

**‘Monster’ Masculinity:
The Veteran-Artist and Figural Representation in Postwar Chicago,
1946-1959**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the formation and milieu of a group of artists working in Chicago after the Second World War, known as the “Monster Roster.” It argues that this group was marginalized in large part because the grotesque and vulnerable bodies often depicted in its artists’ work were incompatible with the dominant trend of abstraction in postwar American art and art history, as well as the national political project of solidifying the United States’ reputation as a powerful, liberating force on the global stage. It also contends that the veteran status of many Monster Roster artists made them suspect subjects in the postwar “crisis of masculinity,” further rendering them inadequate bearers of the avant-garde reputation that was being constructed around New York School artists. This project adds substance and texture to the current conversations about postwar American art by bringing into focus both the marginalized site of Chicago and the virtually unexplored subject-position of the Second World War veteran. Building on important literature that has re-politicized the content and context of Abstract Expressionist artwork, this dissertation elucidates the tensions between the constructions of New York abstraction and Chicago figural representation. These constructions were often erroneously posited as binary opposites during a period in which conversations about art, and its aesthetic and political implications, adopted increasingly strident tones. This project also explores the postwar construction of the embodied ideal male subject as a signifier of state power. While the male veteran may have represented the nation’s military victory overseas, he also revealed the vulnerability of the male body. Postwar public discourse often obscured the harrowing events of the war—including veteran experience—in favor of celebratory rhetoric. By examining the intertwining structures that resulted in the marginalization of Chicago as a site of cultural production, figural representation as a mode of image-making, and the veteran as a non-normative male subject, I situate the artists of the Monster Roster and their artworks in the political and cultural context of postwar America.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine la création et le milieu d'un groupe d'artistes qui travaillèrent à Chicago après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, connu sous le nom «Monster Roster.» Elle fait valoir que ce groupe fut marginalisé en grande partie parce que les corps grotesques et vulnérables souvent représentés dans leurs oeuvres étaient incompatibles avec la tendance dominante de l'abstraction dans l'histoire de l'art et l'art américain de l'après-guerre, ainsi que le projet nationale politique de solidifier les États-Unis comme une force puissante et libératrice sur la scène mondiale. Elle soutient également que le statut de vétéran de nombreux artistes de «Monster Roster» les a rendus sujets marginaux au point de vue de la «crise de la masculinité» d'après-guerre, en tant que porteurs inadéquats de la réputation avant-garde qui a été construit autour d'artistes de l'école de New York. Cette thèse ajoute de la substance et de la texture aux conversations en cours sur l'art américain de l'après-guerre en mettant en lumière à la fois le site marginalisé de Chicago et le sujet pratiquement inexploré du vétéran de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. En s'appuyant sur la littérature importante qui a politisé le contenu et le contexte de l'expressionnisme abstrait, cette thèse élucide les tensions entre les constructions de l'art abstrait de New York et la représentation de l'art figuratif de Chicago. Ces constructions furent souvent posées à tort comme oppositions binaires pendant une époque où le discours publics sur l'art, l'esthétique, et les implications politiques sont devenus plus stridents. Ce projet explore également la construction d'après-guerre de l'idéal mâle conçu comme symbolique du pouvoir d'Etat. Alors que le vétéran mâle pouvait représenter la victoire militaire de la nation à l'étranger, il a également révélé la vulnérabilité du corps masculin chez soi. Pendant les années d'après-guerre les terribles événements et les expériences des vétérans sont mis aux ténèbres en faveur de la rhétorique de célébration. En examinant les structures entrelacées qui ont abouti à la marginalisation de Chicago en tant que site de production culturelle, la représentation figurative comme un mode de fabrication d'images, et le vétéran comme un sujet mâle hors normatif, je situe les artistes de la «Monster Roster» et leurs oeuvres d'art dans le contexte politique et culturel de l'après-guerre en Amérique.

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Table of Contents

Abstract/Résumé	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Illustrations	vii
Introduction	1
Groundwork	7
The Monster Roster	23
Structure	36
A Methodological Coda	43
Chapter One: Postwar Masculinity and the Artist and Veteran Subjects	46
Introduction	46
Masculinity Studies: Crises and Moments Thereof	51
Postwar Masculinity	58
Marketable Masculinities: The New York School and Chicago's Momentum Group	80
The Veteran Subject's Precarious Place	100
<i>Hero[es]!!</i>	114
Chapter Two: The Making of the Second City	122
Introduction	122
An Interlude: The Quintessential and the Exceptional	127
Crossroads of America, and/or "it's really shitty, it's really AMERICA"	130
The Struggle of Modern Art in Chicago	139
Before and After "The Second City": Emergence of a Chicago School	152
On Marginalization: Dubuffet in Chicago and Reckoning with the Canon	176
Chapter Three: "Form v. Content": The Implications of Abstraction and Figuration	187
Introduction	187
Figural Representation in Chicago: Building the Monster Roster	192
Common Origins: Expressionism, Surrealism, and Primitivism	207
Freedom, Myth, and Savage Realities	218
The Political Implications of Abstraction and Representation	232
<i>New Images of Man</i>	247
Conclusion	265
Looking Forward	269
Illustrations	275
Bibliography	319

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Hans Namuth, *Jackson Pollock*, 1950. Photograph.

Figure 2. “Jackson Pollock,” *Life* (August 8, 1949).

Figure 3. Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, 1953. Film still.

Figure 4. George Cohen, *Queenie*, 1955. Collage and paint on canvas, 27.9 x 21.6 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Figure 5. Cohen, *Emblem for an Unknown Nation I*, 1954. Oil on masonite, 172.7 x 130.8 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Figure 6. Cohen, *Anybody's Self-Portrait*, 1953. Framed mirror mounted on painted composition board, with two oval mirrors, plastic doll's torso, legs and arms, painted doll's eyes with fiber lashes in tin anchovy can, metal hand, nail heads, screw eyes, hooks, string, and cloth, 26 x 24.3 x 3.4 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 7. Hans Bellmer, *The Games of the Doll*, 1949. Paris, Les Editions premières, 1949. Hand-colored black-and-white photograph.

Figure 8. Leon Golub, *Burnt Man I*, 1954. Lacquer and oil on canvas, 117.2 x 81.3 cm.

Figure 9. Golub, *The Bug (War Machine)*, 1953. Lacquer and oil on canvas, 101.5 x 99 cm.

Figure 10. Golub, *Orestes*, 1956. Lacquer on canvas, 208.3 x 106.7 cm.

Figure 11. H.C. Westermann, *A Soldier's Dream*, 1955. Maple, stained glass, brass, and string, 74.3 x 38.1 x 29.2 cm.

Figure 12. Westermann, *Sailors Grave*, 1959. Ink and watercolor on paper.

Figure 13. Joseph Goto, *Emanak*, c. 1955. Steel.

Figure 14. Nina Leen, “The Irascibles,” *Life* (January 15, 1951).

Figure 15. Harold Russell and Cathy O'Donnell in *The Best Years of Our Lives*, 1946. Film still.

Figure 16. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn x 100*, 1962. Acrylic and silkscreen on canvas, 205.7 x 567.7 cm.

Figure 17. Westermann, *U.S.S. Franklin*, 1966. Ink and watercolor on paper, 34.3 x 25.1 cm.

Figure 18. Thomas Lea, *Over the Side*, 1942. Ink on paper, 25.4 x 35.6 cm.

Figure 19. Westermann, *A Tribute to the Men of the Infantry*, 1964. Ink and watercolor on paper, 34.3 x 26 cm. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

Figure 20. Westermann, *Destructive Machine from Under the Sea*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 55.9 x 71.1 cm. Collection of Ann Janss, Los Angeles, California.

Figure 21. Westermann, *Brinkmanship* (1959). Plywood, electroplated metal, bottle cap, and string, 59.1 x 61 x 49.2 cm. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Figure 22. Westermann, *Self-Portrait* (December 13, 1962). Ink and watercolor on paper, 27.3 x 21.6 cm. Collection of Rolf Nelson, Staten Island, New York.

Figure 23. Westermann, *Self-Portrait* (May 24, 1964). Ink and watercolor on paper, 27.3 x 35 cm. Collection of Rolf Nelson, Staten Island, New York.

Figure 24. Westermann, *Self-Portrait* (December 24, 1964). Ink and watercolor on paper, 27.3 x 35 cm. Collection of Rolf Nelson, Staten Island, New York.

Figure 25. Roger Brown, *Giotto and his Friends: Getting Even*, 1981. Oil on canvas. Collection of Gilda Buchbinder, Chicago.

Figure 26. Charles Graham, *Dream City, Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition*, 1893. Watercolor on paper.

Figure 27. *The Natural Capital of the Continent*, 1929. Illustration for Rush Clark Butler, *Chicago: The World's Youngest Great City*. New York: American Publishers Corporation, 1929.

Figure 28. Lorado Taft at work on *Fountain of the Great Lakes*, 1913. Photograph.

Figure 29. Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 92.1 x 140.3 cm. Baltimore Museum of Art.

Figure 30. Paul Chabras, *September Morn*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 163.8 x 216.5 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Figure 31. Cover illustration, Josephine Hancock Logan, *Sanity in Art*. Chicago: A Kroch, 1937.

Figure 32. Ulrich Ellerhusen, *Atomic Energy*, Century of Progress, Electrical Building, 1933. Sculpture (medium unknown).

Figure 33. Lee Atwood, *The Kuh Gallery*, c. 1938. Watercolor, ink, and pencil sketch on paper.

Figure 34. Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 349.3 x 776.6 cm. Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.

Figure 35. Jacob Lawrence, *Victory*, 1947. Egg tempera on composition board, 50.8 x 40.6 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Figure 36. *Exhibition Momentum 1950*, 1950. Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Figure 37. Jean Dubuffet, *Metafisix*, 1950. Oil paint and plaster on canvas, 116 x 89 cm. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Figure 38. Willem de Kooning, *Woman I*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 192.7 x 147.3 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 39. Cosmo Campoli, *Jonah and the Whale*, 1954. Lead, twigs and foam glass cast in lead, 134.6 x 22.9 x 40.6 cm.

Figure 40. Campoli, *Birth of Death*, 1950. Bronze, rock, wax, and steel, 177.8 x 47.6 x 62.2 cm.

Figure 41. Campoli, *Birth*, 1958. Plaster model for bronze, 99 cm. high.

Figure 42. Goto, *Organic Forms I*, 1951. Steel, 365.8 cm high.

Figure 43. Cohen, *Avenger*, 1950. Wax, casein, and ink on paper on Masonite, 121.9 x 69.9 cm.

Figure 44. Cohen, *Flight*, 1952. Oil on canvas, 61 x 76.2 cm.

Figure 45. Cohen, *Hermes*, 1957. Oil and sandpaper on canvas, 116.8 x 91.4 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Figure 46. Cohen, *White Figures*, 1956. Oil and metal on canvas, 101.6 x 101.6 cm.

Figure 47. Golub, *Hamlet*, 1952. Lacquer on Masonite, 132.1 x 61 cm. Collection of Peter Selz.

Figure 48. Golub, *Inferno*, 1954. Lacquer, rubber, and strips of canvas, 78.7 x 94 cm.

Figure 49. Golub, *Oceanic*, 1947. Conte on paper, 58.4 x 44.4 cm.

Figure 50. Westermann, student notebooks from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1947-1950. Ink on paper.

Figure 51. Golub, *Charnel House*, 1946. Lithograph, 38.1 x 48.3 cm.

Figure 52. Golub, *Evisceration Chamber*, 1946. Oil on canvas, 32 x 39.5 cm.

Figure 53. Picasso, *The Charnel House*, 1944-45. Oil and charcoal on canvas, 199.8 x 250.1 cm. Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.

Figure 54. Golub, *Skull II*, 1947. Conte on paper, 92.7 x 76.2 cm.

Figure 55. Golub, *Fallen Proletarian Hero*, 1948. Pencil and conte on paper, 62.3 x 42.7 cm.

Figure 56. Golub, *Hellenistic Memories*, 1948. Pencil and conte on paper, 63.5 x 180.5 cm.

Figure 57. Golub, *Prince Sphinx*, 1955. Lacquer and oil on Masonite, 63.5 x 180.5 cm.

Figure 58. Golub, *Priests*, 1951-52. Oil and enamel on canvas, 112 x 101.5 cm.

Figure 59. Arno Breker, *Prometheus*, 1934. Bronze.

Figure 60. Breker, *Kameradschaft (Comradeship)*, u.d. Bronze.

Figure 61. Golub, *Thwarted*, 1953. Lacquer and oil on canvas mounted on masonite, 119.4 x 78.7 cm.

Figure 62. Apollonius of Athens, *Belvedere Torso*, 1st century BCE. Marble, 359 cm high. Pio-Clementina Museum, Vatican City.

Figure 63. Golub, *The Skin (Crawling Man II)*, 1954. Lacquer on canvas, 137.2 x 99.1 cm.

Figure 64. Golub, *Damaged Man*, 1955. Lacquer and oil on Masonite, 121.9 x 91.4 cm.

Figure 65. Golub, *Colossal Heads I*, 1959. Lacquer on canvas, 213.4 x 332.7 cm.

Figure 66. Golub in Italy, 1970s. Photograph.

Figure 67. Golub, *Reclining Youth*, 1959. Oil and lacquer on canvas, 200.7 x 419.1 cm.

Figure 68. *Dying Gaul*, Roman copy of a bronze statue, c. 230-220 BCE. Marble, 92.7 cm high. Musei Capitolini, Rome.

Figure 69. Jackson Pollock, *No. 3*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 142.6 x 61 cm.

Figure 70. Rico LeBrun, *Study for Dachau Chamber*, 1958. Oil on canvas, 199.4 x 213.4 cm.

Figure 71. Golub, *Fallen Warrior (Burnt Man)*, 1960. Lacquer on canvas, 205.5 x 185.5 cm.

Figure 72. Golub, *Mercenaries I*, 1976. Acrylic on linen, 294.6 x 473.7 cm.

Figure 73. Westermann, *The Evil New War God (S.O.B.)*, 1958. Partially chromium-plated brass, 42.5 x 24.1 x 26.4 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Figure 74. Westermann, *Memorial to the Idea of Man If He Was an Idea*, 1958. Pine, bottle caps, cast-tin toys, glass, metal, brass, ebony, and enamel, 143.5 x 96.5 x 36.2 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Figure 75. Westermann, *Mysterious Yellow Mausoleum*, 1958. Douglas-fir plywood, pine, tar, enamel, glass, antique die-cast brass and cast-lead doll head, metal, brass, mirror, and paper decoupage, 74 x 49.2 x 70.2 cm.

Figure 76. Nancy Spero, *Homage to New York (I Do Not Challenge)*, 1958. Oil on canvas.

Figure 77. Spero, *Codex Artaud XVII (detail)*, 1972. Typewriter and painting collage.

Figure 78. Marion Perkins, *Man of Sorrow*, 1950. Marble, 44.4 x 25.4 x 25.4 cm.

Introduction

In a 1979 article entitled “Chicago for real: Leon Golub,” British art critic and magazine editor Peter Fuller wrote for the British weekly magazine *New Society*:

As a young man [Golub] served in the army and almost immediately afterwards set about searching for a way of painting through which he could respond to the history of his own time—which included Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Hiroshima and, later, Vietnam. In the late 1940s, together with other war veterans, Golub was a student of the School of Art Institute of Chicago. He soon found himself the most prominent figure in a distinctive group of expressionist artists, later dubbed Chicago’s “Monster Roster”...During the 1950s, this group produced some remarkable work: its significance in the history of American art since 1945 is yet to be recognized.¹

While Leon Golub has since received his due, the gap around Chicago’s “Monster Roster” has continued to persist in the thirty-five years since Fuller’s article. The group was born out of the efforts of a collective of young artists, led by and largely comprised of veterans: graduates of the School of the Art Institute whose education was made possible by the GI Bill. These students initially mobilized under the name “Exhibition Momentum” in the late 1940s to make a place for themselves within Chicago, which lacked a supportive infrastructure for young artists. By the mid-1950s, leaders of the Momentum group (like Golub) had redirected their efforts towards the national art scene, centered in New York, and began pushing against the increasingly hegemonic domination of New York School abstraction. Around a decade after its formation, it appeared as if the members of the Chicago School might have had their chance at broader recognition. The recently appointed New York Museum of Modern Art curator of painting and sculpture exhibitions, Peter Selz, a former Chicagoan, organized his first exhibition in 1959: *New Images of Man*. The exhibition included twenty-three painters and sculptors from Europe and the United States; the single best-represented locale was Chicago. To create a recognizable (and

¹ Peter Fuller, “Chicago for Real: Leon Golub,” *New Society*, July 26, 1979, 198.

marketable) contingency out of the Chicago group, former artist and art historian Franz Schulze coined the moniker, the “Monster Roster.”²

Selz offered *New Images of Man* as a response to Abstract Expressionism and the by-then dominant approach of formalist art interpretation and criticism. He suggested the works of figural representation featured in his exhibition offered a communicable interpretation of the “human predicament” as the 1950s drew to a close.³ Invoking the horrors of the past two decades—the same we see Fuller use in order to contextualize Golub—Selz suggested that figuration could provide a critical perspective on the concrete conditions of man in the world, a capacity for which he argued Abstract Expressionism had proven incapable.⁴ In the early 1950s, the young art historian had spent a good deal of time with the Momentum Group. He had completed a PhD dissertation at the University of Chicago on German Expressionism in 1954, and had begun writing about the local artists as part of an Expressionist tradition based in the figural form.⁵ Though he had left Chicago in 1955 for a teaching position at Pomona College, California, he remained tuned into Chicago’s contemporary art. Indeed, *New Images of Man* can be understood as a climactic event in a campaign to earn recognition for the so-called “second-city’s” artists.⁶ So, when Selz arrived in New York in 1958, he came armed with ideas that had started fermenting years prior. New York critics, however, were unimpressed. Selz’s attempt to

² Franz Schulze, “Art News from Chicago,” *ARTnews* 57 (February 1959): 56.

³ Peter Howard Selz, *New Images of Man* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), 11.

⁴ Patrick T. Malone and Peter Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?,” *ARTnews* 54, no. 6 (October 1955): 36–39, 58–59; Peter Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting,” *College Art Journal* 15, no. 4 (July 1, 1956): 290–301; Selz, *New Images of Man*.

⁵ Mary Caroline Simpson, “The Modern Momentum: The Art of Cultural Progress in Postwar Chicago” (Ph.D., Indiana University, 2001), 411.

⁶ Smaller exhibitions of Chicago artists both in New York and Chicago were organized contemporaneously with *New Images of Man*, including Franz Schulze’s *The New Chicago Decade, 1950-1960*, which included each of the Chicago representatives featured in *New Images*, Cosmo Campoli, Leon Golub, and H.C. Westermann. Golub’s work was also being shown at the newly opened Allan Frumkin Gallery (originally of Chicago), and George Cohen was showing the “Beyond Painting” exhibition at the Alan Gallery. Jon Bird, *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 207; Franz Schulze, *The New Chicago Decade, 1950-60* (Lake Forest, Ill.: Lake Forest College, 1959); George Cohen, “George Cohen Biography” (Richard Feigen Gallery, Chicago, March 1965), George Cohen Papers, Northwestern University Archives.

push against the dominance of formalist interpretation was not well received: only one major review considered the exhibition in terms of its existential claims rather than in relation to the formal achievements of the then-and-now canonized New York School.⁷

This study explores the nuances of why the Chicago School was so obscured in the postwar years, a period which saw the elevation and celebration of American contemporary art and artists to an unprecedented degree in New York. The New York School's dominance of the postwar years has been perpetuated in art histories of the period, from the celebratory modernist narratives exemplified by Irving Sandler's 1970 *The Triumph of American Painting*, the subsequent attempts of socio-historical revisionism, like Serge Guilbaut's 1983 *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, and finally the critical interrogations of the function of discursively constructed and performed identity, like Michael Leja's *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*.⁸ My own project aims to broaden the scope of postwar American art history by examining the Chicago scene of the late 1940s and 1950s: a marginalized site of cultural production. Like the artists of Chicago School (as we will see), this dissertation necessarily grapples with the myths and metaphors of Abstract Expressionism that have served as the foundation for the New York School's celebrity and have often dictated the direction of art historical scholarship.⁹ I take into consideration the discourse of the American avant-garde art and artist that, by the end of the 1950s, enabled Abstract Expressionism to stand

⁷ Dennis Raverty, "Critical Perspectives on New Images of Man," *Art Journal*, Sculpture in Postwar Europe and America, 53, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 62–64.

