this, and the atrocities committed during the 1937 Rape of Nanking, the United States placed an embargo on all Japanese goods in 1940, again just months before *CAC* was published.

Before we injected these symbols of evil with historical background they may have seemed childish and even ridiculous in relation to America. But now we have defined a few key limits, some of the borders to the 1941 American nation. These borders included intolerance for both corrupt businessmen and insults to the honor of the United States Army. Personal selfishness was seen as a symptom that might weaken national security, leading to a regime change under Nazi control. Finally, xenophobia of Germans and Asians was prevalent, depicting them visually as inhuman monsters. As this paper turns to another synchronic point in the history of Captain America, it will be important to consider these 1941 limits to the nation with regard to the borders of our present imaginary national space.

Captain America in the Present: 2005–2007

It has been argued that the events of September 11, 2001, allowed Captain America to return to a "good war" like World War II, in which evil was defined in black-and-white terms, and America had returned to a simple narrative of freedom versus fascism (Dittmer 637). Given my conclusions in the case study of 1941s *CAC*, I would first argue that the Golden Age comics were very complex. The symbols of the shadow had characteristics of internal corruption that

required repression as much as the more obvious xenophobic limits to the nation. Second, the following case study researches the last two years of *Captain America* and also refutes what Dittmer calls "an inside/outside dialectic" (Ibid). Since this essay does not analyze the same post–9/11 issues that his study does, it cannot confirm or deny that such a dialectic exists there. However, it is possible that the limits to the American nation have shifted since then, symbolized by more complex shadows in these 2005–2007 comics.

Just like the counterpart issues in 1941, the Ed Brubaker run of *CA Vol. 5* that started in 2005 is also set as a battle against a dichotomy of internal and external evils. Beginning again with the internal, more personal menaces that Captain America faces, these issues also feature Nazis as enemies that come from within. But instead of being spies entrenched throughout American society, these internal Nazis sprout from within Captain America's unconscious (as all Jungian Shadows do), appearing only in his dreams and flashbacks (Brubaker *CA Vol. 5 1–6*). It isn't until the nineteenth issue that he faces a tangible Nazi, and this is merely a skinhead henchman of the Red Skull, costumed like the Nazi super-villain, Master Man, (Brubaker, *CA Vol. 5 19*). As stated previously, comic book myths are always in the process of disintegrating real history and their own history. The Nazi flashbacks serve that purpose, showing Cap and Bucky fighting their Golden Age battles in France and the Soviet Union during World War II, instead of back home fighting spy rings, thus disintegrating the original political meaning of American corruption from within. The flashbacks also retcon[4] Bucky as more than the tag-along, rascal sidekick he's shown to be in 1941, and develop him into the most significant of Captain America's new internal enemies.

The narrative of *CA Vol. 5*: *11* explains that instead of dying in a World War II explosion, Russian scientists captured Bucky and brainwashed him into being their "Winter Soldier," a covert assassin who is thawed out of stasis only to murder foreign political leaders (Brubaker). The Winter Soldier comes into conflict with Captain America in the present day when his new master (a Russian CEO) orders him to kidnap Cap's girlfriend, kill his other former sidekick and set off a weapon of mass destruction in Philadelphia. This new Bucky is designed with a bionic arm, machine guns and body armor, making him look much more the "super soldier" than Captain America does. In their final battle, Captain America dispels Winter Soldier's brainwashing and accepts him as Bucky despite the death toll he's caused.

The theme of internal evil is prevalent in these modern comics, as Bucky isn't Cap's only ally that turns against him. First, during the 2006 Marvel crossover event *Civil War*, the superheroes of the Marvel universe turn against each other over a "Superhuman Registration Act" requiring superheroes to register with the American government (Millar *Civil War 1–7*). Captain America leads the faction of superheroes that oppose the law as a violation of civil rights and liberties. Throughout the *Civil War* storyline, his girlfriend, Sharon Carter (an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., a transnational counter-terrorism organization, a fictional equivalent of the CIA), struggles with orders to arrest him. He confides in her, saying, "While I love my country, I don't trust many politicians. Not when they're having their strings pulled by corporate donors. And not when they're willing to trade freedom for security." (Brubaker *CA Vol. 5*: *22*, 14). In several of these later issues, Captain America's enemies are agents of international institutions who stand in his way when he tries to apprehend other villains. The war culminates with Captain America's arrest, but a sniper henchman of the Red Skull and a brainwashed Carter assassinate him before his trial (Brubaker *CA Vol. 5*: *25*). In these stories the people closest to Captain America, his friends, his lover, and the government he represents, all characterize the shadow archetype.

Despite these personal struggles, the characters in the Captain America myth all agree on one evil: terrorism. But instead of being external, in the threat that Dittmer describes in his analysis of post–9/11, *CA*, almost all of the terrorists are either Americans or people of unknown national origin. In the twenty-five politically correct issues of contemporary *CA* reviewed, not one featured an Arab or Muslim terrorist. Instead the terrorists primarily take the form of two opposing groups, Advanced Idea Mechanics (A.I.M.) and Advanced Ideas of Destruction (A.I.D.). A.I.M. is the less violent of the two, an organization dedicated to controlling the world through technology. The splinter group A.I.D., however, is willing to detonate weapons of mass destruction within the United States of America to achieve its goals. Another example of internal terrorism comes from the villains Crossbones & Sin, the Red Skull's henchman and daughter respectively, who spend most of their time together committing random acts of violence against both the American public *and* the other homegrown terrorists. While terrorism still places an unacceptable limit on the American nation, the xenophobic characteristic associated with it is absent symbolically, replaced by an anxiety of dangerous technology in the wrong hands.

This technological anxiety extends into the external shadows that Captain America faces during this same period. The Cosmic Cube — a deus ex machina device that does anything its owner desires — begins in these issues in the possession of the Red Skull, but it is quickly transferred to Aleksander Lukin, the Russian CEO of the multinational Kronas Corporation and the master of the Winter Soldier. It's significant that these are the Cube's two owners because both the Skull and Lukin are depicted as sophisticated and Machiavellian, to such a degree of similarity that the Cube reconstructs them as the same person, with the Red Skull living within Lukin's unconscious, able to take over his body if necessary. While hiding behind the power that Lukin's corporation offers, these villains orchestrate Captain America's assassination. The corporation appears as a bastion of evil in several issues. In Issue *9*, when Captain America and a squad of S.H.I.E.L.D. agents assault the corporation's offices, they find Lukin in a meeting with the vice president's chief of staff and the assistant to the secretary general of the United Nations (Brubaker *CA Vol. 5*: *9*). The politicians order Captain America to leave the premises and he later complains that Lukin "may as well have diplomatic immunity"(*CA 9* 20). These examples, combined with Captain America's previous statement about the connections between corporations and corrupt politicians, demonstrate a running anti-corporate theme in the current Captain America myth. In many ways this is linked to that previous characteristic of evil, technology in the wrong hands, as Kronas Corporation is behind both the WMD in Philadelphia and the chaos that the Cosmic Cube causes. That the Red Skull, the oldest and most malevolent of Captain America's enemies, is now the unconscious CEO of a multinational corporation is also significant. Gone is the goofy green jumpsuit with a yellow swastika, replaced by sleek business suits and limousines. Any trace of his original Nazi ideology has been disintegrated by the revision of the comic book myth, replaced with the sheer lust for power he briefly demonstrated in 1941 when he hoped to threaten even Hitler. The only glimpse we have of his fascist origins occurs when he and Lukin recruit a German skinhead to pose as a Nazi super-villain, distracting Captain America from their real threat. "Look at him ... a mindless racist," says Lukin. "No, he's a soldier looking for a cause to believe in," replies the Red Skull (Brubaker *CA Vol. 5*: *18*, 2). The Skull is less interested in promoting actual Nazi political views than he is in manipulating individuals to conquer the world. That he does this from behind the desk of a CEO is telling that the anxiety lies not just with corporate power, but also with the human unconscious behind

that power. This symbol of the shadow is returning from the realm of the symbolic, back to its psychological origins. This gets complicated because the symbolic characteristics representative of the shadow archetype here are unconscious, just as the archetype itself is. Perhaps this marks a more post-modern understanding of evil, that despite the incomplete symbols we use to represent it (whether they be corporations or Nazis), the real capability for evil lies within all of us, in our collective unconscious.

If it is true that we have a more mature understanding of evil as a part of ourselves, we are still unable to fully accept and integrate this understanding. The modern Captain America myth still attempts to repress that shadow archetype through violence and destruction. Cap resorts to brawling whenever he faces most of these foes — corporate bodyguards, terrorists, even his own friends — though he doesn't always manage to capture or stop them. However, Captain America does attempt to accept and integrate a few of his enemies, the Winter Soldier being the only successful example of this. After we restore the de-historicized political meaning behind the symbol of the Winter Soldier, the importance of its acceptance within the imagined community will become clear.

The term "Winter Soldier" comes from a 1971 Winter Soldier Investigation event held by the group, Vietnam Veterans Against the War. During this three-day gathering, the group intended to publicize war crimes committed by the United States armed forces during the Vietnam War.

The symbols of terrorism in *CA* have obvious political meaning, when viewed with history since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. But remember that the fictional terrorists in this comic book are neither Arab nor Muslim. Instead they evoke homegrown terrorism like the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the Beltway sniper attacks of 2002. Suicide bombings in American connected nations, like Israel and Iraq, reinforced this fear of an internal terrorist attack, and the media's frequent suggestions of a dirty bomb detonation contributed to anxiety about destructive technology in the wrong hands. The only dirty bombs ever associated with a terrorist attack were both recovered, without detonation, from Chechen separatists in 1995 and 1998. This connects to the more recent 2004 Beslan school hostage crisis, committed by Chechens as well. The fear that America will eventually face internal terrorists equipped with such technology is the political meaning behind Captain America's more recent confrontations with terrorism.

The symbols of transnational institutions and multinational corporations are more xenophobic than the symbols of terrorism in this comic. Recent corporate scandals, involving questionable behavior of some companies, provide an explanation for the threat that the Kronas Corporation poses in the Captain America myth. The United Nations' Oil-For-Food scandal and recent tensions between the U.N. and the Bush administration explain the myth's negative portrayal of political institutions outside the purview of United States law.

Finally, the Captain America myth can be said to end[5] when the death of the character results from a conflict over civil liberties. This political meaning was overtly an allegory for the U.S. PATRIOT Act, passed in the wake of 9/11. *Civil War* writer Mark Millar has said, "The political allegory is only for those that are politically aware. Kids are going to read it and just see a big superhero fight" (Gustines). I would argue against Millar, and say that the political allegory is empty for adult readers as well as children. Millar may not intend it, but *Civil War* distorts the political meaning because myth inherently transforms history into something natural (Barthes 142–145). It's expected that a comic book will have super-powered melees, not that they will convey a political message related to current events.

Despite the seeming absurdity, this kind of "big superhero fight" is both symbolic and psychological evidence of what Americans currently accept as universal. In this historical investigation (even though these events are only two to three years old), we can see that modern *CA* still traces the borders of the American imagined community. We're willing to accept our participation in past war crimes, but violations of civil liberties and political corruption are not tolerated. We are equally unwilling to accept terrorism, even though the anti–Arab sentiment Dittmer describes seems to have dissipated and replaced by a fear of destructive technology in the wrong hands. Our xenophobia is instead directed at the specter of multinational corporations and institutions. Tying all of these limits together is the increasing awareness that evil comes from within, is an unconscious psychological condition, and that these symbols are merely partial manifestations of it.

Conclusion

The pre–World War II issues of *CAC* appear to be simple stories about a superhero fighting costumed criminals, but by placing them within the network of political discourses taking place in 1941, we can restore their historical significance. Contemporary issues of *CA* attempt a similar erasure of history, even more difficult to restore given our proximity to them. As time proceeds linearly, the symbolic characteristics of our unconscious fears evolve through the archetype of the shadow. Just within the text of *CA* we can see the different shape the imagined American nation takes today, opposed to its form in 1941.

Americans would find the villains of 1941 silly and even offensive if we inserted them into the modern text. For example, modern culture would reject Asian demonization, proving that it is no longer a limit to the nation. That Brubaker's modern comics disintegrate their own heritage by re-telling Captain America's Golden Age without these villains is the myth's defense mechanism against a political reading that would reveal America's potential for racism.

There are, however, several limitations to the study presented here, an unfortunate reality of an essay this size. First, a larger study would attempt to interview creators like Joe Simon, Stan Lee and Ed Brubaker to record their intentions when developing these villains. My suspicion is a Jungian one: that, regardless of the creator's purpose, these symbols of evil are manifestations of an unconscious Shadow archetype connected to historical and political events. Interviews would be helpful toward exploring that notion further.

Second, this essay ignores the food chain of comic book consumption in favor of an isolated reading of *CA*. Comic books are directed to a marginal audience, not the general American population, so how does a subcultural product reflect the imagined community of the entire American nation? An audience study could provide some useful insights to that dilemma, although, again, I suspect that the shadow archetype prevails over any attempts to market the comic to a subset of readers. The methodology used in this essay is not a precise barometer of what Americans think and do, but it is an indication of the shifts in what we can acceptably know, say and do. While I claim that this analysis traces the borders to the imaginary Andersonian concept of a nation, I would not argue that this "cartography" presents a complete geography of them. Given the fluid nature of that imaginary space, it may not be possible to ever fully complete such a map.

Finally, a true genealogy in the Foucaultian sense would include the World War II issues produced after America entered the war, as well as the gamut of *CA* comics from their return

in 1964 to the 2004 issues before Brubaker's run. Again, due to the limited space of this essay, a study of that magnitude wasn't possible. It is likely that this same methodology could produce similar insights about the American nation between the 1960s and the beginning of the post–9/11 era.

Comic book myths like Captain America contribute to the construction and maintenance of Anderson's imaginary community, defining the limited borders of that national space. This essay's analysis of 1941 confirms Jewett and Lawrence's theory that Captain America was an anti-democratic fantasy that didn't trust American citizens or institutions to combat either internal or xenophobic evils. The theory that comic book superheroes support conservative status quo also seems to hold up here. But while the analysis of the 2005–2007 issues demonstrates a similar distaste for institutional government's inability to secure the nation from threats, they're also highly critical of icons of capitalist democracy: corporations, transnational institutions and elected officials in American government. Captain America's struggle, prior to his death, is primarily against the actual infrastructure and citizens of the nation whose ideal values he symbolizes. That he was defeated seems to suggest that he did not represent the modern American ideal completely. Perhaps Cap was rejected because his pursuit of perfection is now understood to be an unattainable goal.

Notes

1. The "Golden Age" is comic book fan lingo for the period of publishing from the 1930s to the 1950s, when superhero stories first became popular. It also refers more specifically to World War II era superhero narratives featuring characters still written about today. The Golden Age is generally regarded to have ended with Frederic Wertham's congressional testimony and book *Seduction of the Innocent*, in which he alleged that comics contributed to juvenile delinquency. It was followed by the Silver Age in the late 1950s moving into the '70s.
2. Mitra Emad uses this Foucaultian approach with the hyper-sexualization of Wonder Woman's body in relationship to American ideology. Wolf-Meyer uses a similar framework with superhero teams and their inability to establish utopias despite the grandeur of their power.
3. Cap's ruse is to dress up as a female school matron, which has all sorts of implications for 1941 American idealism that this essay won't get into.
4. "Retcon" is short for retroactive continuity, comic book lingo for when an author changes previously established history in serialized fiction.
5. Not many comic book fans believe the Captain America myth has actually ended. Deaths of popular superhero characters have become so common that they're almost considered banal now. That every character that dies is somehow resurrected or replaced by a new version contributes to this cliché. Most readers expect the Steve Rogers/Captain America to be handled similarly, either raised from the dead or replaced by another character (at the time of this writing, the Winter Soldier actually fills the role). Despite his death, the Brubaker *CA* comic is still running, focusing on the supporting characters and how they deal with Cap's death. For the purposes of this essay, though, the death is still a symbolic end for the icon, and it works nicely when paired with his origin in 1941.

References

Anderson, Benedict R. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* New York: Verso, 1991.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1957.

Brubaker, Ed, and Michael Lark, et al., *Captain America, Vol. 5: 9*. New York: Marvel Comics (2005).

Brubaker, Ed, and Mike Perkins, et al. *Captain America Vol. 5: 22.* New York: Marvel Comics (2006)

Brubaker, Ed, and Steve Epting. *Captain America Vol. 5: 25*. New York: Marvel Comics (2007).