⁸ Irving Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Praeger Publisher, Inc., 1970); Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). New York critic Dore Ashton's 1973 text on the New York School is another example of the celebratory art history, akin to Sandler's. Dore Ashton, *The New York School: A Cultural Reckoning* (New York: Viking, 1973).

⁹ I think especially of art historian Gavin Butt, who situates his attempt to "(re)tell" the story of art and politics in the postwar years with a quote from Robert Rauschenberg about the great shadow of Abstract Expressionism: "Jasper [Johns] and I used to start each day by having to move out from Abstract Expressionism." Gavin Butt, "'America' and Its Discontents: Art and Politics 1945–60," in *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, ed. Amelia Jones (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 21.

in as a visual representation of an ideal masculinity, national political identity, and cultural supremacy of much of the Western world—no small feat. Many of the discursive machinations necessary to accomplish this are the same elements that rendered the Chicago School marginal.

Art histories of postwar Chicago are almost invariably built around two narrative oppositions, both of which are based in a single binary: Chicago's historic rivalry with New York, and the persistence of figural representation in Chicago artwork despite the dominant trend of New York School abstraction.¹⁰ This project more or less follows suit. However, I will complicate this model by arguing that if the reasons for Abstract Expressionism's critical and market success (as has been demonstrated by scholars like Guilbaut and Leja) are complex and overlapping, so too, then, are the correlative reasons for Chicago's marginalization. A consideration of the city's art scene within the context of postwar discourses of masculinity and art abstraction reveals that such discourses were often contingent upon mutually constitutive oppositions, even as categorically divisive conversations about postwar art became quite slippery. As stated, the Chicago School and subsequently designated Monster Roster was comprised largely of young men recently returned from military service abroad—a feature that was emphasized in much of the contemporary press and art history about the group. Like the most compelling recent art history of this period, my project is also an interrogation of how the discourses of postwar art and politics mobilized constructions of masculinity.¹¹ There has been

¹⁰ See, for instance, Dennis Adrian, "The Artistic Presence of Jean Dubuffet in Chicago and the Midwest," in *Jean Dubuffet: Forty Years of His Art* (Chicago: David and Alfred Smart Gallery, University of Chicago, 1984), 27–30; Judith Russi Kirshner, "Resisting Regionalism," in *Art in Chicago: 1945–1975*, ed. Lynne Warren (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art; Distributed by Thames & Hudson, 1996), 131–43; Franz Schulze, *Fantastic Images: Chicago Art Since 1945* (Follett Publishing Company, 1972); Peter Selz, "Modernism Comes to Chicago: The Institute of Design," in *Art in Chicago: 1945–1975* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art; Distributed by Thames & Hudson, 1996), 35–52.

¹¹ These studies, some of which I discuss below in a literature review, include Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*; Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Andrew Perchuk, "Pollock and Postwar Masculinity," in *The Masculine Masquerade*:

much useful art historical interrogation of the gender discourse's impact on women, queer subjects, and subjects of color in the postwar period, and I take these studies as a starting point for my own consideration of the discourse's impact on male veterans.¹²

Even as he was symbolic of the United States' recent military victory and political ascent on the global stage, the subject of the veteran was marginalized in postwar America because of his often-intimate familiarity with the physical and mental vulnerability of the male subject. Not only did the most of the Monster Roster artists inhabit this subject-position, their moniker was inspired by the often grotesque, flayed, and fragmented figures that populate their work. Furthermore, figuration was perceived as a debased mode of image-making as social realism was promoted by Fascist and Communist regimes overseas and American abstraction was constructed as a manifestation of the nation's political identity—as both liberator and liberated, fiercely individualistic in the face of totalitarian powers—the Monster Roster's insistence on imagining the body as vulnerable to both internal and external forces made its figuration doubly distressing. A significant element of the elevating rhetoric that positioned Abstract Expressionism as the new avant-garde movement of the postwar Western world was its capacity to make visual the direct expression of the artist, and the correlative construction of that artist as a masculine ideal. Or, as Clement Greenberg wrote of Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock in 1946: “Pollock's superiority to his contemporaries in this country lies in his ability to create a *genuinely violent* and *extravagant* art without losing stylistic control. His emotion starts out

Masculinity and Representation (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 31–42; Amelia Jones, “The ‘Pollockian Performative’ and the Revision of the Modernist Subject,” in *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 53–102; Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹² My project focuses mainly on the experience of white veterans, though the Jewishness of some of the Monster Roster artists, like George Cohen and Leon Golub, occasionally manifests in their work, dealing as it often did with the vulnerable human body in the wake of WWII, the Holocaust, and Hiroshima. While there is a deep need for a consideration of how race intersects with such an intensely politicized social position like that of veteran, my focus on the predominantly white artists of Monster Roster means that, unfortunately, this is not that project.

pictorially; it *does not have to be castrated and translated* in order to be put into a picture.”¹³ By contrast, the physically vulnerable bodies of the Monster Roster *insist* on the possibility of their castration.

Having introduced the crux of my project, the following section is a review of the scholarly work on the American postwar period that has served as the foundation for this study. I begin with a brief summary of the revisionist arguments of the 1970s and 1980s—or the “New Art History.” This scholarship aimed to re-politicize Abstract Expressionism after the marginalization of its political content and context during the Cold War. I then turn to the feminist and queer art history, enabled by this re-politicization, which worked to elucidate the racist and patriarchal structures that privileged certain subjects of the postwar art world, while silencing others. Following this literature review, I more thoroughly situate my own subject of study—the Monster Roster and its place in the postwar Chicago art scene—and introduce the key figures commonly referred to in my project: the artists George Cohen, Leon Golub, and H.C. Westermann; and art historians Peter Selz and Franz Schulze. I also briefly discuss the implications of the “monstrous” as it pertains to my arguments about the Chicago group and their mode of representation. I conclude with a description of the project as a whole. Finally, a brief methodological note on what it has meant to work on an historical milieu that has a dearth of literature, particularly in comparison with the deluge of information about the New York School.

¹³ Clement Greenberg, “Review of Exhibitions of the American Abstract Artists, Jacques Lipchitz, and Jackson Pollock,” (1946) reprinted in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2: *Arrogant Purpose, 1945–49*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 75. Emphasis mine.

Groundwork

Given the oppositional nature of many of the aesthetic debates of the postwar period, and the near hegemonic domination of the art historical narratives by the mythos of the New York School, my exploration of the Chicago School necessarily positions itself in relation to these particular postwar constructions of the meaning of the artist and his or her work, and the political implications of these constructions. However, in exploring how the varying discourses of place, gender, abstraction, and figuration overlapped and invoked each other, rather than to reify them, my goal is to expose how very tenuous and contingent such categories are, even as their rhetoric often employs the language of absolutes. Much of the recent scholarship on postwar American art has worked to expose the binaries that underpinned the contemporary discourses on postwar art and the avant-garde. Such binaries imposed limitations on which subjects could be recognized as successful artists, often contingent not only upon their perceived gender, race, and sexual orientation, but also upon geographic location or their work's subject matter. My own arguments on the position of the Monster Roster in this milieu follows the paths laid by this art historical scholarship and the section that follows is a review of the literature that has made my own project possible.

The revisionism of the 1970s and 1980s or the cutting edge of what was then called the “New Art History,” led by scholars like Max Kozloff, Eva Cockcroft, and Serge Guilbaut, worked to contextualize postwar art and criticism by discerning the conditions of their respective production before, during, and after the veil of McCarthyism, pointing to the government and its agencies’ very political interest in American art and culture.¹⁴ Such scholarship was partially made possible by the 1960s revelations about the involvement of the Central Intelligence

¹⁴ See Max Kozloff, “American Painting During the Cold War,” *Artforum* 11, no. 9 (1973): 43–54; Eva Cockcroft, “Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War,” *Artforum* 15, no. 10 (June 1974): 39–41; Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*.

Agency (CIA) and the United States Information Agency (USIA) in cultural and scholarly organizations. These agencies were revealed as having provided research money through foundations, be they “legitimate ones or dummy fronts.”¹⁵ This recognition of the concrete political implications of the art works and their critical discourse laid the ground for a broad range of scholarship which has taken as its subject the institutions that mobilized Abstract Expressionism as well as the often obscured political content of the works themselves.¹⁶

The New Art History emerged out of the increasing prominence of critical theory and the social history of art, which worked to place art works back into social history. The formalist mode of interpretation practiced by influential critic Clement Greenberg after the Second World War and into the 1960s insisted that the value of the work of art was to be found in the formal qualities of work itself, rather than in its context or content.¹⁷ Similarly, critic Harold Rosenberg’s interpretations have most frequently been read as imagining the artworks of the New York School as expressions of the inner experience of the individual artist.¹⁸ While very different approaches, both proposed interpretations enable a de-contextualization of the work

¹⁵ The New York Times published five articles on such actions of the CIA in 1966. As cited in Francis Francina, “Looking Forward, Looking Back: 1985-1999,” in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Francina (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 2.

¹⁶ One such act of political recovery is Fred Orton’s “Action, Revolution and Painting,” in which he attempts to draw Rosenberg’s increasingly obscured writing in from the margins and offer a political reading of “The American Action Painters” of 1952 “in order to replace the lazy existentialist-humanist reading which has become paradigmatic.” Fred Orton, “Action, Revolution and Painting,” *Oxford Art Journal* 14, no. 2 (January 1, 1991): 3.

¹⁷ Art historians such as T.J. Clark, Serge Guilbaut, and John O’Brian have written extensively on this approach as a dramatic shift from the radically political tone of Greenberg’s 1939 essay “Avant-garde and Kitsch.” See Timothy J. Clark, “Clement Greenberg’s Theory of Art,” *Critical Inquiry* 9, no. 1 (September 1, 1982): 139–56.

¹⁸ Rosenberg’s 1952 “The Action Painters” is most frequently cited as proposing this interpretation of the New York School art and artists. Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” *ARTnews* 51, no. 8 (1952): 22–23, 48–50.

Rosenberg’s existentialism is a romanticized interpretation of Jean Paul Sartre’s metaphysical view of the self as internally coherent. In his 1943 (translated in 1956) *Being and Nothingness: an Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Sartre suggests that the subject has the capacity to project himself out of immanence into transcendence—an act realized in the process of creating an “authentic” action painting. Simone de Beauvoir later argues this is a possibility only for privileged subjects in the patriarchy in her 1949 book *The Second Sex*. Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956); Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949; reprint New York: Random House, 2012).

that, as New Art Historians argued, allowed for and even encouraged the transmission of the postwar national ethos of American culture as a liberating and individualistic force.¹⁹ Art historians T.J. Clark, Serge Guilbaut, and more recently Jonathan Katz, argue that this de-contextualization and consequent de-politicization of Abstract Expressionism was a result of the increasing awareness of the terrors of Stalinism and the rising anti-Communist sentiment in the 1940s and 1950s, which drove “Popular Front” intellectuals like Greenberg and Rosenberg to renounce the Marxist ideology they had supported in the 1930s.²⁰ Indeed, in order to defend abstraction against attacks from virulently anti-Communist critics and politicians, prominent voices such as those of Greenberg and Museum of Modern Art curator Alfred J. Barr bolstered the rhetoric of abstraction as visual manifestation of a free and progressive democracy like the United States, which would eventually be exported overseas in exhibitions arranged by the CIA and USIA.²¹

As the stakes of postwar art grew to include bearing the weight of a national ethos, so too did the myths around the artists responsible for the new avant-garde. Much has been done in the past several decades to add nuance to the often heroizing narratives written about the artists of the New York School. Art historian Caroline Jones is a key revisionist art historian and suggests in her 1996 book *Machine in the Studio* that “reading dominant narratives ‘against the grain’ can be enormously revealing.”²² Authors including Gavin Butt, Michael Leja, Amelia Jones,

¹⁹ This nationalistic interpretation of Abstract Expressionism was famously elaborated upon in by Irving Sandler in *The Triumph of American Painting*, and subsequently critiqued as a political construct of the Cold War by New Art History scholars. Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting*.

²⁰ Clark, “Clement Greenberg’s Theory of Art”; Serge Guilbaut, “The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America: Greenberg, Pollock, or from Trotskyism to the New Liberalism of the ‘Vital Center,’” trans. Thomas Repensek, *October* 15 (December 1, 1980): 61–78; Jonathan D. Katz, “Passive Resistance: On the Success of Queer Artists in Cold War America,” *Image* 3 (December 1996): 119–42.

²¹ Francis Frascina makes this point in “Revision, Revisionism and Rehabilitation, 1959/1999: The American Century, Modern Starts and Cultural Memory,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 93–116.

²² Jones, *Machine in the Studio*, xv.

Caroline Jones, Jonathan Katz, Ann Gibson, and Anne Wagner have grappled with the legends and auras surrounding particular artists of the postwar era in order to offer alternative (often anti-racist, feminist, and queer) readings of the constructed myths of artists, their artwork, and the social and intellectual context. Such readings have infused more recent art histories of the postwar American period with complexity and new energy, and it is in the wake of this work that I approach this study with the objective of opening up the discussion to include the previously overlooked art scene of Chicago as well as to interrogate the apparent lacuna around artwork related to the trauma of the Second World War.

Underpinning each of these works is the understanding of identity as socially constructed and contingent, a particularly fruitful framework when addressing a period during which popular and intellectual discourses were so loaded with gendered and sexualized terms. Judith Butler famously argued that gender is constructed through performance, or the “stylized repetition of acts” in time, expanding upon Simone de Beauvoir’s 1949 dictum that “[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, woman.”²³ Such stylized acts become codified and grow to define masculine and feminine subject-positions within a given society. The individual thus performs the acts that come to be constitutive of their gendered (and otherwise qualified) subject-position, all the while believing that their position is not only stable, but also somehow natural: film theorist Richard Dyer writes, “what can be shown to be natural must be accepted as given and inevitable.”²⁴ This

²³ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 283.

²⁴ This is also at the heart of Louis Althusser’s concept of Ideology: “It is a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are obviousnesses) obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the ‘still, small voice of conscience’): ‘That’s obvious! That’s right! That’s true!’” Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, by Louis Althusser, trans. Ben Brewster (New York; London: Monthly Review Press, 1969), 171–172. As cited in Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 17. Here, Dyer is writing specifically about the equation of obvious, visible musculature (a physical quality that is not natural inasmuch as bodybuilding requires much time and effort) is the sign of natural power that legitimates

perceived innate quality is linked to the idea that biology dictates gender, and while many contemporary gender scholars accede that biology must be acknowledged in the way that gender roles and conception are articulated, the essentialism instituted by an unproblematic correlation between biology and gender “precludes social change by insisting that change is impossible, deeply undesirable, or both.”²⁵

This reading of gender necessitates an understanding of masculinity as not monolithic; it is forever shifting as a function of processes and relationships and is enacted by and affects individuals of differing gendered, sexualized, raced, and classed subject-positions in a variety of ways. This being said, dominant or hegemonic forms of masculinity are actively enacted and promoted to project a sense of uniformity, stability, and naturalness. Within a context of hegemonic masculinity, particular behaviors are perceived as transgressive against what art historian Kaja Silverman usefully terms the “dominant fiction” in her *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*.²⁶ Silverman’s framework acknowledges the limiting patriarchal structures of the dominant fiction, while accounting for its contingent and constructed nature.

Through the work of Louis Althusser, Silverman argues that the dominant fiction, which also might be described as an “ideological reality,” is sustained by ideological beliefs; it is through such beliefs that normative identities are constructed.²⁷ Her book theorizes the “ideological reality through which we ‘ideally’ live both the symbolic order and the mode of production as the ‘dominant fiction.’”²⁸ She posits the Oedipus complex as the “primary vehicle

masculine dominance. Richard Dyer, “Don’t Look Now: Richard Dyer Examines the Instabilities of the Male Pin-Up,” *Screen* 23, no. 3–4 (September 1, 1982): 71.

²⁵ Judith Kegan Gardiner, “Introduction,” in *Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory: New Directions*, ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 12. This suspicion of essentialisms is marked as an area of consensus among scholars of gender and sexuality.

²⁶ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 15.

²⁷ Silverman is specifically referencing Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation).”

²⁸ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 2.

of insertion” into that reality, but argues that even in the most normative of subjects, the “psyche is always in excess of this complex.”²⁹ Silverman describes the ideals embodied by the properly socialized Oedipal subject as the normative gender roles which underpin and sustain the dominant fiction, specifically articulated as the central importance of the family unit and the adequacy of the male subject. This ideology is sustained by a collective belief that Silverman theorizes through the conceptual model of “the specificity of the individual psyche” in the realm of fantasy and ego—“the deepest reaches of the subject’s identity and unconscious desire.”³⁰ While such collective belief cannot be truly uniform, there are many ways in which a dominant fiction overrides the peculiarity and nuance of subjects—those psyches which may be “in excess” of the Oedipal complex.³¹

As I explore more thoroughly in chapter one, the coherence of the family unit was especially an issue in the discourse of homosexuality, which was perceived as a threat to marriage and the family—the foundation for the economic and social success of the nation. More immediately pertinent to my claims about the challenging representations of the human body by the Monster Roster is Silverman’s argument about the vulnerable male body (shown to

²⁹ Ibid.

Freud argues that the Oedipus complex is universal, based in universal structures of kinship, and is the archetypal human experience. It locates parental figures as objects of desire and identification. In the male subject, the child projects his first erotic feelings for another being onto his mother, which renders the father a rival, much more powerful than the child. This acknowledgment of the father figure’s power over the boy manifests as castration anxiety. In a “positive” completion of the Oedipal trajectory, the male subject progresses into maturity and can symbolically defeat the father-figure, thereby diminishing the fear of castration. Freud’s primary case study for the Oedipus Complex in boys is “Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy” (1909). Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, (1925) reprinted in ed. Peter Gay (W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), 22–24. The penis (which Freud conflates with the phallus) plays a significant role in the complex as it represents to the child the possibility of castration when he is made aware of anatomical difference. In female subjects this manifests as penis envy, wherein the child recognizes her own inherent lack. Sigmund Freud, “The Sexual Researches of Childhood,” (1905) reprinted in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), 271.

³⁰ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 16.

³¹ For instance James Gilbert’s *Men in the Middle* makes a compelling point for the relative flexible discourse on masculinity in the 1950s by profiling a number of different public figures and the range of ways that they enacted acceptable and celebrated forms of manhood while not necessarily always adhering to the dominant fiction. James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

be “inadequate”) as a challenge to the dominant fiction. Images of the body as violate make apparent the incommensurability of the penis and the phallus. In her second chapter, “Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity,” Silverman notes the significance of the discourse of war in the construction of the ideal masculinity of the dominant fiction, which relies on the equation of anatomical penis of the subject constructed as fantasy of power attributed to the phallus.³²

Ironically, however, it is often during instances of historical trauma, like war, the equation of the penis and phallus is revealed as a fallacy. She writes, “when the male subject is brought into a traumatic encounter with lack, as in the situation of war, he often experiences it as the impairment of his anatomical masculinity. What is really at issue, though, is a... disintegration... of a bound and armored ego, predicated upon the illusion of coherence and control.”³³

The years following the Second World War were pivotal in the formation of the United States’ identity, both for its own citizens and on the global stage. Again, crucial to this construction was an image of the nation as liberator, but also as liberated and fiercely individualistic—key components of the discourse of masculinity. As has been explored in recent scholarship, the signification of the Abstract Expressionists as representing this constellation of ideal postwar American virtues has been fraught and precarious, indeed as all constructed

³² While Freud did not distinguish between the penis and phallus, Jacques Lacan does in order to emphasize the role that anatomical penis plays in fantasies of absolute male power. Jacques Lacan, “The Meaning of the Phallus,” (1952) reprinted in *Feminine Sexuality*, ed. J. Rose and J. Mitchell, trans. J. Rose (New York: Norton, 1982). In addition to Silverman’s text, Klaus Theweleit and Susan Jeffords also point to the significance of discourses of war are to the penis/phallus equation (and vice versa). See Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1: *Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. Stephen Conway, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2: *Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, trans. Stephen Conway, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

³³ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 62.

identity is, but it is in part the methods of the New York School's abstraction that permitted it.³⁴ The political discourse needed a visual form, and Pollock's paintings' virile expression and "extravagant" freedom made them a much better vessel than the scarred, flayed, and fragmented bodies of the Monster Roster.³⁵

Much of the most compelling recent art history of postwar American art addresses contemporaneous codes of masculinity and is particularly concerned with embodiment and the problems that physical bodies post for an ideological conflation of penis and phallus (and the implied correlative power). For Amelia Jones, whose second chapter of her 1998 book *Body Art/Performing the Subject* directly addresses postwar notions of masculinity and artistic subjectivity, Jackson Pollock's famous performances of both the act of painting and a particular masculine type is a point of origin for postmodern conceptions of performativity. Her chapter "The Pollockian Performative" thus argues that the modernist codes of artist-genius are always aligned with the white male body. Such an artist is a genius in the Kantian sense, and genius is required in order to produce *beautiful art*, as distinguished from merely craft, labor, or even pleasant reproductions of nature. It is a quality that cannot be taught or learned, and (if wielded properly) results in utterly original work, which will serve as an exemplar for imitation in the future.³⁶ Genius is linked to an individual and therefore dies with the artist, and the artist "himself" does not know from where the ideas his genius is responsible for come; that is to say

³⁴ See, for instance, Fionna Barber, "Politics of Feminist Spectatorship and the Disruptive Body: De Kooning's 'Woman I' Reconsidered," in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 127–37; Butt, *Between You and Me*; Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism*; Amelia Jones, "Dis/playing the Phallus: Male Artists Perform Their Masculinities," *Art History* 17, no. 4 (December 1994): 546–84; *ibid.*; Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*.