Brubaker, Ed, and Steve Epting, et al. *Captain America, Vol. 5: 1–6*. New York: Marvel Comics (2005).
_____. *Captain America Vol. 5: 11*. New York: Marvel Comics (2005).
_____. *Captain America Vol. 5: 18–19*. New York: Marvel Comics (2006).
Dittmer, Jason. "Captain America's Empire: Reflections On Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitic." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95 (2005): 626–643
Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane*, tr. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harvest, 1968.
Emad, Mitra. "Reading Wonder Woman's Body: Mythologies of Gender and Nation." *Journal of Popular Culture* 39 (2006).
Federal Bureau of Investigation. "33 Members of the Duquesne Spy Ring." F.B.I. History, Famous Cases (February 20, 2007): http://www.fbi.gov/libref/historic/famcases/spyring/spyring.htm.
Foucault, Michel. " Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, New York: Pantheon, 1977.
Gustines, George Gene. "The Battle Outside Raging In, Superheroes Dive In." *New York Times* (February 20, 2007): http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/20/arts/design/20marv.html?ei=5090&en=f07499cc0d5c031b&ex=1298091600&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1185466577-Kh6ypVuEIBPj83gqSwyFVg.
Holmes, Larry, Jonathan O'Beirne and Glenn Perreira. "Shocking Event For Captain America." CNN.com (March 7, 2007): http://www.cnn.com/2007/SHOWBIZ/books/03/07/captain.america/index.html.
Jameson, Frederic. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981.
Jewett, Robert, and John Shelton Lawrence. *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism*, Grand Rapids, WI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003.
Jung, C.G. *Jung In Mythology,* ed. Robert Segal. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.
Kinsella, Sharon. "Pro-establishment Manga: Pop-Culture and the Balance of Power in Japan." *Media, Culture & Society* 21 (1999): 567–572.
Kluver, Randy. "Comic Effects: Postcolonial Political Mythologies in the World of Lily Wong." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 24 (2000): 195–215.
Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*. New York: Shocken, 1995.
McAllister, Paul. "Cultural Argument and Organizational Constraint in the Comic Book Industry." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 40 (1990): 55–71.
Millar, Mark, and Steve McNiven. *Civil War* 1–7. New York: Marvel Comics (2006).
Rao, Aruna. "Nymphs, Nawabs, and Nationalism: Myth and History in Indian Comics." *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication (Multilingual Matters)* 7 (1996): 31–44.
Reynolds, Richard. *Superheroes: A Modern Mythology*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994.
Robinson, Bryan. "What the Death of Captain America Really Means." ABCNews.go.com, March 8, 2007: http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=2934283.
Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Message to Congress on Appropriations for National Defense," May 16, 1940, available from John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project [online]. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database) (February 26, 2007): http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15954.
Scott, Cord. "Written in Red, White, and Blue: A Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda from World War II and September 11." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 40 (2007): 325–343.
Simon, Joe, and Jack Kirby, et al. *Captain America Comics 1–3.* New York: Timely/Marvel Comics (1941).
_____. *Captain America Comics 5–7*. New York: Timely/Marvel Comics (1941).
Smith, Anthony D. "National and Other Identities." In *National Identity*, London: Penguin, 1991.
Stevens, Anthony. *Jung: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994.
Turrou, Leon G., and David G. Wittels. *Nazi Spies In America*. New York: Random House, 1939.
Washington State Department of Transportation. "Tacoma Narrows Bridge: People of the Collapse & Aftermath, 1940–1950," February 18, 2007: http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/TNBhistory/People/people2.htm#4
Wolf-Meyer, Matthew. "The World Ozymandias Made: Utopias in the Superhero Comic, Subculture, and the Conservation of Difference." *Journal of Popular Culture* 36 (2003): 497–517.

The Man Behind the Mask?

Models of Masculinity and the Persona of Heroes in Captain America Prose Novels

MIKE S. DUBOSE

"You can put the suit on anybody, but it's the man that makes the clothes."
—*American Graffiti*

"I am and can *only* be a man."
—*Steve Rogers aka Captain America*

While Captain America started out in comics form in 1941, since then, he has branched out to make appearances in other media, including television, film, television, and (for the purposes of this essay) popular fiction. In these novels, there is much that is the same about Cap. He still starts off life as a World War II draft reject.[1] He still undergoes a secret scientific experiment which gives him super strength, super durability, and enhanced intelligence. He still fights in World War II and is lost at sea while trying to disarm a Nazi missile. He still is found and revived decades later by the superhero team, The Avengers. He still joins The Avengers, and, both with that group of heroes and by himself, fights crime and super villains. There are, however, notable differences between the prose and the graphic version of Captain America, the most important being the disappearance of his civilian alter ego, Steve Rogers. In these books, while Cap still starts out life as Steve Rogers, once he assumes the role of caped crusader, that "normal guy" part of himself rarely makes an appearance. "Captain America" becomes his sole identity, and Steve Rogers fades to merely becoming a relic from times long since passed.

This is significant for several reasons. First off, a dominant and recurring theme in the comics is Cap's struggle to find a way he can be both hero and an individual. In the '60s, *CA* comics, after breaking up with his girlfriend, Sharon Carter, he has a crisis of identity, fears that he doesn't have anything personal to offer anyone, leaves the Avengers and New York, buys a motorcycle, and goes on a quest to "find himself" in issue *128*.[2] In the seventies, Rogers loses faith in the government and abandons the Cap identity entirely; instead, Rogers adapts the moniker of Nomad, "Man Without A Country," in issue *180*.[3] In the '80s, Cap is told by the government (in issue *332*) that he either has to work for them or abandon the Captain America identity; Rogers returns the Captain America uniform to the government and strikes out on his own in a quest to establish a separate identity.[4] The '90s relaunch of *CA* has Rogers battling his new celebrity status (dubbed "Cap Mania") because "Steve's the kind of guy who was born modest, but ... he honestly can't wrap his brain around this whole hero-worship

thing in the first place" (American Graffiti).[5] So, by abandoning Steve Rogers, the prose novels also abandon a dominant thread of the comic source material.

Of course, Rogers also isn't in either *The Avengers* comics or books, but that can be chalked up to the "way too many characters to develop any one of them in depth" syndrome. There's less of an excuse for this absence in the books. The three Captain America novels most clearly demonstrate the disappearance of the man/superman binary by eliminating Steve Rogers as a viable character. In the *CA* comics, the balance between Cap and Steve — that is, the balance between being a superhero and a regular guy — is a key theme. Moreover, the conflict between the warrior hero figure ultimately successful in battle against villains and the ordinary citizen struggling to lead a normal life is a defining feature of most superhero fiction in general (Klein 267). The Captain America novels, however, do not have this conflict, and without it, the books portray a relatively one-dimensional Cap. In these novels, Captain America is only the costumed guy, only the fighter of evil. He is without connection to the real world. All his friends (except *Captain America: Liberty's Torch*'s Colin Maxwell, about whom see below) are superhero friends who really only know him as Cap.

How can Cap really fight for and protect a way of life from which he is excluded? How can he be anything other than a bland, generic character? More importantly, for our purposes, what kind of hero is this? If he's a warrior, soldier, or hero only, he becomes essentially nothing more than the costume. Furthermore, what does it say about the world at large when our heroes are inhuman?

Cap in Novel Form

While Captain America first appeared in prose form with 1967s *The Avengers Battle the Earth-Wrecker* and has been a character in several more Avengers books (including 1979's *The Man Who Stole Tomorrow*, the 1999 crossover *The Avengers and the Thunderbolts*, and the 1999 crossover trilogy *X-Men & The Avengers: Gamma Quest*), there are three novels specifically dedicated to Captain America: 1968's *Captain America: The Great Gold Steal* by Ted White, 1979's *Captain America: Holocaust for Hire* by Joseph Silva, and 1998's *Captain America: Liberty's Torch* by Tony Isabella and Bob Ingersoll.

The first Cap novel is Ted White's *Captain America: The Great Gold Steal.* In this book, a man, mysteriously on the run, is shot down with a laser beam in front of Avengers Mansion. When Cap examines the body, he finds a chunk of gold with the Federal Reserve emblem on it ... obviously hack-sawed off a Reserve gold bar. Cap goes to the Federal Reserve main office, and, after questioning the supervisor,[6] examines the storehouse and finds a concrete escape hatch. After opening the hatch, he descends into a passage with two security guards. He eventually finds a chamber, is fired upon, subdues his attacker, and then the chamber is blown up in an explosion. Cap digs himself out of the rubble and returns to Avengers Mansion.

A female named Robin, who's in league with the gold thieves, lures Cap to UN Plaza for a meeting, and then the other robbery goons capture him. They take him to their hideout and leave him with her, where Cap eventually talks Robin into letting him go. Meanwhile, the rest of the crooks are moving the gold to a mansion in Staten Island owned by the mysterious man who hired them. Cap hides in their car, and when they get to the offloading area, he comes out to discover that the leader of the crooks is the Federal Reserve official he questioned earlier.

Cap manages to convince the robbers that their share of the robbery would be useless to them, since they were supposed to get paid in gold ingots, and gold in that form would be unspendable. The crooks all rebel against their employer, who, as it turns out, is the Red Skull. Of course, the Skull escapes on a boat, but that boat is overtaken by the Coast Guard and blown out of the water. As is usual for his appearances, however, no trace of the Red Skull is found in the wreckage.

Captain America: Holocaust for Hire is at heart another typical Red Skull caper. The Red Skull has kidnapped a scientist (and his daughter) who has developed a sonic gun that, via the power of vibrations, can destroy cities. Naturally, the Red Skull plans to use the weapon to destroy civilization as we know it and establish the Fourth Reich. The Skull tests out his weapon by destroying cities in Africa, Norway, and Brazil. He then works out of a chalet in Vermont until he is tracked down by Cap; the Skull captures Cap, blows up the chalet, and moves his operation to Skull Island in the South Pacific, but not before Cap manages to free himself.

Meanwhile, Cap and Nick Fury (who seem to be working together informally) take a tag team approach to solving the caper. In the process, Fury manages to get himself captured, and Cap comes in to save the day ... only to get captured himself, for the second time in the book. Then, as S.H.I.E.L.D. launches an invasion of the island, Captain America frees himself, attacks the Red Skull, pursues him to a helicopter, and trashes the helicopter in a fight. The chopper crashes into the sea, and Cap escapes ... but there is no sign of the Red Skull. Both Fury and Cap agree that the super villain probably survives, as he is (like most of his kind) hard to kill.

In addition, there are also two minor characters who are reporters for *Newsrag*. They are investigating the mysterious rash of earthquakes (the result of the sonic weapon). Of course, they are a man and a woman, who initially hate each other, but, after working together, being captured, and being rescued, they realize they love each other. These two serve very little purpose plot-wise (other than acting as cannon fodder), yet they are more developed characters than any of the heroes or villains.

In *Captain America: Liberty's Torch*, a detective writer (and friend of Steve Rogers) is writing a novel where the detective is investigating militias. The writer, as research, gets on the mailing list of a few militias (under pseudonyms) and learns that an extremely radical one called Liberty's Torch (run by a former arms dealer) is plotting to take over America. The writer goes to New York to warn Cap in person, but he is found by the militiamen, and they murder him.

Meanwhile, after working alone in Avengers Mansion, Cap decides to train with Falcon. While Cap and Falcon are running battle simulations in Harlem, they spot a building on fire and rescue the inhabitants. Afterward, Cap finds out about his friend's murder. During their investigation, Cap and Falcon discover that the Harlem fire is the first part of a terror scheme planned by the Liberty's Torch militia, who are hitting welfare providers as a cover for numerous robbery attempts. Cap and Falcon figure this out and bust a bombing/robbery at a free clinic. They bust a second bombing at the same site, but this attack is an ambush, and Cap gets captured. Cap is taken to the compound of the militia (Liberty's Torch), where he is put on trial for treason against America — the charge mainly being that he gave them hope in America, while foreign powers and welfare took their jobs and money. Cap is defended in this trial by a local Legal Aid lawyer named Mark Gruenwald.[7]

Falcon and a sympathetic militiaman (who is a well-developed, but ultimately inconse-

quential character in the plot) then mount a rescue operation and eventually find the compound where Cap is held. However, Falcon has to leave to stop Liberty's Torch from attacking UN war games. At his trial, Cap turns one juror, and in the resulting frenzy, defeats the militia single-handedly. As it turns out, Cap has also been escaping his cell each night to uncover the militia's plans.

In general, all of the Captain America novels are exciting reads and well-written (especially *Liberty's Torch*). Each of the books, however, is action-centered and plot-driven rather than focused on character development.[8] These novels are also all very male-centric, with the only female characters with any specific role in the plot being *The Great Gold Steal*'s female criminal Robin and *Holocaust for Hire*'s Caroline Crandell. These two are very passive characters, though, with the former being the least loyal criminal and the one Cap most easily convinces to give up (by merely talking to her), while the latter only really acts as a generic "damsel in distress" figure and is really only present to give the Red Skull leverage over her scientist father and over Cap during his first capture of the novel.

Even though these novels are male-dominated, the superheroes, who should be paragons of masculinity, come off as flat and relatively one-dimensional, while the most fleshed-out characters are inevitably the civilian hangers-on (such as *Holocaust for Hire*'s reporters or *Liberty's Torch*'s one good militiaman).[9] However, in terms of plot, these three dimensional civilians play very little active role and are in fact quite expendable in terms of moving the action along. Cap novels are entirely about masculine superheroes defeating their evil villains, and humanity be damned.

Real Heroes Are Real Men

The absence of humanity, of a civilian/non-hero persona in the Captain America prose novels is especially important because this absence paints a very particular battle over masculinity within the cultural category of heroes, which is itself historically dominated by males (Baker 28). The "hero-only" facade turns Captain America into a character who is only a warrior and not a human, and the absence of Steve Rogers specifically leads Captain America into symbolizing what Susan Faludi calls "ornamental masculinity," that is, a model of manhood overly dependent on symbols and appearance. In this version of manhood, masculinity is equated with celebrity and becomes "something to drape over the body, not draw from inner resources" (Faludi 35).

Because it stresses appearances and symbols, this ornamental masculinity leads to an almost fetishistic amount of attention on the iconic trappings of his superhero role, specifically his shield and costume. Without a civilian persona, Captain America is only a super-powered icon, the embodiment of America's might and glory This is opposed to the group-conscious masculinity typical of the ground-level World War II troops, who were "inclined toward a continuation of a common-man ethic ... [based on] a masculine ideal that revolved around providing rather than domineering" (Faludi 23). Without the presence of the ordinary man in him, Captain America is really just a celebrity, albeit one who could kick ass.

This, in itself, is not necessarily a problem. Society occasionally needs big, bad men to act as protectors, to defeat our enemies, to go and kick ass, and Captain America, in all of his configurations, was designed by the government to do just that. Superheroes, in their battles against a seemingly endless rogue's gallery of villains, certainly embody the ideals of what

R. W. Connell calls "masculine heroism," centered on strength and discipline (214). This definition of masculinity, centered around power, muscles, and the ability to defeat your enemies, whomever or whatever they might be, is particularly tied to the military (Dawson 145). This is fitting for Cap, as it was in a military experiment where he gained his superior muscles, agility, coordination, and healing powers. However, this type of masculinity by default works best in the absence of real humanity. In his analysis of the role of contemporary masculinity, Kevin Alexander Boon writes:

> In the aftermath of 9-11, firefighters and police officers were elevated to heroic status by the citizenry, despite the specifics of how they individually behaved. In the abstract, they were more than men. To maintain their stature as near-gods, public opinion had to ignore the actuality of these men's lives" ... and when a book on the cleanup effort did try and humanize these rescue workers, that study came under immense public protest for showing something other than a loving portrait of heroes [Boone 307].

When a society employs the one-dimensional definition of masculinity to its heroes, then, showing humanity is more than a distraction; it in fact can undermine the sense of manhood behind the hero.

Captain America in these novels is thus predominantly a hero figure, in a mostly male world, who embodies the ornamental masculinity (i.e., the outward symbols of a celebrity and iconic masculinity) while displaying the physical might of the masculine heroism ideal. This would not be a problem if it weren't for one other key feature of these books: in each of the Cap novels, he is kidnapped and held hostage — by mobsters, by the Red Skull, and by right wing militiamen.[10] The seeming ease the bad guys have in capturing Cap counteracts even the power of this masculine heroism. After all, how big and bad can this hero be if he is constantly a hostage?

What we are left with is a hero who, because he has no human side, is centrally about the display of masculine power, yet who has that power undermined every time he is held hostage. If there is no Steve Rogers, only Captain America, and if Cap does not indeed have the power to pull off missions without a hitch and therefore cannot fulfill the role of super human, what in fact is the character about? If you both remove the humanity and undermine the hero, what, if anything, is really left? How can you really be a hero when all you have are the left-over ornaments of a masculinity separated from both personality and action?

Does the Uniform Make the Man?

Holocaust for Hire has an amusing scene where Captain America, after rescuing the damsel in distress, takes the woman to a local doctor. The doctor is a little shocked at seeing such a strangely dressed man burst into his office and asks Cap about his choice of clothing:

> "Been to a party?" (asked the bald doctor, while washing his hands at the sink)
> "No."
> "Your costume wasn't for a party?"
> "No."
> "Just wear it for fun?"
> "My line of work calls for it" [Silva 88–89].

Cap's costume, though, is more than just an average work uniform; it is how the world knows him, and it is an outfit imbued with great meaning by Cap, by his military creators, and by the public at large. In the case for the prose Captain America as a demonstration of

ornamental masculinity, the costume is exhibit one, and indeed, the costume all but eliminates any other identity he might have.