³⁵ Here, I again quote from Greenberg's 1946 review of Pollock's work. Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of the American Abstract Artists, Jacques Lipchitz, and Jackson Pollock," 75.

³⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (1790; reprinted Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 186–187.

he is divinely inspired.³⁷ With a direct line to such inspiration, the artist is transcendent: possessing a connection to the spirit that protects, guides, and inspires him. Indeed, Caroline Jones writes about this persistent invocation of the transcendent when she describes the construction of the artist's studio as a site where the sublime is invoked in her *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*; this linking of genius to site informs my interrogation of the hierarchical relationship between New York and Chicago as sites of cultural production.³⁸

In order for his genius to be recognized, the modernist artist must *also* be visibly embodied. Jones looks to Rosenberg's construction of the "American Action Painter" as an example of this intrinsic conflict. Rosenberg's 1952 article glorifies act of painting as an authentic encounter with the artist's own self—a concept given heroic visual form in Hans Namuth's now-iconic images of Pollock working in his studio.³⁹ (fig. 1) And so, the artist becomes transcendent (in his "genius") through his embodiment (in the "act" of creation). However, the artist must possess a perceptibly straight, white, male body in order to signify the normative subject-position that enables his genius to be recognized.⁴⁰ This line between transcendence and embodiment must be carefully trod, lest the artist fall into immanence—a feminine domain. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues that women have been relegated to the sphere of "immanence," an aggressive embodiment that strips them of subjectivity. She writes of woman's status of Other to men's subjectivity: "They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be

³⁷ Kant specifically sexes the genius as male. Ibid., 187.

³⁸ See her chapter "The Romance of the Studio and the Abstract Expressionist Sublime" in Jones, *Machine in the Studio*.

³⁹ Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters."

⁴⁰ As Jones points out, Rosenberg never names his subject, although Pollock is often invoked in discussions of the "act" of painting. She writes, "The artist is thus 'embodied,' but only in the most abstract and metaphysical sense: the body of the action painting artist...is dematerialized into a universalized trope of individualist 'freedom.'" Jones, "The 'Pollockian Performative' and the Revision of the Modernist Subject," 73.

overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego (*conscience*) which is essential and sovereign.”⁴¹ Men, conversely, are disembodied in their claim to transcendence and therefore are *not* deprived of at least a fantasy of centered subjectivity as women are.

In Amelia Jones’s summation, the artist of the postwar artist-genius code had to walk the careful line between transcendence and acceptable embodiment (normatively white, male, heterosexual) without falling into immanence, thereby appearing feminine and no longer signifying the normativity required of the artist. Pollock’s performativity is an apt example because although he embodied the normative artist body, he also unveiled it through his filmed and photographed painting-performance as well as the visible persona created by media coverage. This unveiling makes him as a subject vulnerable to immanence, which is articulated in Lacanian terms as castration.⁴² While the literal act of castration may not have been a risk, we have seen that castration certainly was a rhetorical element of the media coverage and success of Pollock, thus the sustained claims of Abstract Expressionism’s capacity to reveal the vitality and virility of the American artist. Conversely, the unabashedly vulnerable bodies depicted by the Monster Roster were the stuff of “nightmares,” perhaps even more so when juxtaposed with the heroism of the Pollock-myth.⁴³

Andrew Perchuk successfully argues that the myth of Pollock as postwar icon of masculinity was not a matter of biographical appeal, but rather that the masquerade of masculinity constituted by processes of masculine display in the paintings themselves was crucial to their success in the era of their production. Perchuk ends his text, “Pollock and Postwar Masculinity,” with a comment about the great irony of Pollock’s success: while his works continue to be heroized in the context of the midcentury crisis of masculinity, the artist

⁴¹ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, xxxv.

⁴² See above discussion of Silverman on Lacan and the incommensurability of the penis and the phallus.

⁴³ Author unnamed, “Art: Here Come the Monsters,” *Time* 74, no. 10 (September 7, 1959): 62.

himself became increasingly aware of his own process/performance of painting as masquerade—that is as histrionic, as feminine—and eventually broke down, or as Amelia Jones would put it, fell into immanence.⁴⁴ This points to the doublethink at the core of such performances of masculinity: for the masquerade to be an effective projection of masculinity, it must remain unknown *as* a masquerade.⁴⁵

The value of a performative model of gender and identity has been used to great effect to reveal certain escape hatches from otherwise repressive roles. After laying out the dominant fiction, Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* explores the “feminine” psychic spaces of non-normative male subjectivities and examines how such a subversive embodiment can be empowering for those who do not fit neatly into the dominant fiction. Particularly compelling for my own study is her discussion of both physically and socially disempowered World War II veterans, to which I will return at greater length in chapter one. Similarly, Amelia Jones devotes her article “Dis/Playing the Phallus” to the ways in which the body art works of some performance artists from the 1960s and 1970s played with the postwar codes of masculinity in order to both avow and disavow the conflation of the penis and the phallus that guides the dominant fiction. She argues that the masculinist veiling of the phallus has benefited the male modernist artist (particularly sexualized, classed, and raced as described above in her *Body Art*) as well as the institutions that maintain claims of critical authority.⁴⁶ Crucially useful in both

⁴⁴ Perchuk, “Pollock and Postwar Masculinity.”

Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 80.

⁴⁵ Lacan writes, “the phallus can only play its role as veiled, that is as in itself the sign of the latency with which everything signifiable is struck as soon as it is raised (*aufgehoben*) to the function of signifier”

These acrobatics are also true for Althusserian ideology: in order to remain intact, ideology's “obviousness” must be perceived as such. Lacan, “The Meaning of the Phallus,” 82.

Furthermore, the masquerade is generally understood as feminine in psychoanalytic terms: “the fact that femininity takes refuge in this mask, because of the *Verdrängung* inherent to the phallic mark of desire, has the strange consequence that, in the human being, virile display itself appears as feminine” Ibid., 85.

⁴⁶ Jones, “Dis/playing the Phallus.”

Silverman's and Jones's texts are their explanations of engagement in the discourse of masculinity and the dominant fiction as constitutive of that discourse.

Gavin Butt deftly articulates this interplay in his book *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*.⁴⁷ Butt poses gossip as a queer form of epistemology and discusses the manner in which gossip about the New York art scene and its inhabitants was informed by the larger conversation about male sexuality incited by the 1948 Kinsey Report as well as prior conceptions of what the artist's body meant in the spectrum of sexuality. This gossip not only elicited fears about the potential queerness of artists, but in some cases resulted in a performed masculinity (as with Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning's notorious brawls at the Cedar Street Tavern described in postwar art histories) that actively attempted to push against these suspicions.⁴⁸ In turn, the behavior of the most famous New York School representatives informed new understandings of masculinity, embodied in the now iconic image of Pollock from the 1949 *Life* magazine article that queried: "Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?"⁴⁹ (fig. 2) The two page photograph spread pictures Pollock leaning against one of his drip paintings, arms and legs crossed, head cocked, chin jutting, cigarette dangling off his lips, and clad entirely in denim, the working man's uniform.

This reconfiguration of the artist in terms of class and new codes of American masculinity is also linked to the transition of the avant-garde from Europe to the United States. Caroline Jones argues that the postwar artists of New York shifted the trope of the artist in his elegantly appointed, and often social, studio to that of the artist-genius laboring in his private

⁴⁷ Butt, *Between You and Me*.

⁴⁸ For romanticizing tales of the New York School's exploits, see Irving Sandler, "The Club," *Artforum*, September 1965, 27-31; Steven Naifeh and Gregory Smith, *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1989).

⁴⁹ Author unnamed, "Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?," *Life*, August 8, 1949, 42-45.

sanctum. While the privacy of the postwar New York studio enabled the view of artist as individual pursuing an authentic expression of self (a subjectivity to be found in the transcendent masculine subject) without external influence, it also promoted the concept of the artist as industrious worker, notably articulated in the representation of Jackson Pollock in text and visual media. Amelia Jones marks Pollock as exemplary of the postwar American artistic stance against the nineteenth-century European anti-bourgeois artist represented by figures like Eugene Delacroix, who presented himself as an aristocrat.⁵⁰ Pollock, conversely, “aligned himself with recognizable codes of masculinity (and hence of artistic authority),” specifically those understood as working class—such sartorial codes included cowboy boots and hat, denim, and the tee shirt à la Marlon Brando as rebel in *The Wild One* (1953).⁵¹ (fig. 3) Indeed Pollock not only employed established tropes of masculinity, but came to signify them as his fame and the Pollock-myth grew.

Robert Corber also usefully points to the way in which visual culture can both reflect and constitute a subjectivity that bolsters dominant fiction. He argues that, rather than viewing Alfred Hitchcock’s movies of the postwar era solely as products of a purist auteur function, it is much more useful to view them in their function as ideologically overdetermined Cold War narratives, articulating the interrelated structures of gender, sexuality, and political allegiance for consumption. He writes, “Hitchcock’s films function as fantasy scenarios that rendered the spectator’s insertion within the discourses of national security not only desirable but

⁵⁰ Amelia Jones, “‘Clothes Make the Man’: The Male Artist as a Performative Function,” *Oxford Art Journal* 18, no. 2 (1995): 22.

⁵¹ While the rebel was a more recent model of masculinity, the myth of the cowboy developed in the years between the 1890s to the First World War, aided in concept development by the “real life heroics” of President Teddy Roosevelt. Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 31.

pleasurable.”⁵² Corber’s text focuses on the social panic of the 1950s, wherein homosexuals were regarded as both exemplary and constitutive of the contemporary crisis of masculinity. Like Butt’s study, and as is implicit in most of the above-mentioned texts, Corber posits that homosexuality was perceived as a foil for the postwar ideal of heterosexual masculinity, and points to the baggage that such a binary understanding carries. Male homosexuals were constructed as effeminate and likely Communist (and vice versa), each subject position constituted by characteristics at odds with the normative masculinity of the American dominant fiction. The binary tensions Corber reveals are helpful to my own study as they point to how oppositional structures are often mapped on to each other in the intersecting dialogues of the postwar period.

The discourse of national security was inextricably linked with the gender and sexuality identifications believed to be linked to the economic prosperity of the United States in the postwar years—including, for instance, the male subject as a member of a secure heteronormative family unit, which Silverman argues is one of the primary elements of the dominant fiction.⁵³ Such a male subject was believed to have successfully completed the Freudian Oedipal trajectory, wherein gender and heterosexuality necessarily develop simultaneously, while homosexuals and individuals who did not abide by acceptable gender roles (“mama’s boys,” working mothers, confirmed bachelors) were understood to have failed to have done so.⁵⁴ Barbara Ehrenreich argues that the dominant construction of normative adult

⁵² Robert J. Corber, *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 6. Here, Corber uses a definition of “fantasy” that signifies the setting that enables the subject’s desire, rather than the object of desire itself.

⁵³ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 31.

⁵⁴ In a later consideration of the Oedipus complex, Freud clarifies, “the matter is made more difficult to grasp by the complicating circumstance that even in the boy the Oedipus complex has a double orientation, active and passive, in accordance with their bisexual constitution; a boy also wants to take his *mother’s* place as the love-object of his *father*—a fact which we describe as the feminine attitude.” In this theory, if a male subject could not complete the Oedipal trajectory he would retain these “feminine attitudes,” one consequence of which was thought to be

masculinity in the 1950s was a breadwinner with a wife and family.⁵⁵ Emergent forms of deviant masculinity included figures like the irresponsible teen or the beatnik, often identifiable by physical presentation and lifestyle. Such aberrations to normative masculinity were examined in the social and political discourse as a threat to the family structure. For example the beatnik, Butt points out, “was often castigated for his immaturity and lack of adult (i.e. family) responsibility, which blurred into his imputed homosexuality.”⁵⁶ Thus, the “enemy within” that threatened the nation was constituted not only by political enemies, but by homosexuals, who were constructed as a challenge to the structure of the middle-class family.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the notion that any individual’s psyche might betray him/her at any moment as an “enemy within” encouraged a constant self-policing on the part of the citizen.⁵⁸ Corber’s readings of many of Hitchcock’s movies suggest that they function to operate the citizen/spectator safely through the Oedipal trajectory. Packaged as entertainment, this didactic function is made “pleasurable” to the viewer.

The Freudian foundation that Corber suggests mobilizes Hitchcock’s films as ideological education was also heavily utilized in postwar art critical discourse. In her book *Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America*, Elizabeth Lunbeck suggests that a psychiatric model of culture and gender was firmly in place by the 1950s, outfitted with normative assumptions about masculinity and homosexuality that resulted in the ostracizing and

homosexuality. Sigmund Freud, “Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes,” (1925) reprinted in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), 672.

Another text that addresses the danger of such arrested development in relation to performance in war is Edward Strecker’s 1946 *Their Mother’s Sons*, which I discuss in chapter one. Edward Adam Strecker, *Their Mothers’ Sons: The Psychiatrist Examines an American Problem* (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1946).

⁵⁵ Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (London: Pluto, 1983), 14–28.

⁵⁶ Butt, *Between You and Me*, 37.

⁵⁷ See Norman Podhoretz, “The Know-Nothing Bohemians,” *Partisan Review* 25 (1958): 305–18; Bernard Wolfe, “Angry at What?,” *The Nation*, November 1, 1958, 316–21.

⁵⁸ Corber, *In the Name of National Security*, 99.

marginalizing that Corber discusses.⁵⁹ Joseph Pleck writes that these conditions made the “maintenance of masculinity the dominant feature of Freudian thought” in American culture.⁶⁰ Leja’s widely influential *Reframing Abstract Expressionism* argues that the New York School was engaged in a nationwide project of reformulating individual identity. Leja conducts a close reading of a myriad of anthropological and psychological discussions that he suggests not only informed the work of Jackson Pollock and his contemporaries, but also informed the reception of these works. Indeed, he argues that Pollock’s paintings became heavily weighted metaphors in the mainstream cultural discourse of individuality. He devotes a chapter to the discourse of the Modern Man, which he usefully describes as a “structure of belief and assumption informing a highly diverse range of literary and visual texts.”⁶¹ Leja articulates the way in which Abstract Expressionism came to serve specific interests and was the product of particular ideologies, regardless of how violently both contemporary and current critics have attempted to think of the New York School artists as painting their individual psyches, as if they (and their psyches) were not subject to ideology.⁶² Indeed, the longevity and apparent appeal of postwar psychoanalytic readings of Abstract Expressionism further support Pleck’s description of psychology as in the service of hegemonic masculinity.

This psychoanalytic focus on individuality has served as the basis for its own body of interpretive literature, but what makes it particularly relevant to this project is the manner in which it limited which subjectivities could have full expression. For instance, as Leja points out, certain subjects were not accounted for within the Modern Man discourse: “*Modern* designated a

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁶⁰ Joseph H. Pleck *The Myth of Masculinity*, 158, as cited in Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 65.

⁶¹ Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 204.

⁶² Leja writes, “Those places where ideology is said to be absent, as Louis Althusser reminds us, are often the sites of its most effective operations.” *Ibid.*, 5.

status implicitly denied to all African-Americans and Native Americans merely by virtue of their racial identity, which was assumed to entail a fixed core of unreconstructed—and unreconstructable—‘primitive human nature.’”⁶³ As stated above, postwar psychoanalytic theory (among many other disciplines) was in large part dedicated to the preservation of the dominant fiction—a construction which was antithetical to certain subjectivities, queer men and women for example, and simply had no place for others, as with men of color rendered primitive by their racial identity.

Psychoanalysis as practiced in the postwar period was invested in reconstituting subjects in service of the dominant fiction, and the potentially sustained wounding of traumatized soldiers and veterans of World War II rendered them marginal subjects in this project. In short, psychoanalysis permitted *some* subjects a right to their individuality, while others were excluded as pathological. Using the same framework by which other scholars have interrogated how postwar psychoanalytic constructions of self have ostracized queer subjects or subjects of color, this project is particularly interested in the similarly “non-normative” subject of the veteran.

The Monster Roster

Coined by Schulze in the 1950s, Monster Roster is a contested term, but it was most widely thought to be relevant to the grotesque humanoid figures—monsters—that populated Roster works.⁶⁴ As with the New York School, there is not necessarily a unifying aesthetic that unites the Chicago School, but Joshua Kind, in his 1964 article on the city’s visual idiom notes

⁶³ Ibid., 253.

⁶⁴ Lynne Warren, ed., *Art in Chicago: 1945-1995* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art; Distributed by Thames & Hudson, 1996), 14.

Kind writes “The appellation ‘Monster Roster,’ was perhaps first applied by Franz Schulze, *Art News*, February 1959, p. 56. It was then given wide currency by the appearance of the article “Here Come the Monsters,” *Time*, September, 7, 1959. p. 62.” Joshua Kind, “Sphinx of the Plains: A Chicago Visual Idiom,” *Chicago Review* 17, no. 2/3 (January 1, 1964): 54.

that nearly all the Chicago artists exhibited a tendency towards the figural, or in the least towards an image composed of signs.⁶⁵ While the representational, specifically the figural, persisted in Chicago, the bodies depicted were often markedly vulnerable, frequently imaged as fragmented or torn, their surfaces broken or ruptured. Such imaging invites a reading of these bodies as victimized, rather than perpetrators of violence. As Kind writes, “[i]t is ironic that this group of artists, typified by a handling which lends their works a quality of tenderness and despair, even when their themes are sardonic and irrational, should have been dubbed ‘Monsters’ and so presented to the ‘outside world’ in art and non-art publications.” Expressing a similar sentiment in a text on the impact of Jean Dubuffet’s *Anticultural Positions* on the Chicago School, George Cohen wrote, “[a] Chicago critic later called what we had done ‘Monster Art,’ an unfortunate term that described a small facet of it all and helped to bury the rest of what we were doing (critics are the true anticultural agents).”⁶⁶ As such, the designation of the group as “monsters” urges the question of what ways can we consider this sort of postwar figuration monstrous?

As Kind points out, while the figures that populated many of the so-called Roster works were indeed grotesque, the bias against “explicit content” lent a potentially malicious tone to the adoption of the name.⁶⁷ A September 1959 *Time* magazine article, “Here Come the Monsters,” profiles four Chicago artists working against the abstract trends of Manhattan, and describes the Roster as the “horror school...staffed by an earnest, loose-knit, and surprisingly well-adjusted handful of Art Institute graduates.” It ends with the note that Chicago will have strong

⁶⁵ This insistence on representation during the dominant trend towards abstraction led Schulze to initially call this first generation of the Chicago School the Imagists, a term which has since been shifted to apply to the later artists working in the 1960s and 1970s, like Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, and Ed Paschke, who were heavily informed by pop culture imagery. Franz Schulze, “Art in Chicago: The Two Traditions,” in *Art in Chicago: 1945-1975*, ed. Lynne Warren (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art; Distributed by Thames & Hudson, 1996), 14.

⁶⁶ Jean Dubuffet, “Anticultural Positions: Lecture Given by Jean Dubuffet at the ‘Arts Club of Chicago,’” in *Dubuffet and the Anticulture*, by Jean Dubuffet and Richard L. Feigen (New York: R. L. Feigen & Company, 1969), 10.

⁶⁷ Kind, “Sphinx of the Plains,” 40.

representation at the forthcoming *New Images of Man* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, curated by former Chicagoan Peter Selz, and the bleak assertion that “[f]rom Chicago, at least, it appears that man is not looking good.”⁶⁸ While the art column of *Time* had previously called for a return to academic figural painting in a time when abstract expression “rule[d] the cash register”, the “nightmarish” bodies of the Chicago artists were not what they had in mind.⁶⁹ Before considering what it *is* that is so “monstrous” about the Chicago artists, I will first introduce some of the key voices commonly referenced in my project.