From his origin, the Captain America costume was designed with symbolism first and foremost in mind rather than physical utility.[11] The most obvious symbolism was patriotic; in both *Holocaust for Hire* and *Liberty's Torch*, the costume was part of the effort to "make Rogers a living symbol of the people he served. Hope was, after all, as vital a component of the coming defense of the nation as were blood and iron.... And they gave him a name, one which would leave no doubt that he was the sum and substance of his country's dreams, hopes, and ideals. They called him Captain America" (Isabella 9–10).[12] The uniform then is intended as a synecdochic symbol, rhetorically connecting and equating Cap with the goals and dreams of the country.

In *The Great Gold Steal*, however, the costume more explicitly provides Cap with absolute separation from his civilian identity. When he asks his general, "Why can't I just be Steve Rogers, an American?" his commander tells him "We want you to be a symbol that every man can identify with. We want men all over this country to feel that beneath that mask, it could be them, it could be any American..." (White 30). In this case, the Captain America uniform, as well as having the ability to inspire hope and provoke fear (White 39), is actively designed to obliterate the humanity behind the mask. The parallels to the aforementioned 9-11 rescue workers are unmistakable, in that any associations with humanity can only hurt, and make him weaker as a hero.

After being the Captain for many years, most everyone in the novels can only see Cap *as* Cap; not even he really thinks of himself as Steve Rogers.[13] In *The Great Gold Steal*, the narrative states: "Captain America *was* his identity. It was only when he donned the tight-fitting blue uniform with its shield chest emblem, the red snug-fitting boots, and the heavy, yet pressure sensitive red leather gauntlets, that he began to feel real" (White 12–13). Likewise, in *Liberty's Torch*, Jarvis (the Avengers's butler) sees Cap with merely his hood down and ask him why he's "a little out of uniform" (Isabella 3). Later, when Cap is captured by the radical militiamen, they are under orders not to unmask him; when one of the kidnappers asks why, his compatriot replies, "General's orders. He says it doesn't matter who's under the mask. What's important is the mask itself and what it stands for" (Isabella 147). The disappearance of Steve Rogers under the Captain America identity comes to its ultimate level in *Holocaust for Hire*, where, outside of the book's retelling of his origin story, Cap's civilian persona never appears.

The level of Cap's separation from the civilian world is highlighted in *The Great Gold Steal*, when the Captain is captured by the band of robbers. These bad buys decide to unmask him, but they are shocked to discover that they have no idea who he is, because they've never seen his face before. Later, when Cap is left alone with Robin, the one female criminal, she asks him about the mask. His response is telling:

> Without it, I'm just another ordinary-looking man. With it, I become a symbol.... You no longer see me as a person, but as a thing—an Avenger. It can be a potent psychological weapon.... I've been anonymous all my life. Even my real name would be meaningless to you, to them. No, the mask is part of the uniform, a psychological device. That's the whole story. [White 101].

In this quote, Cap rationalizes not having a non-hero personality by saying that being anonymous helps his work specifically *by* dehumanizing him.

In the Captain American novels, then, an inordinate amount of attention is given to his costume, to the point where the man has become the uniform and the uniform has become the man. This is completely opposite of the standard superhero uniform protocol, where the

costume exists to shield the civilian identity (Jewett 29). This *is* fully in line with the concept of ornamental masculinity, however, where image and celebrity is more important than substance, and where "to be a celebrity, you had to be a marketable personality, your own brand name" (Faludi 154). Captain America's brand name is his superhero identity and costume, and with Cap, the uniform has taken on such importance that, for most people, nothing else is left. One has to wonder: does anyone at all know the man behind the mask?

Who Knows the Man?

If Captain America is only a hero and not a civilian, it would make sense that most of the people with whom he interacts are also his fellow heroes, and his total commitment to the hero role can, in this instance, only help. However, because he exists in a world with a large population of non-hero types (that is, normal people), Cap *has* to interact with normal people, even if his civilian persona is normally non-existent. Without a real person identity, how can he fit into a world from which, by adopting full-speed the ornamental trappings of the hero, he has distanced himself?

More than the other novels, *Captain America: Liberty's Torch* explicitly deals with Cap's struggle to interact with a world from which he is separated. The book starts off with Cap working on a computer in Avengers Mansion. After changing some computer codes, Cap opens up and begins working on his autobiography. Cap had been writing his life story for some time because "he felt he owed it to his country. He had no family, no heirs, and no estate. This book might be his only legacy" (Isabella 6). The book, however, only covered his existence as Captain America; it had to skip all of the "Steve Rogers" elements of his existence for reasons of national security. As a result of the "all hero and no human context" feel of the book, even Cap found the writing to be "lifeless" (Isabella 13).[14] And without this context, Cap can be nothing other than a uniform.

Liberty's Torch attempts to remedy Cap's lack of a human side by giving him a human friend, Colin Maxwell, a mystery writer. When Maxwell comes to New York for a book signing, Cap, as Steve Rogers, comes to get copies of his books autographed. The two hit it off, tour the city, and promise to stay in touch. Maxwell has no clue that Rogers is indeed a superhero, but he knows something is up and pegs him as "a man who understood secrets, knew the value of private things" (Isabella 24). It is only several months later, when Maxwell is planning another trip to New York, that he calls the number Rogers gave him and gets Avengers Mansion that he realizes just exactly *who* his friend is.

Maxwell is observant to know that his friendship with Rogers is most likely unique, that he was one of the few friends who knew the man, not the superhero:

> Shortly after that first meeting, Colin realized that, while Captain America had a good many friends in the government, law-enforcement, and super hero communities, the man behind the mask had very few. Steve's boyhood and wartime acquaintances were either dead or so old Rogers could not look them up, for fear of having to explain how he had remained so young. And most of the people Steve had met since his return knew of him as Cap. Only a select few knew the "real" Steve Rogers, and Colin prided himself on being one of them [Isabella 40].

In *Liberty's Torch*, then, Maxwell's main purpose, plot-wise, is to provide a human foil to the normally hero-only Captain America. By being a friend of Steve Rogers, Maxwell shows that there is indeed depth to Captain America, that he can be a fully rounded individual.

The problem is, however, that Maxwell's main involvement in the narrative becomes refo-

cused onto Captain America, not Steve Rogers. During the process of researching his next book, Maxwell gets involved with, and on the mailing lists of, several right wing militias and uncovers a plot to overthrow the government. He takes this plot so seriously that he travels incognito to New York, calls up Avengers Mansion, and arranges a meeting with Captain America (not Steve Rogers), because "[i]t was Captain America. Because, this time, he needed the legend. And so, he feared, did their country" (Isabella 40). However, before he can meet Cap, agents of the militia track him down and shoot him. Maxwell was the only character who knew Steve Rogers, and when he tried to cross the line and deal with both Rogers and Cap, he was killed off.

The death hits Cap pretty hard, because Maxwell represents Cap's only real tie to a life outside of crime fighting. After opening an e-mail from Maxwell, Cap finds himself alone with Sam Wilson, the Falcon, and has a moment to reflect on the death of his friend:

> Sam was one of Cap's closest friends; he knew the Captain as well as anyone, better than most. And, for the first time that day, the Avenger let his guard down. He could be the man, Steve Rogers, and not the legend. His voice cracked ever so slightly as, for those few precious moments, he talked about the friend he'd lost. Then it was back to business [Isabella 84].

What's notable about this passage is that although he can now supposedly be "Steve Rogers," he can only do that around another superhero. Wilson does address Cap as Steve, but it is with Cap that he traditionally interacts. Even the narration is telling, because Cap is referred to as "the Captain" throughout, not as Steve Rogers. Furthermore, after talking to Wilson for a few minutes, Cap returns to work as Captain America — the last vestiges of Steve Rogers have now officially been killed off.

After this scene, Steve Rogers only makes two brief appearances in the rest of the novel. The first is when he, on a whim, decides to visit the Statue of Liberty. It is somehow fitting that Rogers, a man whose personal identity has all but been erased by the symbolic costume he wears, goes to visit one of the more iconic symbols of America for inspiration. Rogers utters an oath to the statue to bring the militiamen to justice and then, before the scene even ends, becomes the Captain again in the voice of the narrative. From that point onward, Cap is the only one who appears until the bad guys have been defeated. Afterward, Cap falls into the background as Rogers attends Maxwell's funeral. At the service, "[t]he Captain wished he could have said something, but it was out of the question. He was there not as Captain America, but as Steve Rogers. To reveal the special bond he shared with Maxwell might put Colin's family at risk" (Isabella 279). While talking after the funeral, Maxwell's widow calls him Steve, but the narration quickly returns to referring to him The Captain. With Maxwell's burial, the Steve Rogers persona likewise is put in the ground.

In the end, then, the one person in the three Captain America books who knows him as Steve Rogers, who is a friend of the man rather than the superhero, dies a violent death. There's a parallel here to the role of gay characters in 1960s American cinema — characters who were killed off in large numbers because they threatened the status quo in some way (Russo 156). Colin Maxwell *had* to die, because his friendship with Rogers threatened to make Captain America fully rounded and human.

What's Left of a Man When There's Just Hero? A Conclusion

In *X-Men: The Chaos Engine Trilogy*, a cosmic cube passes from supervillain to supervillain, allowing each to remake the world according to their own whims, and the X-Men battle to

stop each tyrant in turn. After versions of Earth run by Doctor Doom and then Magneto, Red Skull gains possession of the cube and remakes the world in the image of the Fourth Reich, with himself naturally installed as Führer.

What's interesting for our purposes, however, is that, in this alternate version of Earth, the Red Skull turns Steve Rogers into the commander of a Nazi death camp. When the Skull, while wandering around his castle grounds, runs into Rogers, he notes:

> In appearance and demeanor, from the gleam of polished leather and pewter on his crisp black uniform to the swagger of his step, he was everything an Aryan should be — yet his roots were in the East Coast of America. A tragic mishap of geography, really — despite his intense hatred for him, even the Skull had to admit that the man made an excellent Nazi [Roman 678].

The appearance of Rogers, however, does not bring the Red Skull joy, because without his uniform, "the accursed shield-slinger was gone now, replaced by an obedient servant who presented no opposition" (Roman 679). Even for the Red Skull, his most omnipresent enemy, Captain America is nothing without his uniform. All that's left in this alternate version is a generic soldier.

This is important, because in his own novels, Cap is rarely seen out of his uniform. Cap relies on his uniform both to inspire people and to instill fear into his enemies; in either case, the symbolic aspect is what's vital. Ultimately, Cap tries to be a big, walking billboard for what's right in America through the symbolic power of his uniform while also bringing his warrior's training and super serum-enhanced power and might to solve any problems that his appearance cannot forestall. In theoretical terms, this translates into Cap using his ornamental masculinity with the threat of warrior masculinity to back it up. Simply put, Cap's power comes from his appearance first and from his muscles second.

In the Captain America novels, however, there are problems with this particular presentation of self. The level of stress on ornamental trappings is so strong that they have crowded out any other part of his personality. Too much of Cap is the symbol for him to be anything else — hence, the disappearance of Steve Rogers. Also, while people do still have the potential to break through the uniform barrier, the only one who actually does so (*Liberty's Torch*'s Colin Maxwell) has to die for the sin of knowing the man behind the mask. Furthermore, his repeated capture undermines his warrior masculinity; after all, how much of a warrior can he be when he's being held hostage? Granted, Cap does escape in all four instances, but in spite of these escapes, his captures still call into question the extent to which he can rely on his soldier skills.

Since his creation, Captain America's hero persona was designed to represent the ideals of the ultimate soldier, and the costume's symbolism is supposed to enhance that role. Yet if his physical might starts to wane — and the repeated capture scenes suggest just that — then all that is left is his image, his symbolism. Images and symbolism, however, are not enough with nothing to back them up, particularly in Cap's case, where the same symbolism has driven a wedge between him and the people for whom he's supposed to fight. Of course, Cap is and will still be a soldier, but the idea of a super soldier who is essentially isolated from the world is a scary one indeed. If Cap can't get close to civilians without them dying as Maxwell did, there is very little connecting Cap to the public he's supposed to serve. If Cap is supposed to fight for the American Dream but cannot have any real connections with that public, what is keeping him from turning into the "perfect Aryan" of the Red Skull's version of reality?

When you remove the humanity from a hero and undermine his heroic stature, you are

left with a soldier driven by symbols with which he has little attachment. You have a hero who by nature has to stand apart from society, even though isolated loner heroes have never been an American ideal (Faludi 10). Finally, you have a vision of masculinity that is based predominantly on fashion, symbolism, and the desire to be looked at.

The comic creators of Captain America point to the civilian identity of Cap as being the most important part of his character. This is very clear in an editorial:

> More than any character, Steve Rogers very much is the essence of Captain America. Take away that union suit and the ideals, beliefs, and personal motivations of Steve Rogers would remain unchanged. As Mark Gruenwald so effectively pointed out during his run, you can put the suit on anybody, but it's the man that makes the clothes [American Graffiti].

In these novels, the uniform is instead the dominant part of his character. The uniform in these books hides the man, distances him from his roots, and turns him into a generic symbol unconnected from any tangible referent. In these books, Captain America is less a human, less a well-rounded man, and more a walking ornament. Instead of the man making the clothes, in the prose Captain America stories, the clothes ultimately kill the man and doom anyone who manages to get close to him.

Notes

1. In most of these novels, his origin story is relatively consistent with that of the comics. *Captain America: The Great Gold Steal* is different in that Steve Rogers pre-super serum was a lawyer rather than the traditional scrawny art student. This seems to make little to no difference in the story, however.

2. This identity crisis is precipitated by Cap having to fake his own death in a ploy to hide his Steve Rogers identity, which was, at the time, public knowledge. After "killing off" the Steve Rogers as Cap, however, he realizes that there wasn't really much about Rogers to kill off "Can I truthfully say," he laments, "Steve Rogers was ever more than a name? Did he ever really have a life — a meaningful identity — to call his own? No! Ever since adulthood — I've lived under the all pervasive shadow of Captain America!" (Lee, *Captain America 114*). He then begins his road trip.

3. Rogers gives up the Captain America identity after becoming disillusioned with the government. Cap discovers a terrorist plot led by a Nixon-esque government figure and decides he can no longer be affiliated with America, but this only lasts for four issues.

4. During this storyline, the government gave the Captain America identity to John Walker, a genetically enhanced conservative redneck, while Rogers went on to fight crime as simply "The Captain." After Walker goes crazy and Rogers foils a Serpent Society plot to overthrow the United States (including a notable battle with Ronald Reagan, who had been turned into a reptile), Rogers is returned the Captain America uniform and identity in issue *350*. For an analysis of the '80s firing of Captain America, see my article "Holding Out for a Hero."

5. Early into this storyline, for instance, Cap sees a Captain America action figure and exclaims, "Being a soldier doesn't automatically make me GI Joe" (Waid *Captain America Vol. 3, 1*).

6. Cap, strangely out of character in this scene, is a real jerk to the official: "It delighted Rogers to shake the fussy little man loose for a moment from his tidy world" (White 47). This is, in the logic of the novel, somewhat justified eventually, when the official turns out to be in on the robbery scheme.

7. The real Mark Gruenwald was a longtime writer and editor for Marvel Comics, and his most notable work was a ten year run (1985–1995) on *Captain America*, where he was responsible for the aforementioned "Cap is fired" storyline. Gruenwald died of a heart attack in August 12, 1996, and this character is a homage to the writer.

8. That these novels seem to focus more on action sequences and less on plot development than the comics is admittedly a little puzzling, considering the constraints of each medium. One would think that comics as a visual medium would lend itself more to panoramic fight and chase sequences (the staples of action-oriented entertainment), while the increased space for narrative and the possibilities for internal dialogue in the novel form would make the books more character-driven than the comics. In fact, the reverse is the case.

9. The existence of civilian characters who are more well-rounded than the heroes also extends to the Avengers novels. In *The Avengers Battle the Earth Wrecker*, for instance, there is an Alaskan shaman, a New York City police officer, and a former hippie who is each more fully developed than all the heroes combined.

10. Cap, incidentally, is also captured and held hostage by Kang the Conqueror in *The Man Who Stole Tomorrow* and briefly pretends to be a hostage in *The Avengers and the Thunderbolts*. He manages to elude capture in *X-Men & the Avengers: Gamma Quest Trilogy* and in *The Avengers Battle the Earth-Wrecker*, but other superheroes are kidnapped in those books. Suffice to say, kidnapping and capture seems to be a recurring theme in Marvel novels.

11. This is not to say, however, that the uniform is without physical utility. In *Holocaust for Hire*, the Red Skull intends to kill the captured Cap by locking him in a room that has fire-spouting jets on the wall, thus incinerating the hero. Cap escapes by blocking the fire jets with his fire-proof boot (112–114).

12. *Holocaust for Hire* differs from the other novels in that Rogers, as well as coming up with the idea to operate as a superhero, designed the costume himself. In both *The Great Gold Steal* and *Liberty's Torch*, Captain America was a creation of the government. This seems to have little effect on the narrative, however.

13. This is also true in the Avengers novels, where Iron Man notes that while inside Avengers Mansion, "Captain America kept his own mask on, probably just from force of habit. Iron Man suspected that, after five decades of fighting for freedom, from the dark days of World War II through all the years since, Cap was more comfortable in uniform than out of it. His real name was Steve Rogers, Iron Man knew, but even his closest friends thought of him as Cap" (Cox book one, 39).

14. One could also read Cap's dissatisfaction with the Rogers-less autobiography as a comment on Cap's portrayal in the other novels where, as action-packed as those novels might be, they ultimately leave an impression of Captain America as just another bland superhero — interchangeable with almost anyone.

References

"American Graffiti." *Captain America* v. 3 n. 2. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1998).

Askegren, Pierce. *The Avengers and the Thunderbolts*. New York: Berkley Boulevard, 1999.

Baker, Kaysee, and Arthur A. Raney. "Equally Super? Gender-Role Stereotyping of Superheroes in Children's Animated Programs." *Mass Communication & Society* 10.1 (2007): 25–41.

Binder, Otto. *The Avengers Battle the Earth-Wrecker*. New York: Bantam, 1967.

Boon, Kevin Alexander. "Heroes, Metanarratives, and the Paradox of Masculinity in Contemporary Western Culture." *The Journal of Men's Studies* 13.2 (Spring 2005): 301–312.

Connell, R. W. *Masculinities,* second edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Cox, Greg. *X-Men & The Avengers: Gamma Quest Trilogy, Book One: Lost and Found*. New York: Berkley Boulevard, 1999.

_____. *X-Men & The Avengers: Gamma Quest Trilogy, Book Two: Search and Rescue*. New York: Berkley Boulevard, 1999.

_____. *X-Men & The Avengers: Gamma Quest Trilogy, Book Three: Friend or Foe?* New York: Berkley Boulevard, 2000.

Dawson, Graham. "Heroes of History, Heroes of Phantasy: Idealisation, Masculinity, and the Soldiers of Empire." *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture* 3 (Summer 1996): 145–160.

DuBose, Mike S. "Holding Out for a Hero: Reaganism, Comic Book Vigilantes, and Captain America." *Journal of Popular Culture* 40.6 (2007): 915–935.

Englehart, Steve, and Sal Buscema, et al. *Captain America 180*. New York, Marvel Comics (December 1974).

Faludi, Susan. *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*. New York: William Morrow, 1999.

Gruenwald, Mark, and Tom Morgan, et al. *Captain America 332*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1987).

Gruenwald, Mark, Tom Morgan, and Kieron Dwyer, et al. *Captain America 350*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1989).

Isabella, Tony, and Bob Ingersoll. *Captain America: Liberty's Torch*. New York: Berkley Boulevard, 1998.

Jewett, Robert, and John Shelton Lawrence. *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003.

Klein, Alan M. "Comic-Book Masculinity and Culture." *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993, pp. 234–280.

Lee, Stan, and Gene Colan, et al. *Captain America 128*. New York: Marvel Comics (August 1970).

Lee, Stan, and Jim Steranko, et al. *Captain America 110*. New York: Marvel Comics (February 1969).

Lee, Stan, and John Romita Sr., et al. *Captain America 114*. New York: Marvel Comics (June 1969).

Michelinie, David. *The Man Who Stole Tomorrow*. New York: Pocket, 1979.

Russo, Vito. *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*, revised edition. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Silva, Joseph. *Captain America: Holocaust for Hire*. New York: Pocket, 1979.

White, Ted. *Captain America: The Great Gold Steal.* New York: Pocket, 1968.

Guides

A Selected Webography

Fanfiction

Freedonia Paschall

There is no clear beginning date to fanfiction. Many feel that fanfiction has existed since readers first enjoyed novels and wanted more of their favorite characters. Certainly, the genre burgeoned with the developing internet in the 1990s, when writers found a quick and easy way to share their works with others. These eager, and often new, writers take their favorite novels, movies, television programs and graphic novels, and develop alternate worlds, plots, endings, etc. The works varies in length from a paragraph to a full novel. As to the quality of the fanfiction works, that too varies with each item. Subject matter is entirely up to the writer and can range from the "G-rated" to the very erotic. One website requires readers to register and state that they are over a certain age in order to proceed.

The following Internet sites contain fanfiction related to Captain America.

Battlemonger, Ray. "Captain America: Savage Land." http://www.fanfiction.net/s/2296676/1/Captain_America_Savage_Land. Our hero travels to Antarctica to capture two dinosaurs in order to return them to the United States. He hopes that a blood sample from one dinosaur will aid a comrade, while the second dinosaur will be used for research. Once there, he finds that he must battle Kraven the Hunter (Sergei Kravinoff).

Bigb220. "Hope." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/2121334/1/HOPE>. Poetry.

Caia. "Five Times Steve and Sam Kissed." <http://www.marvelfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=157&chapter=1>. This story details the five times that Steve Rogers and Sam Wilson (Falcon) kissed. The final kiss ends as Sam visits the dead body of Steve and promises that Captain America won't die, even if he has to take on the role.

_____. "Just a Little Cold." http://www.marvelfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=32&chapter=1. Steve Rogers and Sam Wilson have the common cold. The Avengers are speedily infected, as well. In spite of their illness, they are called upon to fight evil and do so in an unusual manner.

_____. "Like a Building Thunderhead." <http://www.marvelfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=33&chapter=1>. Following the Superhuman Registration Act, Sam Wilson is undercover. He meets Steve at the headquarters of S.H.I.E.L.D. Once Sam convinces Steve to get some rest, they fall into a homosexual encounter. This is definitely a mature storyline.

_____. "Lovebirds." <http://www.marvelfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=37&chapter=1>. Under a spell, Cap was transformed into a bald eagle, Sam into, what else, a falcon. As with other stories by this author, the two superheroes have an intimate relationship.

_____. "Organizing Mutual Esteem." <http://www.marvelfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=43&chapter=1>. Steve Rogers, Sam Wilson and Sharon Carter are held captives at S.H.I.E.L.D. in a room with a large bed. Their captor, Nick Fury, will let them go after Tension and Hostility Reduction Exercises Encouraging Serenity in an Organization of Mutual Esteem (THREESOME). The outcome is perhaps inevitable.

Calavicci, Chrissy. "2030." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/3858656/1/2030>. The story is set in 2030 and Steve Rogers/Captain America is just being defrosted to face a world that is totally alien to him.

Cap808. "Building a Better America." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/3140798/1/Captain_America_Building_a_Better_America_pt_1>. Captain America faces the Foreign Legion, made up of Batroc, Mandarin, Merrano and the Man-Ape. Cap is assisted by Chipper, who provides information from the control room.

Cap Writer. "What if Captain America Woke Up in 2099?" <http://captain-america.us/articles/cap2099.html>. In this alternate version, Steve Rogers receives the Super Soldier serum after he receives news of his brother's death in the Middle East. After he successfully ends the war, he returns to the United States and a medical check-up, only to die under anesthesia. He awakens in the year 2099 only to find the world much changed.

Danrilor. "Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/2041785/1/Captain_America_Sentinal_of_Liberty>. The author uses this novel-length work to spin the tale of a boy named Steve who becomes Captain America (the novel is 23 chapters and waits for a final chapter). The reader learns of Captain America's history through a series of flashbacks and retelling of his story to Bernie. In this version, Captain America learns of Bucky's homosexuality shortly before the sidekick saves the day by blowing up a plane that they are on. This story certainly keeps the reader's interest although the number of characters can be, at times, confusing. The work is well-written and leaves the reader ready for the next chapter and final chapter.

Destroythemeek. "And You'll Take to the Sky." <http://www.marvelfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=318&chapter=1>. This story begins in 1934 as a teenage Steve Rogers has a homosexual encounter with his friend, Arnie.

_____. "The Past is Gone (But Something Might be Found to Take its Place). <http://www.marvelfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=73&chapter=1>. Steve has temporarily moved in with Tony Stark while his apartment is being repaired. When the two superheroes rely on each other to relieve the tensions and the despair, they fall into a romantic encounter.

Elspethdixon. "Heroes." <http://www.marvelfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=333&chapter=1>. The author uses short vignettes to describe a series of heroes, beginning with Captain America.

Kirke. "Adam and Steve." <http://www.marvelfanfiction.com/viewstory.php?sid=311&chapter=1>. In this story, Cap is bisexual and in love with a man.

Lewiscooper. "Routine: A Captain America Story." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/3234438/1/Routine_A_Captain_America_Story>. Set in World War II, Captain America is on a mission to destroy enemy munitions bunkers, but finds something totally different. This is a short, but moving story.

Lord of the Monkeys. "The American Dream." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/2298108/1/The_American_Dream>. After saving a young man's life, Steve must choose his future: Death or Morpheus. Should he finally have his rest in death or is there another alternative?

Metaltron, Derek. "What If: Bucky and the Avengers." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/3851700/1/What_If_Bucky_and_the_Avengers>. The title says it all — what if Bucky were frozen in ice in the place of Captain America?

Nation's Voice. "The Eagle and the Devil." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/2639375/1/The_Eagle_and_the_Devil>. Set in World War II, this novel gives the details of Cap's rescue of men caught behind enemy lines. This work is not yet completed.

Paladin Steelbreaker. "Just Another Day in the Life of Steve Rogers." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/2622564/1/Just_another_day_in_the_life_of_Steve_Rogers>. In this work of fanfiction, Steve Rogers is in the process of renewing his passport (in the police department), when he meets Buffy Summers, the Slayer. She is the female version of the super soldier, but has the serum naturally in her body.

Summers, Scott. "Choice." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/3085065/1/Choice>. Cap has a moment of introspection as he weighs the pros and cons of the Superheroes Registration Act.

Valor107. "Captain American vs Batman." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/3188538/1/Captian_America_VS_Batman>. In this short story, Captain America clashes with Batman. The story could have used some help with grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Wolvbm. "I'm Sorry." <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/4022278/1/Im_Sorry>. This short piece of fanfiction has Maria Hill meeting Director of S.H.I.E.L.D., Tony Stark as she visits Captain America's statue after his death. Unfortunately, grammatical problems interfere with the enjoyment of the story.

A Selected Filmographic Essay

Cord Scott *and* Robert G. Weiner

> I'm just one man, one man who has dedicated his life to the ideals of freedom, justice and equality. I represent the American Dream — the notion that human beings should have the opportunity to better their lives and attain their noblest aspirations
>
> — *Captain America*

The Captain America Serials **(also known as the** ***Return of Captain America***) **(1944). Republic Studios: Distributed by Serial Squadron DVD; Video Treasures/Anchor Bay. VHS. Directed by Elmer Clifton.**

The Republic studios attempted to bring Cap to the silver screen in the mid–'40s and for the most part it was admirable. Directed by Elmer Clifton, who also did the notorious anti-marihuana film *Assassin of Youth* (1937). It was also the first time that the comic book was utilized in a different medium. Costume wise, Cap looks close to the comics. The two biggest differences one notices is that the name and occupation have changed (in the serials his name is Grant Gardner, and he is a district attorney), and that he does not carry a shield. If one looks closely, the original lozenge shaped shield of *Issue 1* has been placed on his belt buckle.

In appearance, Captain America is not quite like his comic book persona. He is not muscular, but simply looks like a guy in a costume. While it does give him a realistic feel, the comic book version looks like he had been altered by a serum into the epitome of physical perfection. Gardner seems far less imposing. What Cap does not have in physical attributes he makes up for in sheer bravado. He seems to be a man of means, with a nice car, a plane, and other items readably available for his use. He also seems to be somewhat loose with interpretation of the law and evidence. Often times, shooting and the bodies of dead criminals seem to be everywhere, especially in his apartment.

What is somewhat disturbing is how Cap carries himself in the serials. He is armed with a pistol, and has no compunctions about using it. In fact he plays a kind of Russian roulette when trying to extract information from a bad guy: he spins the chamber, cocks the pistol and then pulls the trigger to a click. As the bad guy says that the gun is loaded, Cap says, "I know." It seems more in place with the Winter Soldier/Cap psychology of the current series.

Another disturbing aspect is that Cap is known by others, and that they all share this cavalier attitude. His assistant/love interest, Gail Saunders, packs a gun as well, and both characters carry around evidential items everywhere. In one scene, both characters try to expose the bad guys by having them smell a highly influential potion that allows the bad guys to control and manipulate others.

Captain America does kill bad guys (as he does in the 1940s comics), but the manner in which he does gives him the appearance of being a type of person who metes out justice for the helpless and vengeance for the guilty. In a way, it seems like Cap has been taken over by the Punisher, and the ultimate end for all villains need to simply die—no trial, no appeals, simply death.

The villains are similar to the comic books in that they are bent on mayhem and riches regardless of what they need to do. The chief villain Dr. Maldor (played by the great Lionel Atwell) has the requisite monocle (although unlike the comic books he is not German). His henchman Gruber has the look of a Nazi villain, but again nothing is mentioned of spies or the like. In fact, the one who seems to have the most psychopathic elements is Maldor's other assistant, Matson. The blind obedience to Maldor seems akin to that of villains to another nameless leader. However, no mention is ever made of the Nazis or fifth columnists.

What is interesting for the villains is that they have an almost Hydra-like quality to them. They have radios and are in constant contact with one another; their network of those willing to do what is needed to forward the goals of the "Scarab" is wide; and the technology that is utilized by the groups is far in excess of that used by mere common criminals. For example, the head of the Scarab group, seemingly mild mannered museum curator Dr. Maldor, has a pilot's license, as well as a Cessna equipped with multiple bomb racks. Interesting, considering that any subversive activities would be scrutinized by federal authorities at that time. The gang also has items that allow it to gain on the forces of good. For example, Scarab uses a remote controlled truck (which can be driven from their headquarters).

The serials also give insight into the war years in America. Gardner tools around in his car with an "A" gas ration sticker. This is important as chases are vital to the war effort. General Douglas MacArthur's portrait is hung in the office of the mayor. Gail has a pilot's license, and in addition to her pistol packing nature, she is a liberated woman. Captain America's other assistant, Will Davis, is a whiz at finding out all sorts of clues through scientific deduction.

The story lines also seemed to mirror the early Captain America comic books. For example, the later series refers to a perpetual life machine, which involves a serum, electroshock, and a dose of high temperatures. It is very similar to the story, "the Lord of Death," in which an evil scientist designs a "di-namo fluid" which allows vagrants to operate as zombies who cannot be killed for 24 hours.

In all, the character seems to show a morality that is more akin to the phrase of rough men willing to do whatever is needed to win, rather than upholding the rule of law. It definitely fits into the times in which the serial was made. People had seen the futile attempts by leaders, such as British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, to deal with enemies through words, negotiation, and honor. Captain America in the movies seems to be one who wants to beat the bad guys with their own tools.

***Captain America* (1966 Cartoon). Marvel Enterprises, Gantray-Lawrence Animation-Famous Studios: Distributed by 20th Century-Fox (VHS), Best Film and Video (VHS). Writers Stan Lee and Jack Kirby; various directors.**

Of all the movies and serials that have portrayed Captain America, none is more accurate to the movie than the 1966 Captain America cartoons. The cartoon utilized the actual panels of the comic books (albeit with limited movement), and even followed several of the original comic book story lines. While the first two episodes dealt with the creation of Cap's

infamous foe, the Red Skull, there were some deviations, but those were limited in scope. For example, the secretive Agent 13 (known as Sharon Carter) is introduced in the Red Skull episode. The origin of Red Skull even discusses the original person, Mr. Maxon, of Maxon aircraft, who is a profiteer who goes under the name Red Skull.

Perhaps the best hook of the movies is the theme song. While the other movies played patriotic sounding music, the Cap cartoons had a theme song with lyrics.

Really, how can one go wrong? As for Captain's sidekick Bucky, even his history is delved into a little more. Bucky is a teenager (something not as defined in the comic books), and he has gone through a process of training that has been several months in duration. Again, it is more akin to actual military training, and not just superhero training.

As the features continued, Captain America is joined by the Avengers. What is of interest is that the women show a wanting of Captain America, as well as a veiled sexuality which was evident in media in the 1960s. The character of Captain America is wrought with issues, however. For example, in the episode, "Return of Captain America," Cap is distraught to see a young Rick Jones, a teenager who assists the Avengers. Rick looks uncommonly like Bucky, and Cap cannot deal with the loss of a colleague. Cap suffers further psychological damage in the Revenge of Captain America, where he seeks to avenge Bucky. It is why he does not like partners.

In another episode "Midnight at Greymoor Castle" the plot line is quite similar to the early Captain America comic stories. Again, some of Cap's history is revealed. In that story, we find out Cap is an accomplished pilot, and that the evil Dr. Rawlings has turned against his country, and bombards Bucky with the mysterious "Z-Rays." Fortunately, Dr. Rawlings realizes the nature of his evil ways, and dies having redeemed himself somewhat. Several of the issues took known villains and utilized them. Another favorite was Baron Zemo, who, in this episode Zemo and the Masters of Evil, is running a world cabal of villainy. Unfortunately, Zemo comes off as a spoiled five-year-old, and his henchmen fare little better.