Though different scholars group different artists in the Monster Roster, those consistently named include George Cohen, Cosmo Campoli, Dominick DiMeo, Leon Golub, Theodore Halkin, June Leaf, Seymour Rosofky, Evelyn Statsinger, Nancy Spero, and H.C. Westermann.⁷⁰ While a handful of these artists have gone on to more than regional fame, for the most part they remain largely unknown outside of Chicago. While the women artists of the SAIC like June Leaf and Nancy Spero were instrumental in organizing Momentum, like their counterparts of the New

⁶⁸ “Art: Here Come the Monsters,” 62.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

For instance, this call for the return to representation, or the unification of form and content accomplished by the “great masters,” serves as the magazine’s middle ground in a discussion of the detractors and defenders of Abstract Expressionism in Author unnamed, “Art: The Wild Ones,” *Time* 67, no. 8 (February 20, 1956): 70–75. I return to this article and its implications in my third chapter.

⁷⁰ Joseph Goto is another member sometimes affiliated with the Monster Roster, as I explore in chapter three, but is alternately included or not depending on if it serves the purposes of the narrative. For instance, Chicago art historians Peter Selz and Patrick Malone included him in their 1956 article “Is There a New Chicago School?” because of his critical recognition from important figures like MoMA director Alfred Barr and Art Institute Curator Katharine Kuh. Goto was embraced by Barr and Kuh in no small part because of the abstract form of his steel sculpture; Kuh discussed him as an extension of the abstraction of New York. Of course, when Selz and Malone included him, they referenced and imaged only those works which had the most obvious biomorphic forms, and called them “monsters.” Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?”; Katharine Kuh, “The Midwest: Spearhead-Chicago,” *Art in America* 42 (Winter 1954): 32–39; 71.

Goto is a subject worthy of much more study for the way that his work navigated boundaries—he worked in the marginalized milieu of Chicago, but his forms are by and large abstract, a mode of art-making that was eventually marginalized as the narrative of the Monster Roster has come to dominate art histories of postwar Chicago. Like many of his Chicago peers, he was a veteran and student of the SAIC. He was Japanese-American, born in Hawaii, and the welding skills he learned during his military service in Hawaii gave him the foundation of his when he pursued steel sculpture at the SAIC. Unfortunately, this project does not have adequate space to address the complexities of Goto’s position in the postwar American art scene, though he is a subject I keep in mind for future study. Warren, *Art in Chicago: 1945-1995*, 254.

York School, they were more frequently neglected in critical coverage. Indeed, this occurred in part because much of the rhetoric produced by and about Momentum (and later the Monster Roster) made the veteran status of the students and artists a defining issue, as I explore more thoroughly in chapter two. Indeed, Selz's *New Images of Man* exhibition included strong Chicago representation, but just one woman artist: Germaine Richier. My focus on the incompatibility of the vulnerable subject of the male veteran with the nation-building political project of postwar American has dictated that most of the artists I discuss are male, but I attempt to address this unfortunately gendered gap in my conclusion, as the masculinist structures responsible for the marginalization of women artists are also responsible for the silence around the subject of the traumatized veteran after the Second World War. This project references a number of works by Roster artists, but I have chosen to focus largely on three in particular to serve as a cross-section: George Cohen, Leon Golub, and H.C. Westermann.

Cohen was the oldest of the postwar Chicago artists, often recognized as one of the most influential of the early Chicago School due to his age and education.⁷¹ Unlike his younger peers, he attended the SAIC before serving during World War II. While Golub, Campoli, and their classmates were earning their fine arts degrees, Cohen was at the University of Chicago pursuing his MA and PhD in art history. While a student, he also worked at the Field Museum of Natural History and studied the ethnographic art collection; this is when he would develop his affinity for the "primitive" imagery common to many of the Chicago School artists. His work is more often described in relation to Surrealism.⁷² Much of his painting features fragmented body parts floating in an uncertain ground, like the cloudy forms of *Queenie* (1955) or the much more clearly delineated parts in *Emblem for an Unknown Nation* (1954). (figs. 4 and 5) His

⁷¹ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 110.

⁷² Thomas M. Folds, "The New Images of the Chicago Group," *ARTnews* 58, no. 6 (October 1959): 40–41, 52–53.

assemblage works, like *Anybody's Self-Portrait* (1953), which makes use of doll parts, would elicit comparisons to Surrealist Hans Bellmer's reconfigured doll sculptures, and led some critics to name Cohen as a precursor to Pop.⁷³ (fig. 6 and 7) He would participate in all of the Exhibition Momentum shows from their inception in 1948 until 1957.⁷⁴ Cohen was among the most successful of the Momentum artists and the Monster Roster in the 1950s, showing regularly in Chicago and New York, though he has more recently fallen into obscurity. He devoted much of his career to teaching—both painting and art history—at the Evanston Art Center, the Institute of Design, and Northwestern University.⁷⁵ While the *Time* article 1959 “Here Come the Monsters” lists Cohen as one of the potential exhibitors of Selz's *New Images of Man*, ultimately he was not included.⁷⁶ He received strong positive critical attention during the 1958 Pittsburgh Bicentennial International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture, and had a solo exhibition at the Alan Gallery in New York concurrent with *New Images*.⁷⁷

Like Cohen, Leon Golub was a Chicago native. As a teenager he took art classes at the Art Institute and through Works Progress Administration art education programs. In 1942 he earned his BA in art history, and began work on an MA, at the University of Chicago, after which he was called to serve in the military—he worked for three years as reconnaissance cartographer in Belgium, England, and Germany.⁷⁸ Though he never saw combat, he was profoundly affected by the destruction he saw as he moved through Europe, and had very early

⁷³ This association with Pop is also born of his friendship with Claes Oldenburg, who lived in Chicago before achieving success in New York. George Cohen, “Letter to Richard Feigen,” in *Dubuffet and the Anticulture*, by Jean Dubuffet and Richard L. Feigen (New York: R. L. Feigen & Company, 1969), 11.

⁷⁴ Warren, *Art in Chicago: 1945-1995*, 247. His wife, Constance Teander, also participated regularly in Exhibition Momentum.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ “Art: Here Come the Monsters,” 62.

⁷⁷ Hilton Kramer, “Report on the Carnegie International,” *Arts Magazine* 13, no. 4 (January 1959): 32, 35; Cohen, “George Cohen Biography.”

⁷⁸ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 42.

exposure to the photographic evidence of what had transpired in the concentration camps.⁷⁹

When he returned from deployment, he could not initially get into the SAIC on the G.I. Bill, so in 1946 he returned to the University of Chicago to continue working on his MA. His advisers, however, were “very cool” to the idea of his writing a thesis on Dada and so when a spot opened up at the SAIC, he enrolled as a painting student in the fall 1947.⁸⁰ Among the most active and vocal of the Chicago School, Golub was instrumental in the formation of the Momentum group. He also was very vocal in his opinions on abstraction, publishing “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism” in *College Art Journal* in 1955.⁸¹ Golub and Cohen were very close friends in the early 1950s—Cohen served as Golub’s best man in his wedding to Nancy Spero—though they eventually had a falling out. Golub claimed that his unrest made Cohen nervous (Cohen had a family with three children and a university teaching job he could not afford to lose). He also notes that there was animosity over the possibility that Golub had “stolen” the idea for his *Burnt Men* series from Cohen.⁸² (fig. 8) Their early work shows an affinity in its symbolic figural content, primitivist influence, and the rough texture of its surfaces—characteristics embraced by a number of Monster Roster artists. Golub engaged with a wide array of “primitivist” imagery: see, for example, *The Bug (The War Machine)* (1953), which references pre-Columbian masks on

⁷⁹ Matthew Baigell, *Jewish-American Artists and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 46.

⁸⁰ Golub recalls:

I was going to write a thesis on Dada although there wasn’t too much information about it. My inclination was showing in a certain way. I think Motherwell’s book came out a year or two after that... Maybe a little later, yes. But actually the University of Chicago was very cool to my doing this. So I don’t know what would have come of it all. They wanted me to write on some 19th century German painter [sic] or something like that. If you were going to be modern, you were supposed to be modern at this kind of level, something like the Nazarenes to which I was very cool.

This quote helps to set the scene for the difficult reception of modernism in early twentieth-century Chicago, as explored in chapter two. It also points to Golub’s long history of anti-institutional behavior. Leon Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, interview by Irving Sandler, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 13, Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art Archives.

⁸¹ Leon Golub, “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” *College Art Journal* 14, no. 2 (January 1, 1955): 142–47.

⁸² Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 10–11.

view at the Field Museum, or his *Orestes* (1956), evocative of ancient Hellenistic sculpture. (figs. 9 and 10) Next to Cohen, he received the most press of his peers, and his work was presented as exemplifying the figural trend in Chicago in Selz's 1956 article "A New Imagery in American Painting," in many ways the precursor to Selz's 1959 exhibition.⁸³ He certainly has become the most famous of the Monster Roster group, though not until decades later, but even at the time, Golub in many ways stood in for the trends of the Roster writ large, much in the way that Pollock stood for the New York School.

H.C. Westermann was not from Chicago, nor did he stay in the city for much more than a decade, but he is a figure that has become inextricably linked with the Chicago School.⁸⁴ He is often aligned with the generation of artists slightly after Cohen and Golub, but like Golub, he applied to the SAIC in 1946 but was deferred because the GI Bill quota had been met. He began his studies in design and the applied arts full-time in 1947, after serving four years of active duty in the Marine Corps, which involved heavy combat. Before finishing his degree, he re-enlisted to serve during the Korean War in 1950. He returned to Chicago in 1952 and received his BFA in 1954. He had his first solo exhibition of paintings that year; 1954 would also see his first foray into sculpture, the medium for which he has become known.⁸⁵ Unlike Cohen and Golub, Westermann was reticent to publicly comment or write about the art scene or provide an organizing theory of his work—he includes no artist statement in the *New Images* catalogue—but his oeuvre has been most often interpreted in light of his biography.⁸⁶ In letters, he wrote

⁸³ Selz, "A New Imagery in American Painting."

⁸⁴ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 70. He grew up in the suburbs of Los Angeles, like Jackson Pollock. He met his second wife, artist Joanna Beall, in Chicago, who donated much of his work and papers as the "H.C. Westermann Study Collection" at the David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art of the University of Chicago.

⁸⁵ Horace Clifford Westermann, *H.C. Westermann: Exhibition Catalogue and Catalogue Raisonné of Objects*, ed. Michael Rooks and Lynne Warren (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001), 171–177.

⁸⁶ Despite his works' intensely referential nature—his sculptures are often filled with a personally developed iconography and textual allusions—Schulze wrote in 1972 "Westermann makes no comment about what they mean

very candidly of the horrors he witnessed during the wars, the earliest experience of which was cleaning up gruesome carnage after the attack of Pearl Harbor. Westermann's military experience has become an integral part of interpretation of his art practice—more so than any other Monster Roster artist. Even the briefest of exhibition reviews have interpreted his work in light of his service. Indeed, his work is the most narrative in content of any discussed in this project; one of his earliest sculptures, *A Soldier's Dream* (1955), is quite literal in his title.⁸⁷ (fig. 11) His drawings, paintings, and sculpture often depict the vulnerable male body, often explicitly in the context of warfare, such as *Sailors Grave* (1959). (fig. 12) The youngest of the Chicago artists included in the *New Images* exhibition, Westermann's idiosyncratic work was singled out for particularly harsh review by *New York Times* art critic John Canaday, who dismissed his work as “stale Dada concoctions” and called the artist “a guest...in a clown suit, forty years late for a costume party, to find a formal dinner in progress.” Such a review not only posits that his work as outmoded but further underscores the notion that the Chicago faction was decidedly on the outside of the avant-garde art scene.⁸⁸

Cohen's, Golub's, and Westermann's works will serve as distinct entrance points as this project explores the existential themes and figural representation common to the Monster Roster and the relationship of these themes and forms to the larger art critical discourse of the postwar period. As a further constraint, the works discussed were produced between 1946 and 1959, crucial years in the history of postwar Chicago art. In 1947, the Art Institute prohibited student participation in the Chicago & Vicinity Art Show, which inspired the creation of independent

and doesn't much enjoy discussing their meaning. But he loves to talk about the beautiful materials.” Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 70.

⁸⁷ The extensive and aesthetically alluring collection of illustrated personal letters has encouraged this biographical inquiry. See Horace Clifford Westermann, *Letters from H.C. Westermann*, ed. Bill Barrette (New York: Timken Publishers, Inc., 1988). Chicago art historian Dennis Adrian and Smart Museum curator Richard Born's apartment features an entire hallway dedicated to framed letters from Westermann to Adrian.

⁸⁸ John Canaday, “Art: New Images of Man,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1959, 40.

artist group Exhibition Momentum and brought together artists into a recognizable Chicago School. Nineteen fifty nine was the year of Selz's *New Images of Man* exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). If we understand Chicago as marginalized in the dominant trends of postwar art, that is existing in a position of alterity in relation to New York, we might understand *New Images of Man* as the bringing the periphery to the center in order to affirm its difference, its marginal status. This was also more or less the end of the first coherent generation of the Chicago School; the tortured existentialism of the Monster Roster gave way to the pop aesthetic as practiced by groups like the Imagists and the Hairy Who.⁸⁹ Golub and Spero also left Chicago for Paris in 1959, and moved to New York upon their return. Westermann shortly thereafter moved to Connecticut with wife, artist Joanna Beall, and Cohen shifted his attention from art-making to teaching in the 1960s.

Other crucial figures of the Monster Roster are art historians Peter Selz and Franz Schulze. Peter Selz, as briefly discussed above, was pivotal figure in the establishment and recognition of a Chicago School. Selz immigrated to New York in 1936, at the age of 17, to escape the National Socialist party. His family had worked in the art trade in Munich, Germany, where they sold mostly Renaissance and Baroque work. In New York, he spent much time at photography and art dealer Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, An American Place, where he first encountered American pre-war modernists. He served in the military in the early 1940s, and like his colleagues in the Monster Roster, attended school on the GI Bill. He began teaching art history at Chicago's Institute of Design in 1949, while still a student, and completed his

⁸⁹ Pop artists like Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, Karl Wirsum (of Chicago's Hairy Who), and Ed Ruscha often pointed to the influence of Westermann's popular iconography as deeply influential on their own practice. Lynne Warren, "'Right Where I Live': H.C. Westermann's American Experience," in *H.C. Westermann: Exhibition Catalogue and Catalogue Raisonné of Objects*, ed. Lynne Warren and Michael Rooks (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001), 59; Michael Rooks, ed., *Dreaming of a Speech Without Words: The Paintings and Early Objects of H.C. Westermann* (Honolulu: The Contemporary Museum, 2006), 98–101.

dissertation on German Expressionism at the University of Chicago in 1954.⁹⁰ This focus would run counter to the lineage of modernism espoused by New York critic Clement Greenberg, who placed the roots of Abstract Expressionism in France.⁹¹ Of his pursuit of German, rather than French modernism, he writes that his own background “compelled him to search for art that was marginalized.”⁹² He continues, “I had dissented from hegemonic claims of a simple and verifiable mainstream in aesthetic affairs,” the ethos which ostensibly motivated his 1959 exhibition *New Images of Man*.⁹³ This notion of Chicago and its players as *in opposition* to the mainstream, read: New York, is significant not only in the development of the Chicago School, but also in its art history. Selz was a crucial actor in the postwar scene, but so, too, did he become an historian of the period. As such, I refer to both contemporaneous works of criticism as well as reflections on the period from years later.

Franz Schulze, similarly, has played a number of different roles in the Chicago art scene. Schulze began as a painting student—he was a classmate of Golub and Compoli and a founding member of Exhibition Momentum—but has been better remembered as an art historian whose especial focus has been the postwar art of Chicago. It has been his 1972 survey of postwar Chicago art *Fantastic Images* that has largely established and defined the Chicago School as such, and it has been an invaluable source in my own project. Furthermore, as stated, Schulze coined the term “Monster Roster” as part of the collective effort to bolster the Chicago contingency to Selz’s 1959 *New Images of Man* exhibition. In 1959, Schulze was an art historian teaching at Lake Forest College, and had been working as a critic for *ARTNews* and the *Chicago*

⁹⁰ Peter Selz, *Beyond the Mainstream: Essays on Modern and Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1–5.

⁹¹ Perhaps most famously in Clement Greenberg, “‘American-Type’ Painting,” (1955) reprinted in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 208–29.

⁹² Selz, *Beyond the Mainstream*, 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Daily News. He also organized the 1959 exhibition *The New Chicago Decade*, which also featured work by Chicago Roster artists Golub, Campoli, Westermann, and Cohen.⁹⁴ While “monster” was a term already in use to refer to some of the Chicago artists’ works as early as 1955, Schulze recalls that he came up with the group name during a conversation with artist Irving Petlin about *New Images* as Selz’s chance to “show the Chicago ‘monsters’ to the world.”⁹⁵ Of course, like Selz, Schulze was working to make a name for himself in the postwar world—they hoped to accomplish this in part through their affiliation with a discrete and marketable group. Once coalesced, perhaps the Monster Roster might achieve the sort of recognition of their New York counterparts. As history has shown, this was not to be the case.

Considering the rather antagonistic moniker—Monster Roster—its worth unpacking what was perceived as being “monstrous” about the group or its works. After all, Schulze’s phrasing is ambiguous: Selz’s Chicago “monsters” could refer to either the works or the artists themselves. The conflation of the artist with his works was a part of the artistic discourse, particularly with regards to the notion that the Abstract Expressionist painting was a direct expression of the artist’s inner experience. This conflation is also evident in the surprise of the *Time* magazine’s article that the “nightmarish” images of the Monster Roster works were produced by such a “surprisingly well-adjusted” group of artists.⁹⁶ As British art historian Jon Bird points out in his 2000 book *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real*, the name was “partly derived from American football; Chicago’s team, the Bears were also known as the ‘monsters of the Midway’.”⁹⁷ This root suggests, perhaps appropriately, a regional battle: the Chicago “team” was making its way to New York to compete against the reigning artistic champions—on their

⁹⁴ Schulze, *The New Chicago Decade, 1950-60*.

⁹⁵ Franz Schulze, “The Legacy of Imagism,” *New Art Examiner*, May 1997, 31.

Selz and Patrick Malone also use the word “monster” in their Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?”.

⁹⁶ “Art: Here Come the Monsters,” 62.

⁹⁷ Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 18.

home turf, no less. While this framework is particularly apt considering Selz's agenda of revealing what figural representation could offer as a response to the existential questions of the postwar period after an age of abstraction, the implied aggression and physical force of a "monster" athlete cannot be neatly mapped on to a "monster" artist.⁹⁸

In the preface to the 1996 anthology *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, Medievalist and Pre-Modern scholar Jeffrey Jerome Cohen suggests that the monster is "a *problem* for cultural studies, a code or a pattern or a presence or an absence that unsettles what has been constructed to be received as natural, as human."⁹⁹ Indeed, the abstraction of the New York school was presented as the next step in the trajectory of modern art: a "natural" manifestation of the United States' eminence in the postwar world.¹⁰⁰ While there was quite a bit of effort invested in the shoring up of Abstract Expressionism's naturalness, Chicago's marginal status made it fairly unlikely that the Roster posed any significant threat to dominance of the New York School. This natural-unnatural dynamic is at play in a 1957 article by ARTnews editor Thomas Hess, sharply

⁹⁸ While the postwar discourse of masculinity did see the reconfiguration of the avant-garde artist according to codes of masculinity (and vice versa), including the brawling behavior of Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, the athlete-subject and the artist subject fulfilled different mythic spaces. Athletic aggression is expected and performed in a sanctioned space, while artistic aggression would be indicative of non-conformist behavior. This non-conformism was still a desirable trait in the construct of the avant-garde artist, but it had the potential to veer over into dangerously subversive territory.

⁹⁹ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), ix.

¹⁰⁰ In "The Decline of Cubism" (1948), Clement Greenberg linked the decline of the French avant-garde and the rise of the American avant-garde with social conditions:

If artists as great as Picasso, Braque, and Léger have declined so grievously, It can only be because the general social premises that used to guarantee their functioning have disappeared in Europe. And when one sees, on the other hand, how much the level of American art has risen in the last five years, with the emergence of new talents so full of energy and content as Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, David Smith...then the conclusion forces itself, much to our own surprise, that the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the gravity of industrial production and political power.

His phrasing "at last" implies the inevitability of this migration, while linking art production with industrial production and political power naturalizes it. Interestingly, this logic does not translate when considering Chicago in relation to New York. Chicago's production (particularly in steel and agriculture) far outweighed New York, and this is in part what gave it its gritty underclass reputation. I expand on this in chapter two. Clement Greenberg, "The Decline of Cubism," *Partisan Review* 15, no. 3 (1948): 369.

named “Younger Artists and the Unforgivable Crime.”¹⁰¹ His article begins with a narrative of Abstract Expressionism as an innovative (and uniquely American) development out of European Modernism, after which he proceeds to rancorously dismiss an exhibition of figural work at the Whitney Museum. “A far better exhibition,” he informs the reader “is at the Jewish Museum, entitled ‘The New York School, Second Generation.’”¹⁰² The great crime of the artists at the Whitney is their refusal to engage with the dominant trend of abstraction—either through ignorance or obstinance—and as a result, Hess describes their work as such: “they feel free to pick and choose from a hundred manners, living and dead, for combinations that might blend into Style...as a result, *creepy art dominates; the exhibition appears murky, freakish, and derivative (as opposed to individual)*.”¹⁰³ For Hess, the gall of these artists to work against the grain, rather than within the now-codified lineage of abstraction, rendered them monstrous.

The Monster Roster, however, was a home-grown appellation and was applied not to the composite “Style” (or lack thereof) that Hess found so troubling at the Whitney, but more often the bodies depicted within the paintings and sculptures. Some of these monstrous bodies were presented as antagonistic and potential threats; in 1955 Joseph Goto’s *Emanak* was described as a terrible “jungle monster” that conjures nightmares of what impacts nuclear technology might have on the known world.¹⁰⁴ (fig. 13) More often, though, the monstrosity of these artworks lie

¹⁰¹ Thomas B. Hess, “Younger Artists and the Unforgivable Crime,” *ARTnews* 56 (April 1957): 46–49.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

Of course, that Hess feels the need to dismiss the figural work at the Whitney while bolstering the persistence of American abstraction into a second generation posits it as an apparent threat.

¹⁰⁴ This description is a quote, presumably from Goto, though it is unspecified. Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?,” 36.

Among the best-known “monster” to arise during the postwar period is from the 1954 film *Godzilla*, which film theorist Chon Noriega describes as “a self-conscious attempt to deal with nuclear history and its effects on Japanese society.” As a Japanese creation, *Godzilla* reckons with both past and potential future experiences. The United States, by comparison, did not suffer an attack quite so singularly and awesomely defeating as the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that encouraged an equivalent acknowledgment of the nation’s and its citizens’ vulnerability. Chon Noriega, “Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare: When ‘Them!’ Is U.S.,” *Cinema Journal* 27, no. 1 (Fall 1987): 63.

in the very recently experienced vulnerability of the human subject, witnessed in Buchenwald and Hiroshima.¹⁰⁵ These atrocities revealed the precarity of life in an *awesome* capacity, but they occurred far away from the State. What became untenable was the importation of this knowledge through the vessel of the veteran, who had often experienced this vulnerability—what Kaja Silverman has described through Lacan as lack—first hand. My own reading is haunted by the notion that it is both the grotesque and permeable bodies imagined in the artwork *and* the constructed identity of the group as veterans that rendered them monstrous. Both the work and the artists were untenable vessels for postwar narrative of a liberated and liberating nation.

Structure

This dissertation is structured into three chapters following this one, each exploring a relevant tension between two *apparently* oppositional poles: postwar masculinity as inevitably set up against femininity (and the correlatively mapped subjectivities of homosexual and communist); New York against Chicago; and abstraction against figuration. As has been a primary goal of the texts that serve as the foundation for my own project, each chapter works to elucidate the mutually constitutive elements of these perceived poles as an attempt to break down assumed binary relationships.

The first chapter sets the social and political scene through the lens of the postwar discourse of masculinity. As has been thoroughly explored by feminist scholars of the postwar period, the hegemonic construction of masculinity was positioned as the hard, strong counterpart

¹⁰⁵ The position of the United States as perpetrator in the case of the atomic bombings is a significant issue for which there is insufficient room in this project. Although bomb was often portrayed as an evil unto itself, Barnett Newman acutely wrote in 1948, “We now know the terror to expect. Hiroshima showed it to us. We are no longer, then, in the face of a mystery. After all, wasn’t it an American boy who did it?” The article went unpublished in Newman’s lifetime. Barnett Newman, “The New Sense of Fate,” in *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O’Neill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 169.

to soft, weak femininity. The postwar period has been recognized as a “crisis” moment of masculinity in the United States—which is to say how the American male subject was failing to meet the masculine ideal. This anxiety spawned a flurry of texts and media concerned both explicitly and implicitly with the state of the American man. This masculine ideal was mobilized in intellectual conversations about the national work ethic, psychology, character, sexuality, literature, and the arts—both in terms of artworks and the persona of the artist. In the first part of this chapter, I track the postwar discourse to its roots in an earlier crisis moment, the 1890s, and point to the ways in which particular ideals of masculinity were marshaled in the wartime and postwar nation-building project. I articulate the terms of the postwar discourse on masculinity through some of the most widely consumed sources, including sociological texts like William Whyte’s 1956 *The Organization Man*, scientific studies like Alfred Kinsey’s 1948 study on male sexuality, and the Sloane Wilson’s 1955 novel (and construct) *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*. While some texts concerned themselves directly with the function of the male subject in American society, others like Arthur Schlesinger’s 1949 *The Vital Center* simply implied this concern through heavily gendered language that positioned the United States as the new, dominant leader of the free world.

Similarly, the rhetoric of masculine independence that was very much a part of sociological ideal of the modern American man, and by extension the United States, was also a frequent part of the rhetoric surrounding the art produced by the New York School. This construction of masculinity ultimately privileged particular subjects in the art world, and factored into the national and international success of such recognizable figures as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, while marginalizing others who did not fit these masculinist

terms, as has been thoroughly explored by art historical scholars before me.¹⁰⁶ While much attention has been paid to subjects who were and are situated in a position of alterity because of their race, gender, or sexuality, there has been little critical attention paid to the male veteran in this context.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, while there is extensive exploration of the relationship between art and war in the twentieth century, the vast majority of it takes the European experience of World War I as its subject. American narratives about the Second World War are, conversely, painted with a broad, nostalgic brush that leaves little room for discussions of trauma and the soldier or veteran. Ironically, while the soldier and the veteran are ostensibly defined as honorable and honored positions within this dominant fiction, especially considering the significance of the Second World War in the establishment of the nation's view of its own supremacy from World War II onward, a closer examination of the discourse reveals how the potentially traumatized state of the subject ultimately rendered the veteran marginal. This underpins my argument that the often explicit relationship between the figural artwork of the Monster Roster artists and their witnessing and enduring of the trauma of World War II made their subject matter far less palatable in the context of the postwar obsession with an invulnerable masculine subject.

The second chapter focuses on the hierarchical nature of place and its impact on the visibility of art practices on the periphery by exploring the tensions between New York and Chicago. While the discourse of masculinity in the United States made virtually no distinction

¹⁰⁶ In his essay for *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art*, Norman Kleeblatt writes, "[p]aradoxically, although Abstract Expressionism has long been known as a movement that incorporated a great number of outsiders, certain outsiders continued to be marginalized... The history of the past twenty-five years tells a different story, focusing as well on the achievements of women, African Americans, and homosexuals. These and other marginalized identities were often written out of critical discussions as the emerging canon was being formed." Norman L. Kleeblatt, "Greenberg, Rosenberg, and Postwar American Art," in *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt (New York; New Haven: Jewish Museum under the auspices of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America ; Yale University Press, 2008), 145.

¹⁰⁷ The implications of class in the postwar context have not been as thoroughly explored as these other inflections on subjectivity, but it is a significant undercurrent of my discussion of the veteran, especially in chapter one when I discuss the tensions between the desires of the male veteran students of the Art Institute of Chicago to both earn a middle-class living wage to support families as well as earn artistic recognition.

about place, except of course to bemoan the homogenizing impact of the ever-expanding suburbs, replete with uniform houses with picture windows, attempts to establish the United States as the new cultural superpower often framed New York as the burgeoning center of the visual arts in relation to the decaying formal capital of Paris. While there had been competition between Chicago and New York since the nineteenth century for the position of the nation's iconic city, by the mid-1950s New York had absolutely secured dominance in the cultural realm, as substantiated and reinforced by A.J. Liebling's serial lambast of Chicago as "The Second City" in *The New Yorker* in 1952.¹⁰⁸

The postwar Chicago art scene was lamented even among Chicago artists for the lack of an infrastructure that would enable its young practitioners—students of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in particular—to achieve recognizable success. This chapter delineates the popular national conceptions of Chicago as both blue collar and vice-ridden, promulgated by widely read texts such as William Stead's 1893 *If Christ Came to Chicago* and Upton Sinclair's 1906 *The Jungle*. And while the so-called "Second City" was recognized as the crossroads of American industry, and in many ways the quintessential American city, its reputation was viewed as decidedly provincial when it came to the arts. After establishing the understandings of Chicago's broader cultural construction in the nation's eyes, I trace the institutional exhibiting practices and conservative trends of art criticism in Chicago that were often quite unreceptive to modernism in the early twentieth century, which established the city's rearguard reputation. The student movement that brought many of the eventual Monster Roster artists together and served as the starting point for what would grow into a recognizable Chicago School formed in direct response to perceived and propagated understanding of the city as an unfriendly place to young artists and artwork outside the boundaries of convention.

¹⁰⁸ A. J. Liebling, *Chicago: The Second City* (1952; reprint Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

This chapter culminates with a discussion of the structures of marginalization that ultimately dictated the conversations around art and artists in either of these city centers. As has become an established part of the art historical literature on the postwar period, the need to establish New York as the new cultural center in opposition to Paris encouraged a particular view of the New York School and its work, in both aesthetic and political terms. Similarly, the Chicago art scene *had* to engage with New York's artists, critics, and ideas, in this case in an antagonistic capacity, in its attempts to legitimate its practices. If we consider the time period on which this project focuses as a narrative arc, its climax and denouement are the 1959 Museum of Modern Art exhibition *New Images of Man*, curated by Peter Selz, and its dismissal by New York critics. In a position of alterity, Chicago's artists and its figural practices had to be brought into the center so that it could be affirmed as marginal. Part of what was at issue in the claim to cultural dominance is the notion of exceptionalism. By definition a site (Chicago) cannot be both quintessential *and* the home of the avant-garde, but, paradoxically, the abstraction of the New York School declared absolutely avant-garde was exported as representative of American culture more broadly.

The third chapter explores the relationship between figuration and abstraction in debates about postwar art, building on the foundations laid by the first two chapters. As abstraction was established as the dominant trend in art practice in the United States after the Second World War, its discourse was infused with the social and political concerns of the time—nominally the “crisis of masculinity” as discussed in the first chapter, and the correlative issue of individuality in the face of totalitarian regimes and the Communist threat—as well as the hierarchical value of place, specifically the positioning of New York as artistic avant-garde. For some, like influential critic and culture-maker Clement Greenberg, Abstract Expressionism was the crucial next step in

the forward march of modern art because of its formal capacities, while for others, such as Harold Rosenberg, it was the manifestation of the modern artist's "authentic" confrontation with his inner self. Abstract Expressionism faced its detractors in its early days, and institutional leaders like Museum of Modern Art director Alfred J. Barr and New York critic Greenberg worked to posit New York abstraction as a style that would elevate the United States as an artistic leader, and that represented the ideals of the national political discourse. Their success resulted in its eventual entrenchment as the exemplar of not only the national but also the Western avant-garde and its exportation by government agencies such as the CIA and the State Department as representative of the some of best of American culture. Figuration, by extension, was often described as artistically old-fashioned. Furthermore, as social realism was promoted by fascist regimes, figural art was increasingly viewed with suspicion in the United States, especially in the postwar years. This chapter, however, explores how such debates about the meaning of representation (or non-representation) were based in fluid evidence, marshaled in service of political ends.

The stultifying environment of the Cold War necessarily limited the discussions that could be had about art, which, complemented by the heroized personas of the super-star New York artists, resulted in rhetoric that was both supposedly apolitical in its insistent focus on the individual (internal) self and chauvinistic in its parallel of the American culture and society with a masterful, virile, white, straight, male subject. Through contemporary critiques of abstraction by Chicago voices, I point to some of the discontent with abstraction. Leon Golub and Peter Selz noted that abstraction seemed to carry meanings ascribed to it far beyond what the work itself could convey—much like the emperor's new clothes. For all the rhetoric, this exposure of the inner turmoil of the artist through abstraction revealed actually nothing legibly personal and,

furthermore, circumvented the political reality of people as subjects that live in relation with one another. Or, more simply, they argued that the favoring of an individual self represented abstractly, sufficient and whole even if perhaps troubled, could obscure the wounding traumas of the world-destroying violence of World War II and the suffocating environment of the Cold War. Proponents of the Monster Roster argued that their work addressed the existentialist concerns of the postwar period, also desired within the discourse of abstraction, but had had the advantage of communicability given the universally recognizable human forms. These works, however, insist on the vulnerability of human body. In doing so, these images of broken and flayed bodies propose that the subject, like masculinity, is always in crisis. Such figures *could not* be representational of the nation's ideal subject. Ultimately, the dichotomies laid forth, by proponents of both abstraction and figuration, were in many ways arbitrary. The discourses of image making in the postwar context were so heavily pre-determined by the social and political context that the possibility of either approach was obscured by the silences around the trauma of the Second World War and the repression of the Cold War. This chapter ends with an examination of a selection of works by Monster Roster artists Golub and Westermann. While their artworks are radically different in form and style, they both insist on the vulnerable state of the body in contrast with the wholeness and integrity presumed in a reconstituted human subject, the violated bodies of the Monster Roster insist on a "disintegration...of a bound and armored ego, predicated upon the illusion of coherence and control."¹⁰⁹

My conclusion considers the paths of inquiry that I have encountered during my research but have been unable to follow fully given limits of space and the nature of the dissertation. While my project has focused on a group of marginalized artists, specifically the veteran-students of the SAIC, so too were other artists and groups of people marginalized in their

¹⁰⁹ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 62.

attempts to carve out a space for themselves. I offer up possible future subjects for research on the postwar Chicago art scene.

A Methodological Coda

As I have been working on artists without strong representation in postwar art historiography, I have often turned to interviews and written recollections as a way to flesh out my picture of their milieu. While I believe adding these voices to the conversation offers different lenses through which we can interpret postwar work, I am also very conscious of the patina of authenticity that such an approach lends. In her 1993 essay “Fictions: Krasner’s Presence, Pollock’s Absence,” Anne Wagner argues that the myths built around both Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, which have inescapably colored interpretations of their works, come largely from such testimonies, which convey the appearance of truth.¹¹⁰ The circulation of such quotes then potentially underpins future discursive contributions, and they become crucial building blocks of the unavoidable myths around such artists. Conscious of this methodological catch, I have been as discerning a reader as I am able and attempt to make my own reader aware of the contradictions, disagreements, and (sometimes very obvious) biases in recollections when they arise. As Leon Golub warns Staci Boris in their 1994 interview, “OK, now you must understand that my memory is both good and bad, like most people’s memory, and my memory is intended to make me look good, like most people’s memories. So I will try to give it to you as I remember it, which may or may not be distorted.”¹¹¹ With this sort of self-awareness, I

¹¹⁰ Anne M. Wagner, “Fictions: Krasner’s Presence, Pollock’s Absence,” in *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership*, ed. Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle Courtivron (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 277. She first formulated and presented these ideas in Anne M. Wagner, “Lee Krasner as L.K.,” *Representations*, no. 25 (January 1989): 42–57.

¹¹¹ Leon Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, interview by Staci Boris, November 5, 1994, 1, Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art Archives.

introduce such first-person accounts in order to draw attention to the myriad voices of the postwar period, many of which have been obscured in the process of narrativizing the period.

When I began this process, I thought that what I was doing was writing an account of the much neglected Chicago School, long-suffering in the face of hegemonic New York abstraction. Instead, it has been increasingly clear to me that trying to build narratives from such research often results in the simplification of complex and textured discourses and environments. The discourses that comprise my main foci of study have been constructed in terms of oppositions, which posit a narrative struggle akin to structuralist anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss' theory of binary oppositions: in the battle between New York and Chicago, New York abstraction soars while Chicago figuration struggled and ultimately remained obscure and dismissed by dominant discourses as regional.¹¹² But, as we will see, the reasons for this "success" or "failure" are neither simple nor straightforward. In many ways, the narrative of New York's success has long obscured possible readings, while the relative dearth of scholarship on Chicago allows for a bit more breathing room. As Golub remarked about working Chicago in postwar years: "I think that in Chicago it was like you could run free, because there was no place to run to, so to speak."¹¹³ As such, I present this study not as an act of art historical recovery, or an "alternative" to the

A particularly telling incident of these inevitable ruptures of narrative occurred in an interview with Chicago art dealer Richard Feigen. Discussing the significance of Dubuffet to the Chicago artists (which I address in both chapters two and three), Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art interviewer Staci Boris commented "... I interviewed Leon a couple months ago, and he says that he had been thinking that kind of stuff way before. And it's overrated in its importance, it may have been important but he only reiterated what they had already been thinking and doing in their work." Clearly dissatisfied with this, Feigen responds, "George Cohen, unfortunately a forgotten artist, but also an art historian, and George is much more objective about this. Have you talked to George?" Richard Feigen, Tape-recorded Interview with Richard Feigen, interview by Staci Boris, April 28, 1995, 6, Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art Archives.

Of course it must be pointed out that Feigen curated an exhibit in 1969 on Dubuffet's significance to Chicago. Richard L. Feigen and Jean Dubuffet, *Dubuffet and the Anticulture* (New York: R. L. Feigen & Company, 1969).

¹¹² See Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

Hayden White's notion of the poetic structures of history has been deeply influential on my own understanding of how I engage with and write art historical scholarship. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

¹¹³ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 5, 1994, 17.

dominant narrative, but rather an attempt to broaden and add depth to the conceptions of postwar American art, masculinity, and image-making currently in place, and a pointing to the manners in which socio-political and cultural climates and the needs and wants of audible voices almost inevitably dictate the terms of discourse and scholarship.

Chapter One: Postwar Masculinity and the Artist and Veteran Subjects

The fact that he had been too quick to throw a hand grenade and had killed Mahoney, the fact that some young sailors had wanted skulls for souvenirs, and the fact that a few hundred men had lost their lives to take the island of Karkow—all these facts were simply incomprehensible and had to be forgotten. That, he had decided, was the final truth of the war, and he had greeted it with relief, greeted it eagerly, the simple fact that it was incomprehensible and had to be forgotten. Things just happen, he had decided; they happen and they happen again, and anybody who tries to make sense out of it goes out of his mind.

Sloan Wilson, *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, 1955¹

Introduction

In his survey of the decade, historian David Halberstam writes that Sloane Wilson's 1955 *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* was one of the most influential novels of the 1950s.²

Published in twenty-six languages, Halberstam suggests that it would come to stand as an “authentic” representation of American life both at home and abroad. Wilson's title thoroughly pervaded popular speech almost as soon as it made the best-sellers list, and evoked an instantly recognizable type of postwar America. The middle-class working man who became the mobilizing cog of the postwar American economic machine, a man in gray flannel was “a rather limited sort of fellow...an arch example of [conformity], the squarest guy in the world.”³

Reflecting from 1983, Wilson describes how the phrase became an instant punchline for comedians and MAD magazine, how businessmen who had worn gray flannel since prep school changed clothes to show their free-spiritedness, and how blue collar workers started wearing

¹ Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955; reprint New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), 95–96.

² David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Random House, 1993), 522.

³ Sloan Wilson, introduction to *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, by Sloan Wilson (New York: Arbor House, 1983), reprinted as afterword to *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, by Sloan Wilson (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), 279, 278.

gray flannel to prove their middle class status.⁴ Even now, the phrase evokes this same construction; the front book flap of historian James Gilbert's 2005 *Men in the Middle* suggests that his text will add "crucial dimensions" to understandings of postwar masculinity; "[n]o longer will this era be seen solely in terms of the conformist man in the gray flannel suit or the Marlboro Man."⁵

When I began my research for the analysis of the postwar discourse of masculinity that comprises the foundation of this chapter, I decided that in addition to the key sociological texts addressed by scholars of this period, such as David Riesmann's 1950 *The Lonely Crowd* and William Whyte's 1956 *The Organization Man*, it would be prudent to round out my examination by reading novels that have become central to this discourse. Some novels, such as those of the Mike Hammer series by Mickey Spillane, were pretty much as I expected: adventure stories about an independent macho ex-soldier, who fought crime (often committed by effete Communist foes) to preserve the democratic ideals that had been at stake during the Second World War.⁶ But sitting down and reading Sloane Wilson's 1955 novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, all but stopped me short. While the text is repeatedly invoked in the discourse of postwar American masculinity and culture, references to the text are often at odds with the true subject of the novel: a veteran struggling with the reconciliation of his wartime experience with his life in the shifting economic and social landscape of postwar America, a space in which it

⁴ Ibid., 278.