The story lines also tied in Captain America to other professional units. In "Doorway to Doom" Cap ponders joining the CIA. But after fighting the evil (unstated Communist) Commissar of Sinkhan, he realizes he needs to be with the Avengers. In "the sleeper shall awake" Red Skull buries three items that will remotely activate 20 years after the end of World War II. They will merge and attack all that is good.

Finally, in the episode "The Girls from Cap's Past" we learn a little more about the woman that Cap was in love with, the French partisan who eventually was Sharon Carter (aka Agent 13 of S.H.I.E.L.D.). Cap never learns her name but is obsessed with finding her, and finally meets Sharon and puts the items together. Some of the other nefarious groups (Hydra, A.I.M.) are introduced, but it is somewhat limited in scope.

Interestingly enough, the last episode "The Red Skull Lives" featured the use of the cosmic cube, and how the Red Skull can effectively use it on Captain America.

The story line from the 1966 cartoon ties into the current "Death of Captain America" storyline.

***3 Dev Adam* (1973). *Also known as 3 Mighty Men and Captain America and Santo vs. Spider-Man.* Released by Renkli. Onar Films on DVD. Directed by T. Fikret Ucak.**

This is probably the weirdest Captain America related film ever released. It was made in Turkey where copyright laws are very different than in the U.S.Basically, they used the

characters in an unauthorized way, but nobody really cares that much anyway. *3 Dev Adam* is the kind of movie that is just aching for the Mystery Science Theatre 3000/Rifftrax/Cinematic Titanic treatment. It is so bad that for some it is unwatchable although in small doses this movie is entertainment, but watching it in one sitting is unbearable.

Captain America and Mexico's superhero/wrestler, Santo, fight the Turkish version of Spider-Man, who is evil and has a gang of thugs. We actually get to see Santo beat up a bad guy and then *steal* from him. Spider-Man is the bad guy in a green costume and loves the ladies (in various soft-core scenes). The movie uses the theme music from the James Bond flick *Diamonds are Forever*. Cap and Santo have to stop Spidey from stealing all these priceless statues throughout Istanbul. This film is not for the kiddos, as it is violent, full of sex, and lots of stupidity, but watching it with a group of adults can be fun. The recently released DVD by Onar Films is limited to 1,200 copies with English subtitles and special features include interviews with Aytekin Akkaya (Captain America) and T. Fikret Ucak (director). http://www.onarfilms.com/.

Captain America (1979). Universal Television: Distributed on MCA Video (VHS). Directed by Rod Holcomb. Originally aired on CBS.

In the 1979 version of *Captain America,* the good Captain has developed in familiar, yet unfamiliar ways. Steve Rogers (played by Reb Brown, who starred in the legendary creature feature *Sssssss*) is a former Marine, who is summoned by Dr. Simon Mills, to answer some questions. Dr. Mills is a former colleague of Dr. Rogers, Steve's father, and creator of the original super steroid formula, which was called the Full Latent Ability Gained formula (F.L.A.G.). Unfortunately, the formula only works on the Rogers genetic line, otherwise it will burn out the recipient.

Rogers is very polite, until "enemies of good," who threaten to detonate a neutron bomb unless they are given a large amount of gold, attempt to kill him for the second time. Then, F.L.A.G. is administered to Steve while he is recovering from the second attack, and he finally comes to terms with being Captain America, a moniker that belonged to his father.

This movie is interesting in that it takes some themes popular in the comics and expands them. In the movie, Steve is an accomplished artist, akin to his comic book role of graphic artist. He is polite, and even soft spoken, when dealing with those around him. He worries about becoming Captain America, which would give him added powers, but, more importantly, added responsibilities. Rogers openly worries about what would happen to the innocent if they are hurt.

Since the costumed Captain America only makes his entrance 75 minutes into the 98 minute film, it is apparent that this was meant to be the first part of a greater theme of movies. Indeed, the second movie, *Captain America II: Death Too Soon*, came out later that year. Brown does look the part of Cap in the physical sense. However, the color scheme of the uniform is not exact, and it is often detracted by the odd motorcycle helmet with painted wings and a large "A." The motorcycle that Cap uses is consistent with the story line of Steve being a former motocross rider, but is not like the comic book Harley-Davidson. Dr. Mills seems more in the vein of Nick Fury, rather than Dr. Reinstein. At the end of the movie, the original uniform scheme is re-introduced, and Captain America is off on his new adventures, complete with a stylish van.

***Captain America II: Death Too Soon* (1979). Universal Television: Distributed on MCA Video (VHS). Directed by Ivan Nagy. Originally aired on CBS.**

Reb Brown's second turn at playing the good Captain is considerable better than his first. There is more action in this film and it has a brilliant performance by Christopher Lee as the villain Miguel. Brown is a little more believable this time out even though he still only dons the costume sporadically. Again, much of the comic book folklore has been thrown out for a new story. A scientist, who has been working for the government on a project dealing with the reversal of aging, is kidnapped by the terrorist, Miguel. He forces the scientist to create a formula which forces rapid aging, and threatens the United States that he will make everyone elderly before their time. In typical villainous fashion, he wants one thing, money! When the government does not respond to Miguel's requests, the formula in the form of a fine mist is sprayed over Portland Oregon, and the damage begins. It is up to Cap to stop Miguel and get the antidote.

When Rogers begins to investigate the source of a particular chemical that is needed for the formula, he winds up in a tiny town. Everyone in the town seems bent on getting rid of Rogers, who is asking pesky questions, but then he meets a woman (who becomes the love interest) and finds out that the town is being held hostage by Miguel. Rogers is still baffled as to where Lee's terrorist is hiding (in one fine stroke of writing the hideout is right on American soil). Rogers plays detective and find out just where the terrorist operates. As Captain America, he breaks into the place, and zooms through the hallways on his motorcycle Eventually there comes the showdown between Captain America and Miguel and in typical villain fashion, Miguel utters the "we could have been good friends" line to which Cap replies "I don't think so."

Despite any cheesiness and crazy plot points, one must say that Reb Brown does look like Steve Rogers. His motorcycle is pretty darn cool looking and the scenes with it are fun to watch. Brown's portrayal of Rogers/Cap is also full of kindness (especially at the beginning, when he defends the elderly folks who were being terrorized by a gang of thugs). Of the three major *Captain America* feature films, this one stands as the best. This film received theatrical release in France as *Captain America: France*.

***Captain America* (1990). Marvel Enterprises, Jardan Film, 21st Century Film Corporation; distributed by Columbia Tri-Star Home Video (VHS). Directed by Albert Pyun.**

This particular adaptation contained some strange yet recognized traits from the Captain America story lines then and now. Although originally intended for a theatrical release, it was only released on video and laserdisc in the U.S. but the U.K. did indeed get theatrical showings. Directed by Albert Pyun (*Brain Smasher: A Love Story*). *Captain America* does have some Hollywood talent (Ned Beatty, Darren McGavin, Bill Mumy, Ronny Cox) in spite of it being reviled by fans over all the world. Matt Salinger (the son of *Catcher in the Rye* author J.D. Salinger) plays Steve Rogers (Captain America).

The movie starts with the creation of the Red Skull in 1936 in Portovenere, Italy. The scientist has changed from the male Dr. Reinstein/Erskine to the female Dr. Vicelli. While the Germans are interested in this new formula, which will double mental and physical strength twice over, it is the Italians who invent it. Vicelli flees to America after seeing what the Axis powers do to the child/future Red Skulls parents. Her formula is developed to help American invalids. In the movie, Steve Rogers was stricken with polio, and walks with a limp. His mother (and presumably relations and friends) gather for his departure for parts unknown.

The concept of Project Rebirth is there, as are references to "Bernie" Steve's love; Sharon, Bernie's child, who shows interest in Cap later on, and most importantly, U.S. President Tom Kimball, who as a child saw Cap thwart a rocket launch at the White House at the end days of World War II. That incident helps to lead Kimball on a path of "doing what is right."

What was perhaps the more interesting aspect of the movie was that while Red Skull was a plotting industrialist (who is responsible for most of the major assassinations and unrest in the last 50 years), most of the true violence in the movie came from his daughter, a red haired firebrand willing to kill for her father. This story line in the movie is parallel to the current "Death of Captain America" story line, in which the Red Skull's daughter Sin helped to orchestrate Cap's death.

The president is captured, but even when the chance to escape is offered; he notes that he "is not bailing on Captain America." Perhaps that one line is symbolic of all the Captain America movies: he still represents an ideal to us all, and we simply cannot allow the symbol to go away.

***The Ultimates* (comic book adaptation, DVD, 2003). Released by Intec Interactive/Marvel Enterprises. Directed by Claqudio Osorio.**

The digital comic book DVD was literally a panel by panel adaptation of the *Ultimates* comic, written by Mark Millar and Brian Hitch. What makes this different from the comics is that the stories are "brought to life" with the use of voiceovers and sound effects. Cap is given a retro upgrade in his appearance, in which he appears far more martial in appearance. While the story line is covered in both the Captain's origin, and the basic attitude of Captain America, the story does change a little. His temper is more violent at times, although with reason. For example he notes that Bruce Banner, after rampaging Manhattan as the Hulk, is a part of the team, and that even after the rampage is over, he is still a part of the team. He then tells Banner to have the cuts on his face treated. Banner says what cuts, to which Cap boots him in the head. Certainly not the most honorable way to treat a prisoner, but it did show that Cap is human and a moral compass on the team that the others look to. The DVD contains a documentary on how Marvel comics are made and a "live" version of *Avengers 1.*

Captain America in the *Ultimate X-Men* Volume 5 (comic book adaptation, DVD, 2003). Released by Intecinteractive/Marvel Enterprises. Directed by Claqudio Osorio.

The use of Captain America in this comic book DVD is interesting as well. Captain America and the Avengers are sent to track down all mutants after the Brotherhood (a mutant group lead by Magneto) blows up the Brooklyn Bridge, killing 800 people. After Magneto makes a statement taking responsibility for the act, the Avengers are sent out to detain all mutants, including the X-Men for their role in hiding Magneto for rehabilitation. In the DVD adaptation, Cap shows a certain awareness, even ordering the Avengers to shoot at Rogue as she is trying to talk the Avengers out of pursuing them.

What is of interest was how the story line of Wolverine and Captain America was woven in. Cap identifies Wolverine as the then James Howlett of the First Canadian Parachute Battalion, who served with Cap during World War II. Later on Captain America uses a gun on Wolverine (a violation of his ethics) to stop him. Cap even notes that it is time to "kick some heads in." This DVD features a history of the *Ultimate X-Men* and "live" versions of *Giant Size X-Men 1* and *Ultimate X-Men 1.* The company Intec Interactive is now defunct.

Captain America in *Ultimate Avengers* (2006). Marvel Studios: Distributed by Lionsgate (DVD). Directed Curt Geda.

As with many other comic book characters in recent years, cartoons depicting the comics have become more popular and common. For Marvel, the hit comic mini-series, the *Ultimates* by Mark Millar and Brian Hitch spawned the cartoon of the same name. In this cartoon as well as its successor, the characters take on a new look, attitude, and life.

For Cap, the storyline is similar to the comic: he has a retro look from World War II, and is knocked into the ice following an attempt to stop a German nuclear missile launch. What is of interest is that the WW II Cap has his old diamond shaped shield, and he actually eviscerates a German by the name of Kleiser. This would have been far more disturbing had Kleiser not in fact been an alien of the Chitari race. Cap is frozen and all is seemingly lost.

Forward to today, to a time when Dr. Bruce Banner is working to recreate a Super-Soldier serum. Cap is found in the ice, and it is assumed that although he is dead, his DNA may yield clues to the serum. In fact Cap is alive, and has to deal with the shock of being thrust 60 years into the future. As he deals with the loss of all around him, his core values of patriotism and righteousness are appealed to by Nick Fury with the classic line, "You haven't lost everything. You still have your country." From this point on, Cap takes on a life as a moral compass with a kind of purity that others of the Avengers do not seem to have. He is a teetotaler, unlike Stark the consummate drinker, and he seems to be above human contact for whatever reason.

As he has been many times in recent years, Cap is made out to be someone with naïve views. At one point, Henry Pym, the Giant Man, asks Fury: "Who do you have in mind to lead this scout troop?" The concept here is that people are not willing to do the gritty fighting to win. Others like Banner, have a shrine to Cap and his accomplishments, and it further isolates Cap. He noted at one point "I volunteered [for the Super Soldier Project] to serve my country and to have a normal life. Now I'll never have one." It is only after much soul searching, a need to destroy an old enemy [Kleiser], and a meeting with an old flame that Cap seems to adjust to the new world around him.

Captain America in *Ultimate Avengers II: Rise of the Panther* (2006). Marvel Studios: Distributed by Lionsgate (DVD). Directed by Will Meugniot.

In the sequel to the *Ultimate Avengers* movie, the Avengers continue to search out the Chitari on Earth. This quest takes them to Wakanda, where The Black Panther lives and rules. Apparently, the Chitari are after a meteorite that landed in the area. All sides want the meteorite, as it means power for the Chitari, and material for weapons to defeat the Chitari for the people of Earth.

Cap shows himself to be a man of drive to the point of obsession, when he declares that he will "kill Kleiser." Kleiser is dressed in a ceremonial Schutzstaffel uniform, which was never used in combat. Yet Cap is not dressed in his usual 1940s garb. His boots are high-laced paratrooper boots, he wears a combat belt, and his uniform is very militaristic in form, unlike his original costume.

Throughout the movie, Cap shows his moral center as one superior to others. When asked by Iron Man why Cap disarmed the nuclear missile that imprisoned him in ice for 60 years, Captain America shows that sacrifice was necessary for the greater good, even if it led to his death. Iron Man cannot comprehend this sacrifice, as it seems almost pointless.

For the story line, the Chitari are ultimately defeated, and the Wakandans are shown as a noble race of great need to earth. At the end of the movie, Captain America even shares a romantic moment with Natasha Romanoff, the Black Widow. This seemed to harken to a détente of U.S. and Russian powers. For one who may have read the comic book mini-series, it seemed odd. In the comic series, Cap dates Janet Pym, the Wasp, following the end of her abusive relationship with her husband Hank. In the comic book (unlike the film) Cap deals with Hank by beating him up, thereby invoking the rule that one does not hit women. Cap is seen throughout the movie as a symbol of morality in an age of self indulgence, akin to the Romans at the vomitorium.

***Captain America* (2008). Distributed by Dam Stuhltrager Gallery. Directed by James Leonard. Starring Lazzarus. http://www.damstuhltrager.com/ (80 min.).**

This is not a movie *per se*, but it could be the most interesting Captain America related video piece. Over 600 hours of production and post-production time went into this labor of love as actor and lifelong Captain America fan, Lazzarus, and director, Leonard, worked to craft this videowork. Basically, Leonard has created a novel of epic proportions on film — a

Lazzarus expounding on Captain America's history in James Leonard's art piece *Captain America* (courtesy James Leonard).

book on film. Done as an art piece for gallery exhibition, it is formatted in a rotated letter box, in which the gallery version of the portrait stands vertically and echoes longstanding traditions in portrait imagery.

In this video, Lazzarus sits on a chair, and relates over 60 years of Cap's history in a conversation style that is easy to listen to and watch. Six versions of Captain America are included (Steve Rogers, Spirit of '76, Commie Smasher, John Walker, The Patriot, and Isaiah Bradley). The various Bucky's (Fred Davis, James Bucky Barnes, Jack Monroe), the different Red Skulls (Albert Malik, George Maxon, Johann Schmidt), and the Skull's various guises (Dell Rusk, John Smith etc.) are also present.

What makes this work of art truly remarkable is how well Leonard's script puts together Cap's sixty plus years of history into such a short period of time to make a seamless whole. It starts at the beginning with Rogers and Operation Rebirth/Professor Reinstein, and keeps all the major events in tack (Zemo, All Winner's Squad, Commie Smasher, Avengers, Falcon, "Streets of Poison," The National Force, Nomad, Winter Soldier, Civil War). It ends just before the death of Steve Rogers.

The current high definition version is being remastered for a limited edition of 25 numbered copies. Leonard was able to write and produce this work through a grant residency from Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn Community Access Television, and Brooklyn Information and Culture. The artist/director is using the medium of video/storytelling to describe the yin-yang of storytelling and myths of heroism by laying out Cap's long history and all the contradictions entailed therein. These contradictions are what drew Leonard into working with this particular subject matter. Parts of the work are available for viewing at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZoqprDXS-A.

A Selected Bibliographic Essay

Academic Literature

Jason Dittmer *and* Robert G. Weiner

> America is made up of a multitude of different ethnic groups, each of which has had its own part to contribute to American Culture. Be proud of your heritage, but never let that pride make you forget that beneath it all, we are all human beings who have the same wants and needs and deserve the same respect and dignity.
>
> — *Captain America*

Aciksoz, Esin, Ata Refaiddin, and I. Gokhan Karaca. "Captain America as the Captain of Consciousness." Published online (July 14, 2008). http://fef.baskent.edu.tr/amer/conferences/conference3/EsinRefaiddinGokhan.pdf.