Such popular references include a 1956 episode of *The Honeymooners*, in which Ed Norton (played by Art Carney) emerges from a manhole and asks Ralph Kramden (played by Jackie Gleason), "Who did you expect, the man in the gray flannel suit?" In 1957 movie *12 Angry Men*, which features Lee J. Cobb as angry Juror #3, who derides Juror #12 by calling him the boy in the gray flannel suit.

⁵ Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*.

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⁶ I do a closer reading of Spillane's 1951 *One Lonely Night* later in this chapter.

was tacitly unacceptable to discuss the trauma of the war. Ironically, the protagonist Tom Rath's struggle to share his traumatic experience with his wife, and the book's stark acknowledgment of the horrors of the war for both victims abroad and American soldiers, is mostly repressed in the discourse of the novel.

This disconnect is a crystallization of my argument about the negligible place of the veteran subject in American society. While the World War II soldier was an ideological symbol of the nation's military power and new status on the global stage, I argue that the veteran's potentially traumatic experience rendered him an uneasy subject to embody the ideal masculinity of the postwar year's "dominant fiction."⁷ The resultant marginalization of the veteran subject was a primary reason for the relative neglect of the *Monster Roster* in Chicago—the artists with whom this project is primarily concerned—whose imagery often invoked a traumatized body. As Wilson intimates in the epigraph to this chapter, the "truth" of the war was horrific, so much so that it simply had to be forgotten. Ironically, he foreshadowed the co-option of his text and characters into postwar discussions of conformity and its negative impact on the ideal masculine subject. Wilson writes that originally his protagonist Tom Rath was meant to signify resistance to conformity, but sociologists and "heavy thinkers" like William Whyte, author of *The Organization Man*, reframed Rath as a weak man who would not challenge the stultifying effect of "Organization"-oriented business practices.⁸

This reading, so strongly influenced by the sociological inquiries into the state of masculinity in American society, has shifted interpretations of the novel away from its traumatic subject matter. Even more contemporary readers frame the novel in terms of conformity. In his 2002 Introduction to the novel, novelist Jonathan Franzen suggests two interpretations for Rath's

⁷ Here, I use Silverman's term, further explored in this project's introduction.

⁸ William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (1956; reprint Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 132.

difficulty adjusting to civilian life in the years after the war: perhaps he has been traumatized, or perhaps “he’s pining for the sense of excitement and manly engagement that he lost after the war.”⁹ Franzen goes on, somewhat glibly, “[w]hether he was killing enemy soldiers or falling in love with an Italian orphaned teenager, Tom Rath as a soldier felt intensely alive in the present.”¹⁰ Such a reading aggressively denies the many passages in the book that insist on the horrors of the war, or as Rath finally explains to his wife:

Do you know what it's like to be scared right down to the bottom of your guts? Do you know what it's like to be sure beyond the shadow of a doubt that you'll be killed on the next jump, or the jump after that? And do you know what it's like to be half afraid of yourself, to know in your heart that the last man you killed was killed with pleasure? Do you know how a corpse grins? When you see enough of that grin, everything decent in the world seems a joke.¹¹

Rath’s fear, desperation, and despair are all papered over by Franzen’s description of the war as “excitement and manly engagement,” a romantic understanding of the Second World War that has contributed to the obscuring of the harrowing experience of its soldiers and the silencing of its veterans’ discontent in the postwar years.¹²

This chapter sets forth the terms that underpin my arguments about the marginal position of artists in Chicago as well as an art world climate inhospitable to the often grotesque figural art of the Monster Roster. It begins with a brief literature review of masculinity studies and the terms and arguments that have been most influential on my own scholarship. I then conduct my

⁹ Jonathan Franzen, introduction to *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, by Sloan Wilson (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), unpaginated.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, 266.

¹² While the trauma of Vietnam veterans has now been widely recognized and discussed and led to the establishment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the experience of World War II soldier remains in large part romanticized as part of the United States’ narrative of postwar military and political eminence. In the introduction to the 1983 reprint of his novel, Sloan Wilson notes that young people were writing to him, deeply moved by the novel and its protagonist’s trauma. I would venture to say that this is a direct result of the recognition of PTSD, and the strong possibility that many of these young readers were the children of Vietnam veterans who recognized some of Rath’s fear in their families and communities. Wilson, afterword to *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*.

own analysis of the American discourse of masculinity of the 1940s and 1950s. My next step is to elaborate on how postwar constructions of gender and ideal masculinity were utilized in the reconfiguration of the postwar American avant-garde in New York, without spending too much time restating this already well-established body of literature.¹³ This brief discussion is in service of an explanation of how, contemporaneously, Chicago artists were employing rhetoric very similar to that of their New York counterparts to attain recognition. In particular I examine a 1950 sociological interrogation of the Chicago student artists conducted by a graduate student at the University of Chicago as well as the text of the catalogue of independently hosted 1950 student exhibition “Exhibition Momentum.” I then draw upon the terms laid out earlier in the chapter to explain how the veteran status of many of the Chicago artists who would go on to comprise the Monster Roster may have ultimately worked against them; in many ways the subject of the avant-garde artist was incompatible with the veteran subject.

In the latter half of this chapter I explore the ways in which the veteran subject ran counter to the ideals of postwar masculinity, even as it ostensibly embodied much of the rhetoric of masculine strength and power. As Wilson’s novel reveals in both its content and its discourse, the traumatic experience of the veteran was not a topic eagerly and openly discussed; in some ways the veteran subject constituted a threat to the normative postwar codes of ideal masculinity. Even as actors in the “Good War,” soldiers are subjects who become intimately familiar with the vulnerability of their own bodies, which are, as per their military status, extensions of the state’s power. This vulnerability throws into question both the infallible power of the postwar

¹³ As cited in my introduction, such key works include Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Caroline A. Jones, “Finishing School: John Cage and the Abstract Expressionist Ego,” *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (1993): 628–65; Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Amelia Jones, “The ‘Pollockian Performative’ and the Revision of the Modernist Subject,” in *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 53–102; Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (Beacon Press, 2002); Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948–1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

masculine ideal as well as of the nation. In this section, I also briefly lay out what will be my dominant method of interpreting the figural works of the Monster Roster in my third chapter. Rather than understanding the often vulnerable bodies depicted as evidence of the artists' personal psychological experiences, I suggest that we might interpret such representations of physical vulnerability or trauma as a mode of truth-telling, as per psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton's theory of the repeated resurgence of traumatic memory. Finally, I turn to several drawings by the Monster Roster artist H.C. Westermann as eloquent visualizations of both this insistent truth-telling of the war's trauma, as well as the impossibility of congruence between the power of the state (what Kaja Silverman describes in terms of phallic power) and the body of the soldier.¹⁴ Ultimately this rendered the veteran a silently marginal subject and undermined the chances of the Monster Roster's grotesque figures reaching the kind of international visibility accorded Abstract Expressionist avant-garde paintings.

Masculinity Studies: Crises and Moments Thereof

Modern masculinity studies emerged as a field out of the work accomplished by feminist scholars and queer theorists, particularly the establishment of the notion that gender is constructed and constituted through performance, which Judith Butler defines as the "stylized repetition of acts" through time.¹⁵ Such acts become codified and grow to define subject positions within a given space and time (i.e. in this case, in the United States in the years

¹⁴ Here I remind my reader of Kaja Silverman's argument about the incommensurability between the male body and phallic power, which undermines the dominant fiction of the postwar period. I have touched upon this argument briefly in my introduction, and return to it in this section of the present chapter.

¹⁵ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519.

While Butler first begins to argue for the understanding of genders as constructed through performance in this 1988 essay, she further explores these thoughts in her widely influential 1990 book *Gender Trouble*.

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

following the Second World War). In this interpretation, gender is not an expression of some innate quality, but is socially learned and then performed, as with Simone de Beauvoir's dictum, "[o]ne is not born a woman, one becomes one." Furthermore, a significant aspect of this process of gender codification is its very invisibility. The individual performs the acts that (have) come to be constitutive of their gendered (and otherwise qualified subject position), all the while believing that their position is not only stable but also natural, rather than constituted through their performance. This ultimately maintains the structures of hegemonic masculinity, because as film theorist Richard Dyer writes, "what can be shown to be natural must be accepted as given and inevitable."¹⁶ While masculinity is not monolithic, but rather is forever shifting as a function of processes and relationships enacted and affects individuals of differing gendered, sexualized, raced, and classed subject positions in a variety of ways, *dominant or hegemonic forms* of masculinity work to project a sense of uniformity, stability, and naturalness. Within this context, particular behaviors are perceived as transgressive against the dominant fiction.

R.W. Connell, in his 1995 "The History of Masculinity," places the stabilization of modern masculinity—specifically a "gendered individual character, defined through an opposition with femininity and institutionalized in economy and state"—in Western Europe and North America in the eighteenth century.¹⁷ Though such a definition is not uncontested, it is particularly useful for the way that it suggests that masculinity is enacted both individually and socially, through institutions, as well as the fact that it is constructed in opposition to femininity.

¹⁶ Here, Dyer is writing specifically about the equation of the obvious and pronounced visible musculature as the sign of natural power that legitimates masculine dominance; such musculature is not natural inasmuch as bodybuilding requires much time and effort. Dyer, "Don't Look Now," 71.

This is also at the heart of Louis Althusser's concept of Ideology: "It is a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the 'still, small voice of conscience'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'" Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," 172. As cited in Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 17.

¹⁷ R. W. Connell, "The History of Masculinity," in *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 185.

The gendered political discourse of the postwar era almost uniformly presented masculine ideals as oppositional to the feminine which sets up a binary that excludes subject positions that cannot be neatly classified as either. It is precisely within the gray area in between the poles of this gender binary that I claim the veteran subject often resides, and this perceived uncertain location is a cause for marginalization. Ultimately, this model of identity as contingent locates all such constructs as fallible and flexible. It is the realization of this fallibility that results in the emergence of “male crises” during shifts in the cultural landscape.

James Gilbert usefully situates his own study of 1950s masculinity, *Men in the Middle* (2005), as part of the literature of masculinity studies that has emerged from the assessment of the so-called male crises of the 1890s and the 1950s.¹⁸ Coincidentally, these decades serve as the temporal parentheses to my exploration of Chicago in the next chapter. He writes, “the basic account of the history of masculinity in the twentieth century has become one of crisis and response, rapid change, problematic compromise, and shifting definitions of manliness with the 1890s and the 1950s as key moments of transition.”¹⁹ Gilbert states that the perceived crisis of the 1890s became a starting point for the discussion of modern manliness. For instance, John Higham’s 1965 watershed essay “The Reorientation of American Culture i

n the 1890’s” pointed to this decade as sea change years in American history and culture.²⁰ Notably, Higham lets male-dominated aspects of culture stand in for American culture writ large.²¹ These years see the institution of sports at Ivy League colleges, as well as a broader interest in physical culture (such as body building), and the advent of Wild West fiction; Higham

¹⁸ Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*.

¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

²⁰ John Higham, “The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890’s,” in *Origins of Modern Consciousness*, ed. John Weiss (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), 25–48.

²¹ He even defines the women’s suffrage movement in these terms, writing, “[t]he New Woman was masculine also in her demand for political power.” Ibid., 31.

also refers to Theodore Roosevelt and his call for “the strenuous life,” who grows to mythic proportions in many other histories of the 1890s as “the Everyman of modern masculinity.”²² According to Higham, this shift was a response to a newly routinized economic life focused around family obligations and located in urban centers the resistance against accepted domestic and social roles by the emergent New Woman in years when models of masculinity based on agriculture and small business ownership became increasingly less accessible.

While Higham himself understood the 1890s as a moment of “reorientation” rather than crisis, historians of this period who followed him adopted a “vocabulary of chaos, panic, and betrayal.”²³ Higham *did* stress a split between the newly developed professional and family obligations and the possibility of physically enacting or “proving” one’s masculinity, which necessitated what Gilbert calls “spectatorship masculinity.”²⁴ In this paradigm, one forms (or attempts to form) a masculine identity (or fantasy of that identity) through the observation and emulation of masculine ideals in the public sphere, be they sports, literary, political, or business heroes. It is this new form of structuring a masculine identity that theorists following Higham understood as instituting a cultural and psychological crisis of masculinity. This divide between the social obligations and the ability to more dramatically enact masculinity is evident in the conflicting desires of the veteran students that comprised the Chicago School, discussed later in this chapter.

A spate of recent scholarship has firmly asserted that the notion that the concept of American masculinity in its familiar form being rooted in the 1890s is problematic. For scholars such as Mark Carnes and Kevin White, modern masculinity’s origin date is earlier, set in Victorian America. Carnes notes that fraternal organizations that appeared before the Civil War

²² Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 23.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 23–24.

and extended into the 1920s provided a more coherent and sustained mind-set for American men than the alternative, fractious picture of the 1890s would suggest. White, on the other hand, suggests that the premiums placed on “primitivism” and sexual expression in the early twentieth-century arose from the ending of the stifling repression of the Victorian era and from ideals bolstered by decidedly virile figures like Roosevelt and from the fictional self-made Tarzan in the novels by Edgar Rice Burroughs (a great admirer of Roosevelt).²⁵ This behavior was also linked to class, as would also prove true in popular understandings of masculinity in the 1950s: “the new middle-class man adopted—or tried to—the cultural swagger of working-class men.”²⁶

The critiques that cut to the fundamental problem at the core of such debates about masculinity, however, are those that question the whole notion of a male crisis. Abigail Solomon-Godeau’s 1997 book *Male Trouble* discusses nineteenth-century male bodies in the French visual arts, specifically, but her claims are much larger. The period she discusses was also understood as a time of crisis regarding masculinity, but at stake in her study is the very idea of crises as notable moments. Rather she argues that these perceived moments of “male trouble” are far from isolated or abnormal, but are quite dependable in their regular occurrence. The idea that masculinity itself, a concept that many believe is stable and coherent enough to be embodied (or not) by individuals, can be in crisis, and indeed be in crisis so very *often*, helps to emphasize the very contingency of gender—or any kind of identity—constructs. While understanding masculinity as potentially at risk helps to reify it as a stable set of ideals, this

²⁵ As explored in my third chapter, so-called “primitivism” was an important element in the development of New York School abstraction and postwar figurative art in Chicago.

Gail Bederman duly notes that the superiority of the ideals apparently embodied by public icons like Roosevelt and Tarzan was always constructed as such at the cost of marking others, specifically women and non-white races, as inferior. Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). I explore these structures of marginalization and their relevance to the Chicago School in the conclusion of my second chapter.

²⁶ Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 25.

As Dyer asserts, “images of male power are always and necessarily inflected with other aspects of power in society.” Dyer, “Don’t Look Now,” 67.

vulnerability points to the fact that it refers to a particular set of codes (which change through time and space) that must be *performed* rather than existing as an unassailable inner quality that some have and some do not.²⁷

Furthermore, masculinity is not only a performed construct, but also a fantasy. Feminist theorist Judith Kegan Gardiner thus writes, “[m]asculinity is a nostalgic formation, always missing, lost, or about to be lost, its ideal form located in a past that advances with each generation in order to recede just beyond its grasp.”²⁸ She marks the “crisis” that has been so widely addressed in varying forms of pop culture and scholarly writing for decades now as the “unmapped gap” between the present and the loss of a nostalgic past that can never have truly existed.²⁹ It is a function of the dominant fiction, or the ideology of hegemonic masculinities, that is constantly working towards locating an essential, natural masculinity—an impossible project—that perfectly conflates the phallus with the penis, and as a result infallibly situates power with those that possess it.³⁰

For instance, while psychoanalysis was quickly growing in social currency in the mid-twentieth century, it was more often than not deployed with particular agendas. In her 1995 book *Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America*, Elizabeth Lunbeck suggests that a psychiatric model of culture and gender was firmly in place by the 1950s, outfitted with normative assumptions about masculinity and homosexuality that resulted in the

²⁷ It seems also crucial to point out that masculinity is *not* a stable set of ideas, though it is the perceived naturalness and therefore timelessness of masculine codes that enable the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant fiction. The behavior that constituted “masculinity” in the nineteenth century does not necessarily translate to the twentieth century; the shift from the Victorian age to the late nineteenth-century concepts of masculinity that Kevin White discusses certainly are proof enough that what is considered acceptable behavior and roles for individual shifts according to time and place.

²⁸ Judith Kegan Gardiner, ed., *Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory: New Directions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 10.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ It is precisely the incommensurability of the phallus and the penis that underlies the arguments about images of male bodies (particularly naked male bodies) made by Richard Dyer and Abigail Solomon-Godeau. See Dyer, “Don’t Look Now”; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble: A Crisis in Representation* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999).

ostracizing and marginalizing of subjects who could not fit the normative molds.³¹ In his 1983 incisive critique on the manipulation of interpretation data in the field of psychology, Joseph Pleck writes that the “maintenance of masculinity [has been] the dominant feature of Freudian thought” in American culture since the 1930s.³²

In Michael Leja’s widely influential 1993 *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s*, he argues that Abstract Expressionist painters were engaged in a nation-wide project of reformulating individual identity. He performs close readings of a myriad of anthropological and psychological discussions that he suggests not only informed the work of Jackson Pollock and his contemporaries, but also impacted the reception of these works—indeed Pollock’s paintings became heavily weighted metaphors in the mainstream cultural discourse of individuality. He devotes a chapter to the discourse of the Modern Man, which he usefully describes as a “structure of belief and assumption informing a highly diverse range of literary and visual texts.”³³ Perhaps most effectively, Leja articulates the way in which abstract expressionism came to serve specific interests and was the product of particular ideologies, regardless of how aggressively both postwar and current critics have attempted to think of the New York School artists as expressing their individual psyches, as if psychology were not, as Pleck says, in the service of hegemonic masculinity.³⁴ Not only did the dominant narrative of Abstract Expressionism serve to counter some of the more pervasive anxieties about masculinity in the postwar years, it also helped solidify the dominant place of abstraction as the primary mode of art-making, as I explore more thoroughly in chapter three.

³¹ Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion*.

³² Joseph H. Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 158. Pleck, writing in the early 1980s, argued that this was still more often than not the case.

³³ Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 204.

³⁴ Or, as Leja writes, “Those places where ideology is said to be absent, as Louis Althusser reminds us, are often the sites of its most effective operations.” *Ibid.*, 5.

Postwar Masculinity

For now, following Leja's approach, I turn to postwar era texts in order to explore some of the ways hegemonic constructions of masculinity and sexuality were intertwined with American identity in order to underscore my arguments about the place of the veteran in postwar American society writ large and the discursive position of the veteran-artist in Chicago specifically. Arthur Schlesinger's 1949 *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* is understood as a seminal text in the development of the gendered political discourse of the postwar era. Its project was to recover and redefine liberalism and push it towards the center. For Schlesinger, the liberals of the Depression-era put too much stock in utopian fantasies, while the horrors of the Second World War and the solidification Stalin's totalitarian regime only proved the fallibility, and indeed the potential evil, of humans.³⁵ Expanding on the work on cultural identity of his mentors, Erich Fromm and Wilhelm Reich, Schlesinger articulated the contemporary problems of America as primarily psychological. In this "age of anxiety," freedom had become a burden for the modern individual, which resulted in the allure of surrendering to totalitarianism.³⁶ Schlesinger's text is infused with language that invokes the valuated gender binary. As James Gilbert points out, the terms masculine and feminine carried "inherent implications of positive and negative" in the postwar era: when Schlesinger mourns the

³⁵ Indeed, literary scholar Thomas Hill Schaub defines this reconsideration of liberalism (as it's forced to confront the "real") as the "liberal narrative": a "Blakean journey from innocence to experience, from the myopia of the utopian to the twenty-twenty vision of the realist." Thomas Hill Schaub, *American Fiction in the Cold War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 5.

³⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Riverside Press, Transaction Publishers, 1949), 1.

feminization of the liberal, he is implying that a previous “vital” subject position has become soft, weak, and vulnerable to totalitarian thought.³⁷

Though Schlesinger’s text certainly served as an exemplar for other authors concerned with the “mass man” of the times, it is crucial to understand that *The Vital Center*’s project resonates with earlier psychological and sociological texts. Margaret Mead’s *And Keep Your Powder Dry!* was first published in 1942, with a number of reprints, including a 1944 Penguin Edition for English audiences, retitled *The American Character*. Already a well-respected anthropologist, Mead understood her book as a refocusing of her expertise on her own homeland. She prefaces her book with a note that not only is it an abashedly partisan account of the American character, but that she understands it as a war-time project: “a social scientist’s contribution to winning the war.”³⁸ In her introduction to the expanded 1965 edition of the book she describes the desire on the part of her and her peers (most notably Ruth Benedict and Geoffrey Gorer) to contribute to the war effort and did so by working with the Committee for National Morale. She describes the Committee as “wartime institution devoted to the application for the social sciences to wartime problems.”³⁹ The Committee also functioned in conjunction with the Council for Intercultural Relations (renamed the Institute for Intercultural Studies, Inc. in 1944) whose goal was to “develop a series of systematic understandings of the great contemporary cultures so that the special values of each may be orchestrated in a world built new.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 66.

³⁸ Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry!* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1942), xi.

³⁹ Margaret Mead, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Institute for Intercultural Studies and Japanese Studies* 63, no. 1 (1961): 136.

⁴⁰ Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry!*, viii.

Mead argues that understanding “*what we are ourselves*” is crucial to winning a war.⁴¹ “Total war” throws all character and action into high relief and understanding what it is that makes an American is not only important to winning the war but shaping the postwar world.⁴² In her chapter, “Fighting the war American style,” Mead first invokes a rhetoric familiar to scholars of the 1890 “male crises” as well as the postwar sociology that would follow Mead: that of the individual made weak by the convenience of modernity (with “passive gadget-born attitudes”), who will understand the war as out of his or her control. An alternate mode of conceptualizing America in battle, and clearly that which Mead advocates, is that each citizen takes responsibility for him or herself so that America understand that the future is at least partly “in our hands.”⁴³ The American quality Mead believes will be most valuable in the war effort is the particularly Puritan mix of faith and practicality, embodied in the Oliver Cromwell quote: “Trust in God, my boys, and keep your powder dry!”⁴⁴ She argues that the way to win the war is to get every individual to participate in the effort, and to do *more* than what the government simply asks, and the way to encourage that is for the government to keep open and honest communication with the public. If the government comes to be understood as something other than, greater than, the people, rather than an expression of the people, then Americans are infantilized and become weak and ineffective citizens. Mead’s prescription for how to win the war is to bring out the best of the national character by treating citizens like adults. Americans at their best will “square our shoulders and spit on our hands” upon hearing bad news.”⁴⁵ While Mead acknowledges the inherent problems of generalizing about the United States as a whole

⁴¹ Ibid., 16.

⁴² Though Mead recognizes that the notion of “character” had recently fallen into disrepute, she argues that it was a failing of the Treaty of Versailles that it assumed all parties would act more or less the same way, despite their having been raised differently, in different settings, with different values, institutions, and leaders. Ibid., 17–18.

⁴³ Ibid., 160.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 174.

she feels free to do so *because* the book is essentially propaganda to unify the country in a time of war.⁴⁶

Interestingly both Schlesinger and Mead (Schlesinger at the time of his 1949 publication and Mead in her 1965 introduction) disavow any affiliation with the Communist party, or the “fashionable radicalism” of the time.⁴⁷ The radicalism Mead refers to is the left wing Popular Front movement of which so many public intellectuals had been a part in the 1930s. Indeed Schlesinger couches his anti-Communist stance in masculinist terms, criticizing leftist intellectuals of the 1930’s who refrained from getting involved in the “real” political world.⁴⁸ This move would have given Mead and Schlesinger credit in the Cold War years, when so many writers were reworking their stances to fit into consensus politics. Jonathan Katz writes, “[n]ever before had so many intellectuals expended so much energy in securing a political accommodation that, while threatening their independence as intellectuals, insured inclusion, and concomitantly a good livelihood.”⁴⁹ Katz attributes this turn towards consensus and uncritical patriotism to the fear of Stalinist totalitarianism merged with guilt over associations with the Popular Front before the realities of life in Soviet Russia were known.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ There are some obvious problems with Mead’s own qualification of American culture’s unity: she only differentiates between the American South and the *rest* of the country, lumping together the North, Middle West and West as the primary basis for her analysis. *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, xxvi.

⁴⁸ Schlesinger was an intelligence officer in the Office of War Information and the Office of Strategic Services during the Second World War. K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 4.

⁴⁹ Katz, “Passive Resistance: On the Success of Queer Artists in Cold War America,” 125.

⁵⁰ Another crucial part of Katz’s argument is that consensus intellectuals were seduced by the idea of affluence, which is ubiquitous in the discourse of American political and social life. He argues that affluence, in the postwar world, offered the dream of a truly classless society without the taint of Marxism: “In abundance, all could get what they needed.” Katz ultimately uses the pervasiveness of consensus culture and intellectualism to explain the success of queer artists like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg in the Cold War in spite of the fiercely gendered language of individualism and artistic creation in the United States. *Ibid.*

Moir Roth’s notion of the “aesthetic of indifference” serves as a foundation for much of his interpretation. Moira Roth, “The Aesthetic of Indifference,” *Artforum* 16, no. 3 (1977): 46–53.

While Mead's clarion call for unity and the pushing up of shirt-sleeves was not nearly as gendered as Schlesinger's "hard" lessons of *The Vital Center*, it set the scene for the flurry of sociological texts that would reach unprecedented levels of popular readership. Katz describes sociology as the descriptive discipline and suggests that the descriptive mode supplanted more obviously ideological perspectives, promoting the status quo as the locus of intellectual inquiry. Gilbert also tracks roots of the intellectual interest in typology and character study in part to the project of defining and defending American civilization during the war, as was done by authors such as Mead and her disciple Geoffrey Gorer, author of *The American People: A Study in National Character* (1948).⁵¹ Indeed, Mead was a friend and colleague of David Riesman, author of the widely read and influential 1950 sociological text *The Lonely Crowd*.

Although the American role in the Allied victory in World War II inspired patriotic ruminations on American character, it also led to some concern, such as that expressed by Edward A. Strecker, in *Their Mother's Sons: The Psychiatrist Examines an American Problem* (1946). Strecker addresses the issues he perceived at induction screenings while he served as a psychiatric doctor to the United States Army, Navy, and Air Force during World War II.⁵² According to the statistics cited in the foreword, 1,825,000 men were rejected for military service because of psychiatric disorders, nearly 600,000 were discharged from the Army for neuropsychiatric reasons ("or their equivalent," whatever that may mean), and 500,000 more attempted to evade the draft completely.⁵³ Apparently deeply distressed by his observations, Strecker first warned the American public of the threat to the psychic well being of American's

⁵¹ Gilbert also points to the de Tocqueville revival of the 1930s-1950s as partially responsible for the interest in typology. Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 40.

⁵² Strecker served as Chairman of the Psychiatry Department at the University of Pennsylvania and as consultant to the Surgeons General of the Army and Navy and as adviser to the Secretary of War. Strecker, *Their Mothers' Sons*, 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6.

children in what came to be known as “the Mom lecture” on April 27, 1945. In his foreword to the text, the Chairman of the National Committee on Mental Hygiene, Eugene Meyers, writes, “Dr. Strecker called his lecture, ‘Psychiatry Speaks to Democracy.’ His title understated his subject. He could have called it ‘Psychiatry Speaks to the Neurotic Moms of Psychoneurotics,’ for the darts of his comments were directed first at the apron-stringing ‘moms’ of our nation and indirectly at their effect upon our democracy.”⁵⁴

Along with texts such as Philip Wylie’s (1942) *Generation of Vipers* and David M. Levy’s (1943) *Maternal Overprotection*, Strecker’s book aimed to explain the reasons underlying the failure certain subjects to meet the ideals of masculinity, understood in terms of maturity. As Barbara Ehrenreich argues in her 1983 book *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*, the postwar rhetoric of maturity was both gendered as masculine, and was explicitly related to married domestic life and the “breadwinner” role. She writes, “this expectation was supported by an enormous weight of expert opinion, moral sentiment and public bias, both within popular culture and the elite centers of academic wisdom.”⁵⁵ Wylie’s text may have begun the popular discourse on “Moms,” but it was given scientific validity through the works of mental health professionals like Levy and Strecker. Each of these texts focuses on the explicit role of the mother in either helping her child to reach maturity or stifling such development and possibly stunting him or her forever. The essentially selfish behavior of the type of women Strecker calls “moms” creates immature sons who have

⁵⁴ Eugene Meyer, Chairman of the National Committee on Mental Hygiene, foreword to *Their Mothers’ Sons: The Psychiatrist Examines an American Problem*, by Edward Adam Strecker (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1946), 5.

⁵⁵ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*, 12.

While *Generation of Vipers*, ardently rebukes the selfish, immature women that become moms, it does not have the same hopeful tone of its contemporary 1942 *And Keep Your Powder Dry*, or even *Their Mother’s Sons*, which ends with chapters entitled “How Can We Help Mom? And “What Mom Can Do About It.” His book focuses on the worst qualities of “the American scene” in order to understand what got us in this “horrid mess,” and in that way, it belongs to the same sociological project as Mead’s and Strecker’s text, bombastic and vitriolic prose notwithstanding. Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (1942; reprint Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1996), 8.

failed to contribute to the war effort (unlike “mothers” who raise healthy children who will mature into well-adjusted, responsible adults). While Strecker concedes that combat fatigue is a condition that can afflict even those who display “soldierly ideals,” he notes that it seems to appear in higher proportion among the immature who succumb to self-preservation above all else.⁵⁶ Importantly, Strecker does not *define* what constellation of qualities comprises soldierly ideals. They are implicitly known and understood, and therefore *naturalized*. This marks those who do not live up to these ideals as both deviant and consequently dangerous.⁵⁷ While Strecker’s book is an early text in the postwar discourse of American masculinity, his urgency is patent and specific: if such tendencies in the American character are not remedied, the force that won the Second World, *already* diminished by psychoneuroses and the bad example of cowardly draft dodgers, will deflate beyond its ability to not only win wars, but defend the nation. The

⁵⁶ Strecker writes that all who succumb to combat fatigue (even those who “fought splendidly”) are sick in the same way as those who display psychoneuroses which removes them from combat after only a few days, and even those who dodge the draft: they each suffer from the inner emotional conflict of self-preservation versus soldierly ideals. I believe through Betsy Rath, the protagonist’s wife in *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, Wilson points to one of the “ideals” and ultimately tears it down. In the midst of a fight, Betsy explosively accuses Tom of being weak, of having no ambition. She soon breaks into tears and apologizes, saying it was his strength that got him through the war. Tom says to Betsy, “It was luck... Whether you get out of a war or not is ninety per cent luck.” Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, 64. This thesis, that victory at war is not always contingent upon masculine (or soldierly) ideals, but dumb luck is common to similar veteran-authors, like Norman Mailer, Kurt Vonnegut, and Joseph Heller.

⁵⁷ Given my own research into the construction of the ideal masculine mid-century American subject, I understand these ideals to be: bravery in the face of imminent physical danger, a sense of brotherly community and obligation to fellow soldiers, and fierce patriotism and commitment to the “American way of life” and concurrent disdain for the nation’s foes. As I will expand upon later in this chapter, I believe there is an inherent tension between the ideas of strength of individual “character” (which becomes a significant part of the discourse in the 1950s) and the obligation to nation and military. In a civilian setting, this plays out as the drive to be an individual while also supporting the family unit, necessary to the economic vitality of the nation.

As a side note, this tension was more recently invoked in U.S. military rhetoric by the 2001-2006 slogan “Army of One.” Understandably, this paradoxical slogan was retired after only five years (replaced with “Army Strong”), compared to the decades-long sustainability of slogans such as “I Want YOU for US Army” and “Be All You Can Be.” While “Army of One” promotes an ideal of a strong, self-sufficient soldier, it belies the teamwork necessary to functioning military units. An incongruous recruiting poster from 2001 reads, “Being a Soldier Means Somebody’s Always Got Your Back” above a black and white photograph of two soldiers at arms standing back to back. The slogan below them contradicts both the textual and visual message. “2001 - Strength of the Nation - The United States Army,” <http://www.army.mil/strength/2001.html>; accessed May 5, 2014.

stakes of maturity and strength of masculine character are no less than the security of the nation.⁵⁸

Arguments such as Strecker's were undoubtedly influenced by studies directly concerned with what it meant to be a man: both anatomically and performatively. In 1945, physical anthropologist Carl C. Seltzer published his Harvard University, Department of Hygiene funded study "The Relationship Between the Masculine Component and Personality."⁵⁹ It argued for the correlation between the external morphological traits of a man—a "body build complex" called the masculine component—and certain personality, behavioral, and physiological traits, ultimately concluding in a physical-psychological correlation.⁶⁰ The "weaker" end of the masculine component continuum, described by traits including but not limited to "a general softness and roundness of the body contours and outline, a wider hip line, an approximation of the thighs when heels are together," indicate a personality that tended toward the arts, indecisiveness, and femininity, while a stronger component indicated strength and vitality of character. Such findings, soon to be muddled by the Kinsey Report, reflected the naturalized assumptions of the period, clad in scientific costume; or as a 1978 article that cites Seltzer's study, entitled "Men and Their Bodies: The Relationship between Body Type and Behavior" points out, "[f]or at least two thousand years people have believed that a man's character is revealed by his body."⁶¹

⁵⁸ This is the overarching argument of Robert Corber's *In The Name of National Security*: those who are perceived as failing to fulfill the Oedipal trajectory, mother-obsessed bachelors, homosexuals, working women, are understood as a threat to the stability of the nation, not only because of their possible Communist ties, but also because they undermine the family unit which bolsters the economically abundant American way of life. Corber, *In the Name of National Security*.

⁵⁹ Charles C. Seltzer, "The Relationship Between the Masculine Component and Personality," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 3, no. 1 (March 1945): 33–47.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶¹ Thankfully, this later study finds that "any association between physique and behavior is very weak, that stereotypical perceptions and exceptions cloud the relationships..." Raymond Montemayor, "Men and Their Bodies: The Relationship Between Body Type and Behavior," *Journal of Social Issues* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 48.

To wit, the recurrent how-to guide *How to Improve Your Personality*, first published in 1942, and reprinted through the 1970s included a helpful section on gender performance that noted the paramount importance of men appearing masculine.⁶² The chapter “Good Appearance—Grooming” of the 1954 edition from the section intended for its male readers encourages men to “Think masculine, and act masculine” (not in the original 1942 edition) and provides a list of correlative feminine and masculine gestures (tapping front teeth with finger nail versus clenched fist under chin or jaw; short, mincing steps versus long steps) and commands the male reader to “stop at once” if they find themselves performing feminine gestures.⁶³ It provides tips on how to carry oneself, how to walk, and how to laugh— “[d]o anything but giggle!” Indeed, the book encourages men to emulate movie stars such as Clark Gable: “Imitate their laughter. You can’t do it, but you can at least try.”⁶⁴

It would appear that learned and performed aspect of codes of masculinity are absolutely recognized by the authors of this how-to guide, and they even encourage the kind of “spectator masculinity” that Gilbert describes. However, even as such a guide acknowledges the performed nature of gender, it provides a concrete list of tactics and behavior for acceptable masculinity, which, as we have seen, had significant stakes in the postwar years. This masculine-feminine binary is both implicit and explicit in the sociological texts of the time, and was quite possibly

⁶² Roy Newton, *How to Improve Your Personality* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1942).

Not to be confused with *Ways to Improve Your Personality*, a 1951 text directed primarily at teenagers and focused on controlling one’s emotions and changing overt behavior without fundamentally changing one’s personality. This era gave birth to a flurry of how-to books, in the era of do-it-yourself, and instructional manuals on effective personhood and were consumed with great verve, if the long shelf life of *How To Improve Your Personality* is any indication. Perhaps such guides were inspired by the influx of sociological texts on the myriad possible wrong ways of being a person in the world. Virginia Bailard and Ruth May Strang, *Ways to Improve Your Personality* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1951).

⁶³ Newton, *How to Improve Your Personality*, 132.

⁶⁴ Roy Newton and Frederick George Nichols, *How to Improve Your Personality* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1954), 166.

made even more of an imperative by the statistical findings of the 1948 Kinsey Report, which called this apparently solid constructed masculinity into question.

Perhaps the most widely influential sociological study of the 1940s was this report by Alfred Kinsey et al., officially entitled *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948).⁶⁵ Despite being a dense, scientific text, nearly a quarter million copies were sold in the first few months of publication; within ten days of its release, the publisher ordered a sixth printing for a total of 185,000 copies in print.⁶⁶ It seeped into popular culture, inspiring not only articles and interviews, but cartoons and songs. It elicited a flurry of conversations about sex, but the most immediate impact was the “homosexual panic” and juridical construction of the categories “homosexual” and “lesbian.” The report made evident “the visible body’s limited capacities for telling the truths of sexuality in the early 1950s.”⁶⁷ It suggested, strongly, that sexual identities were far more fluid than previously believed: 50 percent of men admitted to having been aroused by members of the same sex, 37 percent to having a post-adolescent homosexual encounter that brought them to orgasm, and 4 percent to being solely homosexual. According to Kinsey, only very few people were “purely” homosexual or heterosexual, and most people existed somewhere in the middle on the spectrum of attraction. It was this newly discovered flexibility of categories believed to be static, certain, and defining that was most shocking. Not only did the Kinsey report reveal that *far* more American people were participating in homosexual acts than had been previously thought, gender, thought to be inextricably intertwined with sexuality, now appeared perhaps not quite as binary as common-sense literature suggested.

⁶⁵ Alfred Kinsey, Clyde Eugene Martin, and Wardell Baxter Pomeroy, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1948).

⁶⁶ The second volume of the Kinsey Report, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* also resulted in a sixth printing within 10 days of its initial publication. David Halberstam, *The Fifties*, 278, 280.

⁶⁷ Butt, *Between You and Me*, 67.

Widely influential literary critic Lionel Trilling responded to the surprising popularity of the report in a 1948 article entitled “Sex and Science: The Kinsey Report,” first published in *Partisan Review*.⁶⁸ He presciently makes note of the growing influence of sociology and in his opening paragraph simultaneously lauds the Report for making raw data available to the public while arguing that it makes use of a façade of science and objectivity to ultimately further an agenda of sexual permissiveness. While the outrage of some of the Report’s more rabid critics, focused on the lack of condemnation on the commonness of practices like pre-marital sex, oral sex, anal sex, and homosexuality, Trilling argues that the text didn’t display sufficient objectivity, that it actually supports the “naturalness” and by extension “normality” of homosexuality. Ironically, texts like Strecker’s and Seltzer’s promote “common-sense” knowledge, that is they rely on the “naturalness” of masculine codes of behavior to support their arguments. That Kinsey’s findings *defied* these naturalized expectations is why Trilling finds faults with its objectivity.⁶⁹ Trilling’s loudest complaint, however, is that Kinsey and the Report focus only on the physical aspect of sexual behavior and don’t make sufficient allowance for the inner lives of individuals, suppressing the “connection between the sexual life and the psychic structure.”⁷⁰ Trilling disputed the attempt to de-pathologize homosexuality through the claim that it was a purely physical act that was actually much more prevalent than previously believed, and doubled the stakes by suggesting the report was suppressing the psychoanalytic model in favor of a Marxist reading of emotions and the inner life as merely a “superstructure” of physical conditions.

⁶⁸ Lionel Trilling, “Sex and Science: The Kinsey Report,” (1948) reprinted in *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: New York Review Books, 2008), 223–42.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

As a former member of the Popular Front, Trilling was one of the many consensus intellectuals, as described above by Jonathan Katz, who in the period during and after World War II tried to distance themselves from their left-wing politics of the 1930s. Robert Corber argues that his rebuttal to the findings of the Kinsey Report was an attempt to shift critical focus from Jewish intellectuals who had sympathies for the Communist movement prior to the Second World War—like himself—towards homosexuals who were also and already perceived as a threat to national security.⁷¹ While the Report argued that homosexual behavior was rooted in the physical, the presiding wisdom on homosexuality understood it as a psychological pathology. While the so-called “well-adjusted” men who performed homosexual acts might have appeared mentally healthy to Kinsey and his interviewers, Trilling argues that they simply did not have the evidence of their inner lives and could *not* prove that homosexuality wasn’t a developmental disorder. And so, by arguing that Kinsey neglected psychoanalysis in favor of an essentially Marxist model, Trilling not only confirmed his own anti-Marxist stance, he was able to write off the statistical findings of the Report that suggested homosexuality was not only far more prevalent than previously believed, but that it could not be easily detected by the physical cues outlined in texts like “The Relationship Between the Masculine Component and Personality” or *How to Improve Your Personality*.⁷²

It was this potential ubiquity of homosexuality that led in large part to the panic over homosexuals in the government and daily life. In 1950, a State Department official disclosed to

⁷¹ Corber, *In the Name of National Security*, 39.

Unlike Schlesinger and Mead, Trilling could not claim that he was never swept up by the Popular Front.