This paper is a conference paper, and as such is written in a rather unfinished style, and probably in the authors' second language. In places it is rather inaccessible. The purpose of the paper is to show Captain America as an instrument of American ideology. The reference in the title to 'Captain of Consciousness' is a reference to the hegemony over the mind, as described by Stuart Ewen in his work on advertising. The paper begins with a discussion of the original Viper and his view of propaganda and advertising as two sides of the same coin. The authors appear to be making a connection between the comic book, *Captain America*, as a form of advertising for America itself, and the villainy of Viper within that comic book. The authors then move on to a discussion of the legitimation of gender and racist inequality, as well as militarism and violence, in the pages of *Captain America*.

An initial discussion of Captain America's origin is somewhat confused by the authors' contention that the supporting cast of Captain America's book are all members of the Avengers (including Sharon and Peggy Carter). Iron Man is also discussed as a member of the Avengers and a symbol of American imperialism. A brief sketch of the Red Skull and the Serpent Society leads, confusingly, to a discussion of the Falcon as a symbol of the abjection of African Americans as second-class citizens in America. A slightly stronger argument is mounted that focuses on Sharon Carter and Leila (the Falcon's one-time girlfriend) as experiences of gender differentiated by race. The article abruptly concludes by noting that Captain America has at times been in conflict with the U.S. government itself.

Burkhardt, Todd A. "Operation Rebirth: Captain America and the Ethics of Enhancement" in *Philosophy Now,* 64 (November/December 2007): 8–10.

This publication has a cover story on Captain America and the ethics surrounding creating real-life super soldiers. The author, a major in the U.S. Army, argues that the creation

of super soldiers would be morally acceptable under certain circumstances, as long as there was a "supreme emergency" and an "evil ... which negates our right to autonomy" as a nation. Certainly in World War II, this was true of the Nazis, and it would have been fine ethically to have created a real super soldier.

The author calls the process a "somatic cell enhancement" which would be beneficial to our nation in times of crisis. He brings up Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative argument, which, on the surface, might seem to be against such a process, but ultimately, taken to their logical end, Kant's theories would justify the creation of super soldiers.

Steve Rogers knew the risks involved in partaking in the Super Soldier program, and since the Nazis threatened the right of autonomy to millions of people around the world, Cap's creation in the real world, would have been justified. In this case, it would have been fine to "play God."

Carpenter, Stanford W. "Truth Be Told: Authorship and the Creation of the Black Captain America" in Jeff McLaughlin, ed., *Comics As Philosophy*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2005: 46–62. ISBN: 1578067944 (trd); 1604730005 (pbk).

This paper approaches comic books as artifacts, not texts. This is meant to preclude the multiplicity of analyses that an audience-centric approach might allow for. This seems to be the result of the author's own history as a comic book creator, and of perceived problems of audience interpretation in his own work. Thus, to highlight the importance, processes, and constraints of comic book authorship, Carpenter interviewed the creative staff behind the *Truth: Red, White, and Black* storyline to see what their inspirations, influences, and compromises were. This is particularly interesting in the context of generational change in the comic book industry, where racial minorities are moving into positions of leadership in a medium that often has a checkered past (as was the case here). The paper begins by outlining the narrative of *Truth*, and connecting it to the famous Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, which the editor, writer, and artist each mention as common inspiration. Axel Alonso, the editor of *Truth*, is generally opposed to a reading of the work as identity politics, instead arguing that the idea for re-developing the origin story of Captain America was the publishers, but that he pushed for it.

It was Bob Morales, the writer, who fleshed out many of the details. It was a difficult story to write, he said, often depressing enough that he had to leave the project alone for weeks at a time. Morales argued for three points, but only got two of three — with Marvel interceding to make sure that Isaiah Bradley (the Black Captain America) was a victim, a la Tuskegee, rather than the leading scientific mind, a la Reed Richards. However, Morales did get to keep Bradley in a strong marriage and to have him live into the present in a brain-damaged state. Morales did argue that the story is reductionist, a function of the lack of space that complicated the research that Morales did on black life during wartime, which called out for a thick representation.

The artist, Kyle Baker, wanted to draw the comic in a way that would appeal to hip-hop audiences. This decision did not endear *Truth* to traditional comic book audiences, however, and this dovetailed with a general disdain for many Captain America fans for the idea that there was a Captain America before Steve Rogers. The comic was further complicated by the actual drawing of black heroes, who are difficult to have stand out from the background during action sequences. Nevertheless, Kyle Baker, the artist, was excited about the opportunity to give a positive representation of black identity. The chapter concludes with a reiteration

of Carpenter's contention that audiences should not have a privileged position in scholarship, and thus he calls for more ethnographic research of this type.

Carter, James Bucky. "There'll Be Others Converging": Fighting American, The Other, and "Governing" Bodies. *International Journal of Comic Art*. Vol. 6: 2 (Fall 2004): 364–375.

This article highlights the importance of the body in any analysis of the Fighting American, a hero created by Simon and Kirby in the mid–1950s. This character can be seen as a "re-boot" of a Captain America type figure by creators who were alienated from their own product (Captain America). The author proposes that Simon and Kirby intended for the virile body to be seen as the seat of American power, while enemies of the United States in the comic (usually Russian) are weak and disfigured.

The author adopts a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective in arguing that the virile body is a protector of the ego, thus buttressing identity from the threat that the Other poses. The Fighting American in particular seems to be a likely case for psychoanalytic treatment because the character is a fusion of two brothers — the mentally superior Nelson and the physically perfect Johnny. When Nelson's brain is put in Johnny's body, it is Johnny's identity that continues-consuming his alter ego. The author argues that this indicates Simon and Kirby's view that the essential part of American power is physical rather than intellectual, and failure to recognize that is itself weakness. In Lacanian theory, however, you cannot escape your alter ego, and although Nelson is never heard from again, the Fighting American's enemies all resemble him in their feminized, withered bodies and their intellectual plots. Later, Kirby would argue that this was all satire, but that does not seem to be indicated in the comic books themselves. Indeed, the highly gendered aspects of the narratives are continued during a brief revival in 1966.

Another key element of the texts is that the enemy is denied its own identity. Despite being indicated as obviously Russian through the use of stereotypes, the texts go to great lengths to avoid mentioning the Communist villains' country of origin. This effectively denies the Other the dignity of interpellation. The author concludes that by always constructing the Other as the subject of the Fighting American, Simon and Kirby effectively robbed the Other of equal status. This nexus of naming, masculinity, and the author's claims that the body is a key site, should be investigated further in regards to American patriotism and Otherness.

Coetzee, J.M. "Captain America in American Mythology" in David Attwell, ed., *J. M. Coetzee Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992: 107–114. ISBN: 0674215176 (trd); 067421584 (pbk).

This essay is a semiotic/psychoanalytical reading of Captain America. Despite the edited volume's publication, in 1992, the essay itself is from 1976. Therefore, by the time it was reprinted, it was quite dated. Many of the insights appear to be true of most heroes, not just to Captain America, and, indeed, some of the essay reveals a superficial, or even inaccurate, understanding of Captain America and his history. It begins by focusing on the physicality of Cap, and in particular the Hitler-esque angle at which he is often portrayed. This contributes to a reading of Captain America as a phallus, with his rippling over-endowment of muscle being more than a match for his equally distended opponents. The author then contrasts this Captain America with the "cowed" Steve Rogers, who is the anxious partner of "teenage girlfriend Sharon Carter." Through his life as Captain America, Rogers can reject women, and take refuge in his life as a "courtly knight," living a life of discipline and questing. The

dynamism of Captain America in motion marks him as a fully autonomous Guardian of the Republic, not battling crime, but evil.

The author makes various connections: S.H.I.E.L.D.—as a "dirty" warrior organization; Cap—as an ideological warrior presenting his work as just "a job" (thus glorifying the working class), and as a man fighting against domestication by Sharon Carter (who "wants love and marriage, a steady income, respectability"); and Nick Fury—as a father/elder brother figure ("Lancelot to Captain America's Galahad"). Then the author plunges into a section outlining the idea of Captain America as an American form of Gothic literature. In its totality, the essay is quite disjointed, and seems to be based on a shallow reading of the comic book.

Cremins, Brian. "Why Have You Allowed Me to See You Without Your Mask?": Captain America *133* and the Great American (Protest) Novel, *International Journal of Comic Art*. Vol. 4: 1 (Spring 2002): 239–247.

This paper focuses on the concept of relevance and attempts in the 1970s to make comic books socially relevant. To do so, it looks at one issue of *CA* (*133*) and uses the frame of the protest novel (e.g., *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). This issue of *Captain America* is about a villain's attempt to gain the support of the people of Harlem by clearing the slums in which they live and forcing the landlords to rebuild. When Captain America intervenes, he is put in the uncomfortable position of having the residents cheer for the villain against him.

The author explores this from the standpoint of fantasy—what fantasies are fulfilled by reading this comic book? How does capitalism commodify the fulfillment of fantasies? The author proposes that comic books cannot do justice to complicated issues, such as those raised in this comic book, but nevertheless argues that raising the issue serves an important purpose. However, previous critiques of the American protest novel have problematized this notion as an example of social consumerism. That is, the act of buying and reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or *CA 133*, serves as an act of "ritual purification," thus anesthetizing the reader from engaging in any sustained political effort to right the wrongs. The author continues by pointing to evidence from the letter-to-the-editor columns in *CA* to illustrate how effective *CA* was in making at least some readers politically aware—they were, in fact, key to some readers' social development. This form of retrospective audience research enables some tentative conclusions to be made about the political opportunities that socially relevant comic books provided for young readers growing up in trying times.

The author concludes by calling for further research to be conducted on the relevant comics of the 1970s, research which explores exactly what kinds of fantasies are fulfilled through their consumption: the desire for superpowers, or the desire for white catharsis?

Dittmer, Jason. "America is Safe While Its Boys and Girls Believe in its Creeds! Captain America and American Identity Prior to World War 2." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 25 (2007): 401–423.

The field of geography is just now beginning to see the relevance of popular culture materials as a source for gauging geopolitical and nationalistic tendencies. The political context of comic books, particularly *CAC*, provides rich primary source material for such studies. Captain America is clearly a representation of American political ideology. He provided a role model which young people, especially in the 1940s, could emulate as an "explicitly American superhero."

The article briefly gives a history of the creation of Captain America and his relation to

Superman and the Jewish-American experience, just before the U.S. entered World War II. Captain America, whose uniform was designed to invoke American patriotism and values, rivaled Superman in popularity. Despite this, he remained a "flexible" icon of the nation who changed throughout time, as nationalistic roles have changed.

The article looks, in detail, at the first 10 issues of *CAC*, and provides expert analysis of villains and racial stereotypes during the pre-war and war years. Villains were often portrayed as freaks, or as having some kind of malaise, while Steve Rogers was the "idealized" American in form, race, features, and principles.

In *CAC*, the American Fifth Columnists were in respectable avenues (e.g., the first Red Skull was an industrialist who sold out to the Nazis). While Germans were portrayed as buffoons, some German-Americans were considered better than Asians, and both the Chinese and the Japanese were portrayed as "sub-humans," with extended fangs and freakish features. Russians were also seen as odd and otherworldly, but the British, were "generic" allies of the U.S., and were considered friendly. The comic book industry helped to shape U.S. policy before the war, and helped usher in participation in the war, long before Pearl Harbor. The "geopolitical script" of *CAC* provides a unique glimpse into American nationalism.

_____. "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post 9/11 Geopolitics." *Annuals of the Association of American Geographers*. 95: 3 (2005): 626–643. Also available online at: http://courses.eas.ualberta.ca/eas499/Urban%20social%20geography/Dittmer_911.pdf.

The author looks at how comics can be a useful tool for understanding geopolitical scripts and ideas. He particularly argues against the idea that comics are only juvenile literature without cultural relevance. Popular culture can be, and is, a useful tool in understanding and constructing geopolitical identities. Using Captain America comics as a guide to understanding patriotic identity, the author makes an excellent case for comics as true reflections of political ideologies at any given time in history. Cultural warriors like Michael Medved have paid attention to Cap's storylines, which again justifies the importance of these kinds of fictional characters in the study of culture and geopolitics. *CA* stories can, and do, provide insight into how Americans construct their identity.

The author interviewed Stan Lee for this essay, and compares Cap's stories to those of Horatio Alger. Unlike Superman, who represents the immigrant's American, Captain America is a homebred American. The author goes into detail on the history of Cap and his lack of a role in Vietnam, but focuses on Cap's response to the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Captain America serves as affirmation of territorial desecration on American soil. The author also describes how the word, Homeland, is and has been, historically, distasteful to most American sensibilities. The "American bread" town of Centerville and Cap's clash with this town's al-Tarq's terrorists is discussed and described in detail. Captain American even mulls over the "validity of the dominant geopolitical narrative" during this encounter. By focusing on Rieber's run on the title, the author shows not only the uniqueness of Captain America in the world of superheroes, but also how he represents the "idealized American" and responds to 9/11 as the most human and American of superheroes.

_____. "Fighting for Home: Masculinity and the Constitution of the Domestic in the Pages of *Tales of Suspense* and *Captain America*" in Lisa M. DeTora, ed., *Heroes of Film, Comics and American Culture* (forthcoming, McFarland.)

This essay describes in detail how Captain America and the American home front America are the central theme throughout the comics. The author analyzes the first ten issues of *CAC* and Cap's role in World War II. He describes how the Jewish creators of Cap saw the dangers of Hitler long before America entered the war. The comic book industry was engaged in what has been termed by one scholar as "popaganda:" the combination of popular culture mores with official governmental policies. Before the war, comic book sellers could sell to both isolationists and those patriots who could see world catastrophe on the horizon. Captain America changed all this, and he become a hero who rivaled Superman. By being dressed up in an American flag, with an American shield, Captain America became the most patriotic of superheroes. He represented American beauty and ideology all wrapped up in one man. But Cap did not have any time for the women who swooned over him, as he was focused on saving America from the Nazis and the immediate problems associated with the conflict. Captain America stories also taught American soldiers how they were to behave and the attitudes they should have.

The author then describes Cap's reboot in *ToS* and *CA* in the 1960s, and tells how, although Cap stories still focused on the war, he was an heroic character that young comics readers could identify with. World War II still invoked heroic imagery and positive feelings among Americans. The Cold War and Communism were a little too distant, politically, for readers to believe Cap could be involved, and the Mcarthyesque "Commie Smasher" issues of the 1950s failed. Later, Cap felt like a man out of time, and often in the stories of the 1950s Cap regaled his colleagues, the Avengers, with stories of his previous adventures with Bucky.

Cap only had three "adventures" in Vietnam and none of these involved any political warmongering. Sometimes, Cap goes in and rescues folks, and is not doing the government's bidding in these cases. The author quotes from a letter writer who praises Marvel's lack of political stance with regard to Vietnam in the Cap books.

The author then concludes that Cap's attempts to find a personal life, as Steve Rogers, end up more often than not with the Captain America persona taking over. No matter how hard he tries, the man in the mask and the image are always lurking. Cap cannot really establish a normal civilian life.

_____**.** "Retconning America: Captain America in the Wake of WW II and the McCarthy Hearings" in Terrance Wandtke, ed*., The Amazing Transforming Superhero! Essays on the Revision of Characters in Comic Books, Film and Television*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007, 33–51. ISBN: 078643189X.

The author looks at the changing concept of what America is and what it stands for, through the *CA* comics. He invokes Antonio Grammsci's concept of "coercing loyalty" from the populace, and explains how this works in popular and national culture. Serial narratives, like comics, can be a valid way to show how national personas are constructed and used, and certainly Captain America is one of the best examples. Popular culture reflects national character, and Captain America is an emblem of the American standard.

Dittmer compares the three major, distinct Caps: the 1940s American propaganda version, designed to boost morale before and during World War II; the 1950s Red baiting version; and the more idealized American version, during the 1960s and 1970s. The 1940s version of Cap was created to be a personification of the American loyalist sentiment. Captain America was not supernaturally powered, *per se*, as many other heroes were; instead, the basic message was that America's "super soldiers" are unique instruments of "national policy." The

1950s Cap was purely against *all* communists, but he failed to garner commercial appeal. During the 1960s, Cap became a kinder, gentler superhero, who fought racism and injustice wherever he saw it. The author describes him as a "New Deal Democrat." Cap became a "symbol of the American Ideal [and] the American Dream" rather than a voice of the U.S. government.

The 1970s brought about a retconning (a "retroactive change in continuity") of Cap, by bringing back the "Commie Smasher" Cap of the 1950s (who was different from the real Cap, Steve Rogers). This Cap ingested a version of the super solider serum that made him go crazy. This "Commie Smasher" views Steve Rogers as a traitor, and acts like a "fascist." He was brought back in 1979 as a leader of a racist group known as the National Front, but he was being manipulated by Cap's nemesis, Dr. Faustus. When finally brought out of his "racist trance," the 1950s Cap committed suicide, rather than betray his "true" American patriotism. The author points out that the message in these *CA* books is that racism is un–American, and that Captain America now stands for social justice as an American principle. The deliverance of the "Commie Smasher" Cap also shows that the fact that it is possible for someone to be redeemed, despite whatever mistakes one makes, is an American idea.

_____. "The Tyranny of the Serial: Popular Geopolitics, the Nation, and Comic Book Discourse." *Antipode*. 39: 2 (April 2007): 247–268. Also available online at: http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118485828/abstract.

This paper argues for the legitimacy of geographical studies of comic book stories to tell us about various kinds of national identities. In the past, comics have been dismissed from geographical and scholarly study, merely being seen as fodder for children, but the author makes an excellent case for its use in geographical studies and scholarly literature. Dittmer focuses on the serial nature of comic stories and how those stories construct a kind of national identity. He begins by pointing out that the U.S. government produces comics to help the military learn their jobs and to boost morale (as in the case of the war in Nicaragua against the Sandinistas). He also mentions other "state" morale boosters, such as the Egyptian AK Comics and the series *The 99* to promote positive views of Islam.

The author argues for the "Tyranny of the Serial," in which mainstream comics serve as political texts that share geopolitical characteristics. Two comic book series are analyzed and discussed: DC's *The Watchmen* and Marvel's *Captain America*. Three types if continuity found in comic book series are discussed in detail: serial, hierarchical, and structural. Storylines are kept real enough that regular fans will keep buying, but occasionally within a limited series, a certain amount of creativity beyond traditional modes of operation and continuity enters into the narrative.

The *Watchman* series takes a freer approach because it is a limited story without years and years of continuity to hinder its approach. Therefore, in it many of the traditional "superhero" type story arcs are not adhered to. The collected story is considered to be the greatest graphic novel of all time. *The Watchmen* in some ways, according to the author, is more humane and realistic than most superhero literature, but even within that series one can find certain frameworks that correspond to other stories (e.g., the *Incredibles* movie adopted a motif from *The Watchmen*).

The author spends most of the essay discussing the comics and character of Captain America. There are several subheadings including: 1) Captain America as Space of Legitimation, in which Cap serves as a "territorial symbol"; 2) Captain America as a Lefebvrean Moment

(based on the theorist Lefebvre) in which Cap is an anthropomorphic personification of American national ideology; and 3) Captain America and (Anti) Nationalism. This section looks at several stories in which Cap has to fight the anti-nationalist Flag Smasher. The author looks at how the Smasher's lack of geopolitical identity contrasts with Cap's blatant Americanism. There has been plenty of study on serialized texts, like the *X-Files*, *Lost*, and *24*, and the resurgence of popular serial stories like Harry Potter and *Left Behind*. However, comics also provide an excellent way to find insights into geopolitical and nationalistic ideas about the world and popular culture at large.

Dorrell, Larry D., and Carey T. Southall. "Captain America: A Hero for Education?" *The Clearing House* 55:9 (May 1982): 397–99.

This short piece discusses a high school program in which comic books were placed in a junior high school library with affirmative results. The goal was to attract more students to the library and heroes like Captain America provide a superb role model for students to read about. Comic books also showed to be helpful teaching aids.

DuBose, Mike S. "Holding Out for a Hero: Reaganism, Comic Book Vigilantes, and Captain America. *Journal of Popular Culture*. Vol. 40: 6 (December 2007): 915–935.

This article sketches a broad argument regarding the portrayal of violence and its legitimacy in comic books. It does so by comparing the domestic and international politics embodied by President Ronald Reagan with portrayals found in Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, and Mark Gruenwald's tenure on *Captain America*. This article begins by presenting Reaganism as a generic term for the ideological package presented by Reagan, the most relevant of which was his ability to hide his relationship with authority by adopting a folksy, cowboy persona that always presented him as an outsider. This portrayal was mirrored in the popular culture of the time, which questioned traditional roles of heroes as defenders of morality, and arguably advocated hard line responses to violators of law and order. This paper relies on a distinction between police vigilantes who fight for the system from beyond its reach, and vigilantes who refuse to be co-opted by the system.

The Dark Knight Returns and *Watchmen* are provided as examples of vigilantism that serves to provide order through alternative means. Captain America is introduced as a counterpoint to these darker tales. As a traditional Boy-Scout hero, Captain America seemed ill-positioned to react to the 1980s Reaganism *Zeitgeist*. However, the 1980s marked a dramatic turn in the hero's life, as he struggled to adopt a less Manichean system of morality. Often, when battling villains, such as Every Man or Flag-Smasher, Captain America takes action, not as a result of his opponents ideology, but because of the violent way in which those ideologies are presented/imposed on the public. The article then documents the saga of Captain America's resignation in the face of governmental pressure as an example of his rare diversion into vigilantism, which represents the Captain's recognition of the ambivalence of his legitimacy. Ultimately, it is seen to rest on his superior morality; even when the government claimed his costume and title, he carried on, fighting for his version of the American dream.

Jewett, Robert, and John Shelton Lawrence. *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil*. New York: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002. ISBN: 0802860834 (trd); 0802828590 (pbk).

This book is an exploration of zealous nationalism (i.e., a fusion of religious jeremiad with national identity), and its parallels to religious fundamentalism in the Judeo-Islamic-

Christian world. The goal of purging a space of evil and evildoers is a common thread that connects American crusades against Indians in the Old West, the present War on Terror, and Islamist Terrorism. The book is not entirely critical, however, as it also offers forth the tradition of "prophetic realism" as a more humane potentiality.

Fans of Captain America will be most interested in the preface and first chapter of this book, which use the character of Captain America as a symbol of the divided nature of American identity—both the peaceful and law-abiding "City set upon a Hill," which is paradise on earth, and a zealous crusader, meant to purge the entire world of sin and evil. The authors refer to this schizophrenia as the "Captain America complex." Indeed, the authors use the example of a 1999 Captain America story to illustrate how popular culture often propagates the forms of American zealous nationalism that are passé in elite circles. The authors conclude that given Captain America's muscular assertion of American exceptionalism, it is perhaps time for him to retire.

MacDonald, Andrew, and Virigina MacDonald. "Sold American: The Metamorphosis of Captain America." *Journal Of Popular Culture*. Vol. X: 1 (Summer 1976): 249–258.

This article's main thesis is that the character of Captain America has changed, from the 1940s through the 1970s, to reflect changing American values. Further, Captain America serves as an example of the way in which popular culture icons can be quickly rendered obsolescent, if they are not able to evolve to match shifting moods and ideas within the United States.

The authors primarily use decades as the unit of time over which Captain America changes (e.g., a World War II Captain, a 1950s Captain, a 1960s Captain, and a 1970s Captain). After outlining the origin of Captain America, the authors describe the World War II Captain America as one interested mostly in destroying threats to liberty from outside the U.S. (i.e., Germany and Japan). In the 1950s Captain America returns as "commie-smasher" Cap, intent on uncovering Communist spy rings. The authors deem this a false metamorphosis, with a later retconning of the story illustrating that this was actually a different Captain America than the one featured in the 1940s issues. In the 1960s, the real Captain America has returned, this time, however, as a man out of his time. Most of the issues during this time have an introspective tone, with memories of Bucky's death never far from the Captain's mind. To overcome this, Captain America seeks comfort in organizations such as S.H.I.E.L.D. and the Avengers. The Captain America of the 1970s becomes more and more disillusioned with his job, going through what in academia later became known as the crisis of representation. He becomes increasingly aware that America was more diverse than he had recognized, and aware that his experiences were not those of, for instance, his girlfriend, Sharon Carter, or his African American partner, Sam Wilson. Eventually this culminates in the Secret Empire storyline and his resignation (for a time) from his position.

The authors argue that Captain America is a good summary of the changes in the United States; somewhat problematically, they conclude that he reflects the increasing sophistication of the country itself, stating, "Captain America moves from an almost rural simplicity to an urban complexity."

Mitchell, Jane P., and Joseph D. George. "What Do Superman, Captain America, and Spider-Man Have in Common? The Case for Comic Books." *Gifted Education Quarterly* 11: 2 (1996): 91–94.

The authors argue that one can use comic books in teaching gifted children positive ideals.

In particular Captain America, Superman, and Spider-Man provide a basis to teach excellent moral principles about life. Comic books and superheroes should not be seen as just fluff or garbage because they do reflect certain value systems that can be useful teaching tools.

Oehlert, Mark. "From Captain America to Wolverine: Cyborgs in Comic Books, Alternative Images of Cybernetic Heroes and Villains." In Chris Hables-Gray, et al., *The Cyborg Handbook*. New York: Routledge, 1995: 219–232. ISBN: 0415908485 (trd); 0415908493 (pbk).

The author looks at comic book cyborgs and analyzes the roles these characters play in popular culture and the psychological impact they have on readers. Captain America is seen as the first "genetic cyborg" since he was created for a specific purpose, as a super soldier. The author views Cap as a character who sees violence only as a last resort, and describes this creed as a "throw-back to a different era." The character Supreme is compared to Cap, and their similarities and differences are discussed in detail.

The chapter gives a brief history of Marvel comics and the various cyborg-like characters created over the years, including Deadpool, the original Human Torch, Cable, Iron Man (who because of his tie to technology to keep his heart alive is considered cybernetic), Omega Red, Dr. Doom, Wolverine, and (in great detail) the Vision. There are pictures of Deathlok (a true cyborg, if there ever was one) and the Sentinels (ala X-Men), but they are not discussed in the text. Man-Thing is mistakenly referred to as Swamp Thing.

Other characters discussed include Stormwatch's Weatherman One, Battalion, and Deathtrap. There is a discussion of the three types of cyborgs and how, in many of the stories, humanity is lost because too much control is given over to the machine, rather than the humane, aspects of consciousness. Comic readers prefer the darker, more violent characters like Supreme, Wolverine, and the Punisher. Also, in the cybernetic future of comics, the multi-national corporation rather than the government is the biggest evil.

Scott, Cord. "Written in Red, White, and Blue: A Comparison of Comic Book Propaganda from World War II and September 11." *Journal of Popular Culture*. 40: 2 (December 2007): 325–343.

The author argues that comic books have always served as a form of propaganda, and that over time they have served, among other roles, as a venue for citizens to express their support for their country through consumption. This first originates in a major way during World War II, when Germans usually were portrayed with monocles, thick accents, and aristocratic demeanors and names; Africans were portrayed with exaggerated physical features and passive attitudes; and Asians, especially the Japanese, were portrayed as evil. Chinese were sometimes differentiated. Women were portrayed as beautiful and in need of defending. Men, therefore, served as active agents of protection.

The Jewish creators of comic books lead to an early position in favor of intervention, with even Dr. Seuss (Theodore Geisel) advancing the Allied cause. Once the war was underway, the comic book producers often teamed up with the Office of Wartime Information to coordinate their propaganda with other forms. It was difficult to write comic books during the war, because they had to be in sync with wartime developments.

The first wartime patriotic hero was the Shield, who worked with J. Edgar Hoover to protect the American population from spies and sabotage. His powers, given by exposure to chemicals, hinted at the eugenics that was gaining popularity at the time. Another hero was Blackhawk, originally a Polish pilot, but later possibly an American immigrant. The author argues that Blackhawk was subversive because he worked outside of society's conventions, while

the Shield and Captain America were conversive characters. Other heroes of the time included Uncle Sam, the Boy Commandos, Citizen V, Namor the Sub-Mariner, the Patriot, and the Human Torch. The first female heroes, Miss Fury and Wonder Woman, were relegated to more nurturing roles.

The most famous hero, however, was Captain America. What made him unique was his sidekick, Bucky, and his amazingly violent adventures. The Red Skull served as a classic Nazi villain, who has outlived the wartime era by being a flexible symbol into the 1950s and beyond. Captain America did not last in publication into the 1950s. However, he would return in the 1960s and emerge as a different hero.

September 11 opened up the opportunity for heroes to return to their propagandistic role, which the author somewhat problematically refers to as Captain America's "primary" role. This shift was due in part to the centrality of New York City to comic book production. The new comics, however, were lighter on the xenophobia and ethnic abuse and stronger on the portrayal of firefighters and the police as heroes. Captain America, in particular, returned to a more military uniform in *The Ultimates*, and hunted terrorists in his own book. Less famous comic books enacted adolescent revenge fantasies on Osama bin Laden, but these comics had much smaller runs than the more famous superhero comics. Women in post–9/11 comics retained their traditional position as objects to be protected by men. The author concludes by questioning whether comics retain their propagandistic role given that now, on average, their target demographic is 24 years old and has more than average disposable income.

Stevens, Richard J. "The Ultimate Critique: Neoconservitivism, Captain America and Marvel's *Ultimates*." Midwest Popular Culture Association 2007 Convention Submission. Online at: http://jrichardstevens.com/TheUltimateCritique.pdf.

This well written conference paper looks at the Ultimate Captain America and the Ultimate Team as neo-conservatives. By writing the *Ultimates* in such a ways as to portray the team in a negative light (stooges serving governmental interests), the authors of the comic offer a critique of neo-cons, George Bush, and the American War on Terror. The comic series portrays the Ultimates team as a government sponsored group of "persons of mass destruction," created and bred to serve government interests and the status quo, despite being funded, in part, through private sources. In the comic, American "jingoism" presents a plan in which established principles are "preserved at all cost."

The essay looks at the history of comic's scholarship, going back to the 1940s, along with a history of Captain America. The author finds eight major distinctions of Captain America from 1941 to 2007, and he looks at "post modern" comics and their messages. The Ultimate Marvel Universe's creation, and role, are recapped and described as a "pro-status-quo" book. Ultimate Captain America is a soldier in every sense of the word, while the traditional Marvel Universe Cap is described as a "liberal." The Ultimate Cap loves guns, and he has no compunction about killing someone, if it gets the job done for "king and country." Neo-conservatism is defined, and discussed in detail. The essay also looks at the super soldier debate and how, when Thor started questioning the role of the Ultimates on the world stage, he was taken into custody, and seen as a traitor. The author then argues for four major themes about neo-con philosophy that the *Ultimates* can provide.

Trushell, John. "Captain America and His Compatriots: "Our Country, Right or Wrong?" *Borderlines: Studies in American Culture.* Vol. 4: 3 (1997): 217–233.

The author begins by recalling the phrase "Our country, right or wrong," used in nineteenth century American politics in multiple ways, harnessing discourses of patriotism and citizenship when used by different speakers. However, the author argues that both of these discourses have been undermined by processes of globalization that have hollowed out the state. The new virtual state has little need of either. The author then changes tacks to comic books, arguing that they reflect societal values through their revenge fantasies against a cruel adult world. As time has changed, however, so have comic books. This brief article, then, purports to chart the evolution of Captain America as a symbol of the nation in a time period in which patriotism has been problematized.

Golden Age Captain America was heavily focused on the Captain beating up Axis menaces, with little plot or character development. He was just one of a variety of wartime heroes, some of whom were retrospectively put together in *The Invaders*. The end of World War II boded ill for a hero like Captain America, and the moral panic instigated by Fredric Wertham did not help. By 1954 Captain America had disappeared. In the 1960s superheroes began to team-up in a way that reflected the rise of corporate capitalism in the U.S.A., and Captain America was no different. Emerging as a leader of the Avengers, Captain America resumed his career, but eschewed the Vietnam conflict. Still, the rise of the anti-war counter-culture influenced the hero, not least through the rise of underground comic, which undermined the market.

The 1970s Captain America was part of the broader movement towards social relevance, most obviously through the addition of the African American hero the Falcon as Captain America's partner. Similarly, the history of Captain America was modified to elide the McCarthy era commie-smasher Captain America. Further, the discovery of a Watergate-style crisis in the government occasioned Captain America's wandering period as the hero, Nomad. Later, he was fired by the U.S. government, and replaced with John Walker, who was intended to be a more pliable and administration-friendly Captain America. The author strains to connect this latter move to attempts to roll back the liberal consensus of the U.S. Supreme Court, by appointing conservative judges to the bench during the Reagan administration. The departure of Reagan from office happened to coincide with the return of the real Captain to his position.

Since then, the author argues that comics have entered a more sophisticated era, but one that is often scarred by parody, nostalgia, and pastiche. A period of intense questioning is under way, both in *Captain America* and in other companies' takeoffs on the concept, like SuperPatriot and Captain Kurtz. Various storylines interrogate the role of the super-soldier serum in the Captain's life, the hollowing out of the state, and exactly what role Captain America can play in the future. The article concludes pessimistically on this issue.

Weiner, Robert G. "Okay, Axis, Here We Come!" Captain America and the Superhero Teams from the World War II and the Cold War" in B.J. Oropeza, ed., *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 83–101. ISBN: 0820474223.

This essay seeks to unpack the representations of various Others found in comic books during World War II and the early Cold War. At various times the article also attempts to incorporate evidence of Judeo-Christian allegory in the same texts. The Jewish heritage of many of the early comics' creators was a factor in the early intervention by many superheroes in World War II — well before official American foreign policy was aligned with that of characters like Captain America.

The essay then turns toward an outline of the origins of Captain America and his war on various racial/ethnic stereotypes in World War II. Captain America was joined by two other major heroes during World War II: the original Human Torch (to be differentiated from the Fantastic Four's version) and Namor the Sub-Mariner. Their collaboration was only the first of many teams to emerge during this era. The Young Allies was a group of children, reminiscent of the Little Rascals. The group consisted of one super-powered child, Toro (a young version of the Human Torch), Bucky (Captain America's sidekick), and four stereotypes (the fat kid, the African American kid, the smart kid, and the tough kid), and their purpose was to fight the Nazis. Captain America, the Human Torch, and the Sub-Mariner teamed up in the All-Winners Squad with Miss America and the Whizzer. However, with the war ending, anxiety in the comics focused on the role of atomic power and Communist spying in contemporary geopolitics. Later super-teams included at least some members who owed their powers to radiation (e.g., the X-Men).

In the 1970s the All-Winners Squad was reinvented as the Invaders, telling new stories from World War II, but with an overtly more nuanced perspective (for example, highlighting the Holocaust). Here the author links comic books to religion by noting a storyline from the Invaders that highlighted the Jewish Golem as a defender of Central European Judaism. Another storyline from the Invaders brought Nordic theology into World War II, when Hitler summoned Thor to fight on behalf of the Reich. The author concludes by discussing the parallel developments in the DC Universe, with the Justice Society of America fighting in World War II, before it morphed into the modern-day Justice Society.

Weinstein, Matthew. "Captain America, Tuskegee, Belmont, and Righteous Guinea Pigs: Considering Scientific Ethics through Official and Subaltern Perspectives." *Science and Education* Vol. 15: 7/8 (October 2006). Online only: http://www.springerlink.com/content/4164m325v6w407j8/ (July 16, 2008).

This paper is a comparison of scientific ethics in four different texts. The purpose of this comparison is to assess the texts' contribution towards the pedagogy of scientific ethics. The author also compellingly argues that the best pedagogical opportunities are to be found in texts associated with cultural studies and the anthropology of science, rather than in philosophy and bioethics. The author compellingly argues that the danger to be faced is in the objectification of humans who are participating in research as subjects. The relationship between scientists and their volunteer subjects is one that is inextricably embedded in ethics. The author notes the history of abuse that is popularly narrated through the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which led to many subjects' deaths and numerous infections of wives and other sexual partners. The racialized character of the experiment highlights the dangers to vulnerable populations.

The author describes two official texts, the U.S. National Science Standards, and the Belmont Report, and two unofficial texts, the magazine, *Guinea Pig Zero*, and the Captain America story, *Truth*. The author finds major problems with the official texts in regards to pedagogy. The National Science Education Standards reflects the professional scientist's view of what should be taught about science, and includes a tiny mention of ethics that should be given in middle school, and nothing later. The Belmont Report is slightly better, giving a historicized narrative of scientific ethics that nevertheless portrays ethical progress in science as the norm, and denies the agency of participants in scientific research.

The author's choices of unofficial texts are compelling. The first, *Guinea Pig Zero*, was

a magazine devoted to the culture of professional guinea pigs, a group that emerged when prisoners and patients were removed from the research subject pool by ethical reforms. This magazine omitted any sense of ethical progress in science, and instead focused on ways to pressure science into doing the right thing. The second text was *Truth*, and the author argues that the text provides a revisionist origin of Captain America, implicating Operation: Rebirth in an ethos of eugenics and racism that was equally applicable to the U.S.A., the U.K., and Nazi Germany. In this story, the notion of ethics is problematic because, given past events, there are limited options for Captain America. The author notes that this story was written for youth (the only one of the four texts), and is extensively footnoted to show its links to the real world.

The author concludes by criticizing current pedagogical practice and encouraging the use of unofficial texts.

Afterword by J.M. DeMatteis

The first time I ever laid eyes on Captain America was on the cover of *Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos 13*. It's a tribute to the character, and the man who co-created him, Jack Kirby, that it's an image that has remained lodged in my memory and imagination ever since. The Marvel covers of the era were — in contrast to their streamlined and sedate DC counterparts — gaudy and garish, crammed full of copy: simultaneously cheap, raw and incredibly vital. Cap's costume — the stars and stripes, the fat A on his forehead — was equally garish, even by superhero standards; and the look in his eyes ... well, the guy seemed a little crazy.

I had no idea who Captain America was. Despite the fact that the cover copy proclaimed Cap and his young partner, Bucky, "the overwhelming stars of the Golden Age of Comics," I'd never heard of them. Even the phrase "Golden Age" was new to me. To my ten-year-old mind, any comics that existed before I was born were as ancient and unfathomable as an Egyptian tomb. Which, of course, made the character seem bizarre and appealing. Add in that dynamic Kirby artwork, with Cap — in an impossible, but somehow believable, pose — dominating the scene, and I just had to read that story. *Read* it? I *devoured* it.

Flash forward fifteen or so years. I'm brand new to the comic book business, having written a number of stories for the DC anthology titles and just getting my foot in the door at Marvel Comics — where editor-in-chief Jim Shooter hands me an assignment. "There's a new Captain America TV movie coming out," he says, "and we want to do a tie-in. Come up with a story." I'd seen the first Cap TV movie — let's just say it was disappointing and leave it at that — but I dutifully set to work, weaving Cap, his long-time enemy, the Red Skull, and real life actor Reb Brown into a story that, I hoped, was more than just a cheesy TV cash-in. By the time I'd finished the plot outline, someone at Marvel came to his senses and Reb Brown was removed from the story, along with all references to the movie. I was told to rework the story as a three-parter for the monthly Cap comic, which I did: it finally saw print in *Captain America 261— 263.*

The story wasn't a classic by any stretch of the imagination — in fact, the opening sequence, which featured Steve Rogers getting a little drunk with his buddies, was a major blunder — but it did get me a regular gig writing Cap's adventures. Working primarily with Mike Zeck — the starting point of a fruitful collaboration that would reach its peak seven years later with our Spider-Man saga "Kraven's Last Hunt" — and British superstar Paul Neary (with some terrific fill-in work from the amazing Sal Buscema), I got to spend the next three years exploring the life, times and psyche of one of the great American icons.

I'd been a loyal *Captain America* reader, of course — with a special fondness for the Lee-Kirby, Englehart, Gerber and Stern-Byrne eras — but I can't say that Cap was a major god in my comic book pantheon: I enjoyed the stories immensely, but, to my mind, Cap was no Silver Surfer, Superman or Doctor Strange. Of course reading about a character and *writing* that

character are two very different experiences — and the deeper I submerged myself in Steve Rogers' world, the more I appreciated Captain America — not so much the icon as the man. In costume, Rogers was larger-than-life: "the whole country — squeezed into one pair of pants." (That line, spoken about theater legend George M. Cohan, is from *Yankee Doodle Dandy*— one of the great movie musicals — and it describes Cap, The Icon, better than I ever could.) I was more intrigued by the person behind the mask. Rogers — to dip into movie lore once more — was the George Bailey of super heroes: a simple, honest man of inherent decency, who always struggled to do the right thing — no matter how difficult it was. He wasn't concerned with ideologies or the politics of the moment. He was concerned with the American Dream. He believed, to the core of his being, in what America *could be.* Rogers was certainly well aware of the many times the United States had failed to live up to its own ideals — and those failures disheartened him — but he never gave up believing because his faith and hope weren't invested in any elected official or political party. They were invested in the spiritual core of America: something deep and true and unchanging that lay beneath world affairs and shifting political currents. To my mind, Captain America's greatest power wasn't the strength he gained from the super-soldier formula; it was the depth of his compassion, his caring, and his belief in the revolutionary power of simple human decency.

The nature of the character dictated that the stories I wrote explored issues larger than the latest hero-villain slugfest. The canvas had to be large — encompassing action, psychology and broader political, spiritual and philosophical issues. Some of my attempts failed spectacularly, some succeeded — but I thought I'd finally hit my stride during my last year on the book: an ongoing saga involving Captain America's final battle with the Red Skull that was to reach its turning point with a double-sized *CA 300* in which the Skull dies and Cap, after (at the time) forty-plus years of solving problems with his fists, begins to wonder if there's another way to live his ideals and change the world. (Despite my love of the superhero genre, the inherent — and often mindless — violence in superhero comics has always disturbed me. This story was my way of attacking the issue head on.) In the proposal I presented to my editor — the late, great Mark Gruenwald — Cap was, ultimately, going to disavow violence as a tool for change — essentially rejecting the fundamental superhero mindset — and start working for world peace. (Keep in mind that this was at the height of the Reagan "evil empire"/cold war period, so it was a pretty radical idea for its day.) There was much more to the story — including Steve Rogers' apparent assassination by his then-partner, Nomad, and the emergence of a new Captain America, a Native American named Jesse Black Crow — and I was eager to spend the next year exploring these challenging issues.

Gruenwald approved my proposal, and I wrote the double-sized *CA 300*. Then I went ahead and plotted the next two or three stories in the arc; but Jim Shooter, hearing what we were planning, shot the idea down. Jim thought my idea violated Cap's character, that Steve Rogers would never do the things I was suggesting. *Cap 300* was then cut down to a normal-sized issue and substantially rewritten, I think by Jim himself— or perhaps Gruenwald under Jim's direction. (This is why I used a fake name in the credits and immediately quit the book.) At the time I was angry but, in retrospect, I totally understand Shooter's point of view. Jim — a brilliant editor who really helped me along in the early days of my career — was the custodian of the Marvel Universe: he had to protect the characters as he understood them. Me? I think my Cap saga would have been an emotional and thought-provoking piece of pop fiction.

(This idea — a long-time superhero finally realizing that violence is a dead end — has obsessed me, in various forms, since I first conceived it in 1983. The concept has evolved considerably

over the years and it will finally see print in 2009 as *The Life and Times of Savior 28*—a six-issue series from IDW Publishing.)

My journey with Captain America ended then—but, as this collection of essays attests, the character remains as fascinating as he seemed when I first glimpsed him on that *Sgt. Fury* cover more than forty years ago. Some people view Cap as an anachronism, a throwback to another era. Worse, some see him as a symbol of American imperialism. They miss the point. Captain America, the costumed hero, is the embodiment of all that's best and brightest in the *concept* of America: a concept that transcends the nation that birthed it. Steve Rogers, the man, represents everyone who seeks a better world for himself and his neighbors; who strives to live a decent, compassionate life. That makes him one of us—*all* of us, no matter our country of origin—and insures that that character will still be with us, in all his gaudy, vibrant glory, for decades to come.

This page intentionally left blank

About the Contributors

David L. Albright is a student at Florida State University pursuing a Ph.D. in social work and M.S. in measurement and statistics. His research interests center on military and veteran populations and focuses on evidence-based practices, intervention research, post-traumatic stress disorder, and research methodology.

Phillip L. Cunningham is a second-year Ph.D. student in American culture studies with a concentration in critical studies in media, film, and culture. His interests are in American comic books, American mainstream popular culture, African American popular culture, and professional athletics. Prior to entering the Ph.D. program, he was a tenured English professor at Palm Beach Community College (2003–2007). Cunningham earned a bachelor of arts degree in English (creative writing) from Ohio University in 1998 and a master of arts degree in English (creative writing) from Temple University in 2000. He is also a recipient of a Zora Neale Hurston–Richard Wright Foundation Award for his short story "The Upstairs" (1999).

J.M. DeMatteis, Eisner Award winner, has worked in the comic book business for nearly thirty years, writing the adventures of such Marvel and DC icons as Spider-Man, Superman, Batman and Captain America. He is perhaps best known for the intensely personal visions of *Moonshadow, Seekers Into The Mystery,* the all-ages fantasy *Abadazad* and the autobiographical *Brooklyn Dreams*, as well as (with co-writer Keith Giffen) the superhero comedies of *Justice League* and *Hero Squared.* DeMatteis, who also writes for television and film, lives in upstate New York.

Jason Dittmer is a lecturer in human geography at University College London, where he teaches courses on political geography and critical geopolitics. His primary research is on the geographies of nationalism and identity as found in nationalist superhero comic books and their role in mediating international conflict.

Mike S. DuBose is a lecturer in University of Toledo's Department of English. His scholarship focuses on complexity theory, control and models of authority in contemporary media texts. He is writing the manuscript for his first book, which examines the intersections of popular culture and dominant political identity in the 1980s.

Shawn Gillen is a professor of English at Beloit College. He teaches courses in literature, writing, and popular culture and has worked as a music critic, editor, and journalist. His essays and reviews have appeared in the *Colorado Review*, *New Hibernia Review*, *Film & History*, *In These Times* and a variety of newspapers and encyclopedias. He is at work on a novel.

Brian E. Hack received his doctorate in art history from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in 2007. Specializing in 19th- and early 20th-century sculpture and public monuments, he is writing a book on the American sculptor George Grey Barnard (1863–1938). He teaches American art and other courses at Kingsborough Community College, CUNY, and resides in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, with his wife (and fellow art historian), Caterina Y. Pierre.

Christopher J. Hayton, a teacher for 25 years, is again a student, pursuing a Ph.D. in social work at Florida State University. His research interests include the use of language arts in therapy, culturally competent marriage and family therapy with Asian immigrant populations, research evaluating social work interventions, and social commentary in popular media.

John Shelton Lawrence, emeritus professor of philosophy at Morningside College, lives in Berkeley. With Robert Jewett he coauthored *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil* (2003) and *The Myth of the American Superhero* (2002), which received the John Cawelti Award of the American Culture Association

as the best book of 2002. He has provided essays and filmographies for *Hollywood's White House* (2003), *Hollywood's West* (2005), and *Why We Fought* (2008). With Matthew Kapell he co-edited *Finding the Force of the Star Wars Franchise: Fans, Merchandise, and Critics* (2006).

Mark R. McDermott first became aware of the dramatic potential in the costumed crusader genre as a six-year-old watching the prime-time *Batman* TV show. He started college at Morningside College, where John Shelton Lawrence was the co-instructor of an honors class on American culture. Sometime after finishing with a bachelor's degree in speech and journalism at Iowa State University, he went on for a master's degree in popular culture at Bowling Green State University. Mark has written entries for *The Guide to U.S. Popular Culture* and other such encyclopedias. His dissertation on fan backlash to George Lucas' "Part 1" trilogy appeared in *Finding the Force of the Star Wars Franchise* (Matthew Kapell and John Shelton Lawrence, eds., 2006). Mark works as a prepress specialist for R.R. Donnelley Co. and lives in suburban Chicago.

Ora C. McWilliams is a graduate student in the department of popular culture at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. His thesis is on orphans in comic narratives. He worked in a comic book store for five years, which proves nothing is wasted. Captain America holds a special place in his heart, but his favorite shield wielder is still Vance Astro.

Nicholas D. Molnar is a doctoral student in history at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, and a staff member of the Rutgers Oral History Archives of World War II. He graduated from Rutgers in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in history, magna cum laude, and received the sole Bevier Award Fellowship granted by Rutgers that year.

John E. Moser is an associate professor of history at Ashland University. He is the author of three books on twentieth century U.S. history, most recently *Right Turn: John T. Flynn and the Transformation of American Liberalism* (New York University Press, 2005). He lives in Ashland, Ohio, with his wife, Monica, their daughter, Constance, and their two yellow labs, Lotte and Ruby.

Freedonia Paschall is an archivist at the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library at Texas Tech University. She has been published in the *West Texas Historical Journal* and the *Landscape of Hollywood Westerns*.

Cord Scott is a doctoral candidate in American history at Loyola University, Chicago. His dissertation is on war comics in times of conflicts. He has written several articles on comic book characters, as well as several on aspects of Chicago history, and is an adjunct instructor in the Chicago area. He developed an interest in Captain America while teaching a class in propaganda at the time of the terrorist attacks, on September 11, 2001.

Christian Steinmetz recently finished his M.A. thesis at Georgia State University, focusing on Captain America villains and their relationship with the national imagined community. He is working on his own comic book series, involving graphemes, globalization and a steampunk submarine.

Jackson Sutliff is a free-lance writer, sketch comedian, and comic book fanatic. He is pursuing a degree in writing for stage and screen at Missouri State University.

David Walton, a graduate student at Texas A&M University–Commerce, is working on his master's thesis, which is devoted to the death and retirement experiences of major superhero icons.

Robert G. Weiner is an associate humanities librarian at Texas Tech University. He is the author of *Marvel Graphic Novels and Related Publications* (McFarland, 2008), editor of *Perspectives on the Grateful Dead*, and co-author of *The Grateful Dead and the Deadheads*. He has published on various popular culture topics including film, music, and comics in several publications, including the *Guide to U.S. Popular Culture*. Weiner is area chair for comics, graphic novels, popular culture, and various film-related areas for the Southwestern Popular Culture Association. He has master's degrees from Texas Tech (in history) and the University of North Texas (in library science). He lives in Lubbock and can be seen in the movie *Lubbock Lights*.

Nicholas Yanes received his bachelor of arts degree from the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors Program and his masters degree from Florida State University's American & Florida Studies Program. His undergraduate honor's thesis examined the relationship between the X-Men and civil rights, and his master's thesis argues that Jewish Americans used comic books as a medium for their political stances during the Great Depression, the New Deal, and World War II.

Index