⁷² Furthermore, by focusing on the preeminent importance of the inner life of the individual, Trilling denied the validity of social categories for marginalized groups, such as homosexuals. His focus on the subjectivity as that which constructs the world around the individual attempted to move away from the materialist critique of the place of social beings in the world common to Popular Front politics. While Trilling lauds the report for an essentially “American” and democratic attempt to give an “objective” assessment of sexualities believed to be deviant, his indirect accusation is that the Report was essentially a Marxist project as a materialist critique, and was therefore complicit in the project of the Communist and homosexual infiltration of the American government. *Ibid.*, 30.

the Senate Appropriations Committee that the Department had dismissed employees on charges of homosexuality.⁷³ This led to the paradoxical accusation that the government was tolerating homosexual employees, and also raised the question: how could the government employ thousands of “sexual deviates” without knowing it? An ensuing investigation by the Senate Appropriations Committee refuted the notion that male homosexuals were effete and female homosexuals were masculine. This indecipherability of sexuality led to a panic of attempts at identification, most notoriously in the witch-hunt tactics of Senator Joseph McCarthy—indeed, homosexuals were perceived as much of a threat to national security as Communists. In order to circumvent the apparent normalcy (with respect to gender presentation) of homosexuals, the Committee subscribed to a psychologically pathologizing model of same-sex eroticism that argued homosexuals were emotionally unstable and were vulnerable to the “blandishments of the foreign espionage agent,” the presiding wisdom of the time and that which Kinsey worked hard to statistically disprove and which Trilling loudly defended.⁷⁴ In this model, homosexuals who appeared normatively masculine or feminine were thought to be even *more* unbalanced because of their apparent normalcy—pointing to the accepted correlation between sexuality and masculinity or femininity. Indeed both scholarly and popular writers saw psychological instability—often in psychosexual terms—as the primary explanation for the appeal of Communism.

Kinsey’s attempt to articulate the flexibility of sexuality and the notion that sex is an act that one performs and does not necessarily constitute or even inform other parts (i.e., one’s masculinity or femininity) of one’s expressed identity resulted in a backlash, the main element of

⁷³ John Peurifoy disclosed this to the Senate Appropriations Committee on February 28, 1950. This, in part, led to the investigation by the Senate Appropriations Committee into same-sex behavior. *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷⁴ Senate Appropriations Committee as cited in *Ibid.*, 63.

which was identifying or recognizing homosexuals.⁷⁵ As such the report inadvertently contributed to a culture of suspicion and performance that is deftly articulated by Lacan's notion of the masquerade. As the Kinsey Report imperiled the stability of the masculine construct's basis of heterosexuality, attempts to articulate and perform masculinity according to the dominant fiction became ever more pronounced, even hysterical. Film theorist Robert Corber succinctly describes this play of identity through the concept of "the enemy within." Initially used to refer to the threat of Communism infiltrating the American government and security structures, Corber suggests that it also applied to subjects who disrupted the "American way of life" (i.e. the family unit of the dominant fiction), most notably homosexuals. However, because homosexuality was constructed as a medical neuroses, Corber argues the "enemy within" might also be constituted by an individual's psyche, which might betray him at any moment.⁷⁶

The bogey man of Communism spread far and wide, making its way into widely popular pulp novels, like the intensely masculinist fare of Mickey Spillane. Mike Hammer, the "toughest guy in pulp fiction," was a WWII veteran turned hard-boiled private eye, disillusioned by a corrupt justice system.⁷⁷ And with the Cold War, Hammer turned his eye from standard criminal element of gangsters and corrupt cops towards the growing problem of domestic Communism. In the 1951 novel *One Lonely Night*, Mike Hammer explains to a Communist he is about to strangle, "you were a Commie, Oscar, because you were batty. It was the only philosophy that

⁷⁵ Kinsey eschewed the very idea of a sexual binary which divided populations into heterosexual and homosexual through his focus on homosexual acts rather than person; as stated earlier it was this fluidity that seemed to distress many people.

⁷⁶ Corber, *In the Name of National Security*, 99. Corber's work argues that in the course of watching Hitchcock's didactic movies, in which the protagonist traveled the path to maturity as understood in contemporary Freudian Oedipal terms, spectators were encouraged to police their own behavior, and to make sure any thoughts not concurrent with the normative Oedipal trajectory were not indulged. Indeed, Corber points out the scopophilic pleasure of the cinematic apparatus was mirrored (and distorted) in contemporary society; ubiquitous concern regarding national security politicized voyeuristic pleasure, encouraging citizens to scrutinize others (and themselves) for deviance.

⁷⁷ David Halberstam, *The Fifties*, 59.

would appeal to your crazy mind.”⁷⁸ Hammer swaggers, spitting out his disdain for all things soft and effete—intellectuals, professionals, homosexuals, and bureaucracy. He indulges a gruesome pleasure in weeding out Communists and destroying them, enacting a gross caricature of hard masculine persecution of a soft and corrupt sickness.⁷⁹ In these novels, the masculine self (articulated through the character of Hammer) is affirmed through the violent destruction of the other. Later in *One Lonely Night*, Hammer says “I shot them in cold blood and enjoyed every minute of it...Pretty soon what’s left of Russia and the slime that breeds there won’t be worth mentioning and I’m glad because I had a part in the killing...they never thought there were people like me in this country. They figured us all to be soft as horse manure and just as stupid.”⁸⁰ And while Hammer had a weakness for beautiful women, it does not stop him from lashing their stripped bodies when he discovers their Communist treachery, ultimately letting his desire for vengeful destruction against Communists and their softness “flow.”⁸¹ So, while Communists represented psychosexual instability, Hammer himself embodied a Communist-hating machismo fantasy of the American public, one that climaxed with violence and law-breaking in the name of what was “right.”⁸² This fantasy, however, was not one that could actually align with conceptions of how a mature masculinity should be enacted—getting married,

⁷⁸ Mickey Spillane, *One Lonely Night* (New York: Signet, 1951), 171.

⁷⁹ Spillane’s novels have a remarkable affinity to the Fascists memoirs and novels Klaus Theweleit analyzes in this two-volume text *Male Fantasies*, in which the soft, feminine other corrupts the hard, strong ideal masculine self, embodied by the *freikorpsmen*, or the elite Fascist soldier-males of interwar Germany. I would suggest that this parallel is ironic, given Hammer’s status as a proud veteran of World War II (which gives him masculine credibility), but the truth remains that the same patriarchal structures of gendered marginalization underpin both cultural contexts. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*; Theweleit, *Male Fantasies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*.

⁸⁰ Spillane, *One Lonely Night*, 171.

⁸¹ Here, I invoke Theweleit’s word, “flow,” for the expansive and torrential expression of violent hatred for the enemy, racialized and gendered as other. Indeed, the language of the soft, wet morass that emblemizes the fearful and degenerative feminine in the fascist texts discussed in *Male Fantasies* is also common to Schlessinger’s *The Vital Center*. While my point is not to equate the texts, such a comparison is helpful in understanding how important the binary between masculine and feminine was in solidifying definitions of masculinity at moments when it seemed most imperiled.

⁸² On discovering, the Communist allegiances of the beautiful Ethel, Hammer assaults and strips her and then straps the back of her thighs with a belt, the text bubbles with sexualized vengeance: “a naked woman and a leather belt....A gorgeous woman who had been touched by the hand of the devil.” Spillane, *One Lonely Night*, 129.

maintaining a job, supporting a family, and otherwise contributing to the stability of the family unit—in daily life.⁸³ The first Hammer novel, *I, the Jury*, was published in 1947, just a year before the Kinsey Report would throw male sexuality into question and two years before Schlesinger would make accusations of political “softness” in *The Vital Center*.⁸⁴ The foment of the so-called crisis of masculinity would make its way into all sorts of media. The common goal was often, whether implicitly or explicitly, to reassert the gender binary (as if it has ever disappeared).

Popular sociological texts such as David Riesman’s 1950 *The Lonely Crowd* and William H. Whyte’s 1956 *The Organization Man*, though ostensibly not about gender, contributed to the constructions of what was perceived as suitably manly.⁸⁵ In addition to being “mature,” an ideal masculine subject also had the personal integrity not to be too swayed by a crowd. Communism, too, impacted this construct; as an “immature” subject might lead to weakness that would make citizens vulnerable to homosexuality and evil political practices, the conformity was a hallmark of the totalitarian regimes that comprised the enemy in the Second World War and then the Cold War. As Barbara Ehrenreich lays out in her chapter “Early Rebels,” just as “maturity” was gendered male, “conformity” was gendered female. The “Gray Flannel Dissidents,” Ehrenreich describes have surpassed the suspicions of “immaturity,” by and large they are family men with steady jobs and houses: “[h]e was adjusted; he was mature; he was, by any reasonable standard,

⁸³ Importantly, Hammer first discovers his passion for violence as GI, when he could “acceptably” exercise it against the State’s enemy. In this way, it might be possible to read Hammer as a character stunted and damaged by his time in combat to the point that he cannot fulfill the obligations of the mature masculine subject. I explore the uneasy subject-position of the veteran later in this chapter.

⁸⁴ Mickey Spillane, *I, The Jury* (New York: Signet, 1947); Kinsey, Martin, and Pomeroy, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*; Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center*.

⁸⁵ My reading of Riesman, Whyte, and the *LOOK* Magazine texts are heavily informed by Amelia Jones’ reading of them in her book *Body Art*. Similarly, Ehrenreich’s study led me to more popular texts like Wilson’s 1956 *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, Richard Yates’ 1961 *Revolutionary Road*, and Mickey Spillane’s novels. Jones, “The ‘Pollockian Performative’ and the Revision of the Modernist Subject”; Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*.

a success as an adult male breadwinner.”⁸⁶ But nonetheless, this subject is discontent because he understands that his maturity has served to make him subservient to a dulling system that robs him of his individuality and keeps him financially beholden because of the consumerist drive to “keep up with the Joneses.”⁸⁷ For instance, *The Lonely Crowd*, which I will return to shortly, was an oft-cited text in discussions about the erosion of masculinity in relation to changes in economic and social roles. Riesman outlined a social binary that came to be interpreted as rigidly based in gender; his project described the emergence of the “other-directed,” read *feminine*, person in the post-industrial world.⁸⁸

Whyte’s intensely sardonic *Organization Man* was released as a critique of management practices, and argued that rather than subscribing to “rugged individualism,” most Americans were contented to operate within a collectivist ethic.⁸⁹ This led to conservative business practices and leadership that did not tend towards risk-taking and growth, but rather focused on security and stability. While Whyte prefaces his text with the qualifier that it is *not* an attack on organization society or a plea for nonconformity (which he names as an “empty goal”), particular chapters do point to the negative consequences of “false collectivization”—the loss of individual creativity and decision making—with a tone that is nostalgic for competitive capitalism, and as a widely read text it was frequently invoked as evidence of the dilution of individualism in America.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*, 29.

⁸⁷ This tension between the obligation of being a responsible, mature “breadwinner” and the desire to push against conformity is evident in the interviews of the Exhibition Momentum members, who wanted both recognition as artists and the possibility of earning a living wage, both of which they believed were stymied by the Art Institute of Chicago’s 1947 ban on student participation in the Chicago & Vicinity art show. I discuss this tension in more depth below, and the impact of the ban in chapter two.

⁸⁸ David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1950; reprint New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2001).

⁸⁹ Whyte, *The Organization Man*, 22.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

After addressing the issue of contemporary masculinity in its pages for years, *LOOK* magazine published a short book entitled *The Decline of the American Male* in 1958.⁹¹ Its second chapter, “Why Is He Afraid To Be Different?,” tells the story of Gary Gray, the middle-class American man who has forgotten how to say “I”; Gary has found that the collective “we” holds much more meaning.⁹² Indeed, The Group was always right. Here, The Group refers not just to the corporation for which he works, and for which he was forced to surrender his individuality and mold his personality, but also to the manner in which all of the country is guided—by organized groups—and the standards set for socially acceptable behavior. Shy children and neighbors must be drawn out, ultimately at the expense of developing a rich inner life and sense of individuality. This morality tale ends with The Group’s interrogation of Gary regarding his neighbor. To what organizations does he belong? What does he read? Are his lights on late at night? It would seem that the telos of The Group mentality is the fascism that the “free and democratic United States of America” has fought against.⁹³

This little book neatly articulates the three linked issues understood to contribute to the decline of American men: the subjugation of individuality to The Group (“Why Is He Afraid To Be Different?”), the increasingly powerful position of women in the economic, social, and domestic realms (“Why Do Women Dominate Him?”) and the oft-constructed as feminine drive towards consumerism (“Why Does He Work So Hard?”) In a semi-scientific manner, the authors

⁹¹ William Attwood et al., *The Decline of the American Male* (New York: Random House, 1958).

This book was the result of a symposium by the same title. *Cosmopolitan* magazine also held a conference on gender in 1957, which Gilbert refers to as a “characteristic what-is-wrong-with-our-men symposium.” Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 65.

⁹² I have come to think of this particular form of sociology, that relies heavily on anecdotal narratives to serve big picture arguments, as “speculative sociology,”—wherein one fictional character, often with a punned name such as Gary Gray in “Why Is He Afraid To Be Different?” or John Drone in *Crack in the Picture Window*, is meant to stand for the everyman and his multitude of common problems. This form of description is pervasive in the texts I have discussed above.

⁹³ George B. Leonard, Jr., “Why Is He Afraid To Be Different?,” in *The Decline of the American Male*, by William Attwood et al. (New York: Random House, 1958), 26.

make lists of human failings and conditions that answer the title-questions, citing popular texts by Alfred Kinsey, Geoffrey Gorer, William Whyte Jr., and David Riesman to name a few.

According to the editors of *LOOK* the decline of the American male has a number of causes, but the underlying reasons are linked to the demands of the corporate system for both a loss of individuality and personal time, and the apparent shift of economic and domestic control to women. In bullet points, the first chapter enumerates the ways in which women have the upper hand: there are more of them, their life span is longer, there is an increasing number of them in the work force (an estimated one of every three American workers), more women voters, and a rising percentage of women stockholders, but *most importantly* her most influential position is that of consumer.⁹⁴ Wives dictated what purchases should be made for the home, spending the money that Husbands spent all of their time diligently earning at soul-sucking jobs. Even more wives were represented as the voice of social pressure, urging their husbands to “keep up with the Joneses,” managing to keep the (over-) working man in perpetual debt.

The notion of emasculating social pressure inflicted at home by wives was often underwritten by David Riesman’s work on the “other-directed person.” While Riesman, like Whyte, was ambivalent about the co-option of his research in the discourse of male decline, his language is decidedly gendered and value-laden. While the text refers to a character type not specifically male—Riesman is diligent in his use of the word “person”—the text is implicitly concerned with men.⁹⁵ As social critic Barbara Ehrenreich notes, “a book on ‘other-directed

⁹⁴ J. Robert Moskin, “Why Do Women Dominate Him?,” in *The Decline of the American Male*, by William Attwood et al. (New York: Random House, 1958), 18.

⁹⁵ Betty Friedan’s 1963 *Feminine Mystique* makes good use of this focus on the contemporary condition of men to further its agenda for the well-being of women. Rather than focus on the suffering of women relegated to the domestic sphere, she describes the American housewife as a “Typhoid Mary” whose malaise spreads like a toxin through American society, infecting children and husbands most directly, saddling them respectively with a lack of a sense of identity (which only resulted in promiscuity, military desertion, and homosexuality) and unreasonable economic and sexual expectations concocted while bored at home. The solution to this poisonous ennui was to redirect destructive energy into the work force. Indeed, this freeing of women from their domestic shackles would

women' would have been as unsurprising as a book on, say, fair-skinned Anglo-Saxons, because other-directedness was built into the female social role as wives and mothers."⁹⁶ While Riesman explains this male focus through anthropologically-flavored reason that "characterological change in the west seems to occur first in men," his terms are not subtle in their binary approach.⁹⁷

The inner-directed person is a stable man, guided by a "psychic gyroscope" that is set in motion by his parents and parental-figures. He is guided by the *principles* of his parents, rather than specific details of behavior, and so he has the resources to remain stable in the face of external voices or inner impulses that might otherwise sway him. The other-directed person, however, responds to signals from a group rather than from only his family unit, and so as the group shifts and changes, so does the other-directed person.⁹⁸ While the inner-directed person is guided by his internal compass, the other-directed person finds his source of direction in referring to his contemporaries, oft represented by mass media, "through an exceptional sensitivity to the actions and wishes of others."⁹⁹ Again, the emergence of this type is in part linked to the shift in labor conditions: fewer and fewer people work with physical materials, and more and more people are working with other people in this "centralized and bureaucratized society."¹⁰⁰ The enterprise and "Protestant ethic" of inner directed people is less necessary in this system, and so what Riesman calls "hard enduringness" gives way to the other-directed person's

alleviate the pressure they unfairly placed on men: freeing women would reinvigorate men. See Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*, 99–104; Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 218.

⁹⁶ Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*, 33–34.

⁹⁷ Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, 41. Riesman's work is directly related to the anthropological work on "character" preceding it, by the likes of Margaret Mead, Geoffrey Gorer, Ruth Benedict and Erich Fromm. Indeed, Mead was a friend and mutual critic of Riesman.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

softness.¹⁰¹ Riesman has taken a cue from Wylie and Strecker in his analysis of other-directed parenting, suggesting that the other-directed child is manipulated by overbearing parents, and unlike the governing gyroscope that the inner-directed parents bestow to their child, the other-directed child inherits a diffuse anxiety: the constant worry that he is not sufficiently keeping up with or appeasing his contemporaries.

Such a picture of other-directedness is enacted in the practice of consumption in a newly abundant land. While the inner-directed person might feel compelled to be seen in good standing by his neighbors, his acquisition of a washing machine or dishwasher does not determine his sense of self. For the other-directed person, however, it is not just physical trappings that comprise “keeping up with the Joneses,” it is the anxiety that his *quality* life does not measure up to his neighbors: that he is measurably less successful in his “inner experience” as well as his outer experience.¹⁰² Here, Riesman manages a nuance that is foregone in more pop-sociological texts, like *The Decline of the American Male*. Like the intellectual organization men of the *Partisan Review*, Riesman does not see consumption in itself as a negative act, nor the notion of keeping up with Joneses, rather he passes judgment on the lack of a stable sense of self that drives the other-directed man to measure his own inner life with his neighbors.

In the vignette presented by *LOOK* Magazine as well as in the morality tale of John and Mary Drone of John Keats’ 1956 *A Crack in the Picture Window*, the act of consumption, especially conspicuous consumption, eventually leads to a loss of self-knowledge, exemplified when Gary Gray forgets how to say “I.”¹⁰³ *The Crack in the Picture Window* is an angry screed against the underhanded practices of suburban-home developers that tracks the fall from newly married grace of its protagonists as a direct result of the consumerist drive to move out and up

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 24.

¹⁰³ John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window* (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1956).

from the city, becoming trapped and deadened by the ersatz communities of these suburban developments. Compared to the blame-ridden chapters “Why Do Women Dominate Him?” and “Why Does He Work So Hard?” the text shows remarkable sensitivity for the trials of Mary Drone, stuck at home in a house too small and too shabbily constructed, surrounded by other bored and frustrated housewives. Both texts, however, outline the causal relationship between the consumptive drive for home-ownership and material goods—always initiated by Mary—and the increasingly unsatisfying lives of the suburbanites. This other-directed attempt to live up to one’s neighbors is articulated as ultimately emasculating; the loss of the individual’s sense of self is feminizing.¹⁰⁴

Schlesinger, in the pertinently titled “The Crisis of American Masculinity,” published in *Esquire* magazine in 1958, made use of the now well established tropes in the discourse of masculinity: aggressive women, changing social and domestic dynamics between the sexes, the emasculation of society by mass society and conformity.¹⁰⁵ Ultimately, in spite of the gendered models of society he employs, he suggests that the change in women’s status in the workplace and in the home is *not* to be blamed for the current anxiety of masculinity, but rather it is the loss of men’s firm sense of self that has caused this crisis. Schlesinger suggests that the nineteenth-century sense of masculinity, hinged as it was on the “psychological idealization and legal subjection of women,” was simply untenable; that men at some point had to learn to live with liberated women.¹⁰⁶ Nor is it the mere shift in domestic responsibilities that have caused this crisis: indeed, helping with diapers and dishes and other “feminine” tasks might even be proof of

¹⁰⁴ Like the mature citizens of Corber’s arguments, Riesman’s inner-directed person also follows an Oedipal trajectory, wherein he grapples with the Father to assume his own place of power. It is this authority that allows him to follow his inner gyroscope, rather than to be swayed by mass media and his contemporaries, like the other-directed person.

¹⁰⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “The Crisis of American Masculinity (1958),” in *The Politics of Hope and The Bitter Heritage: American Liberalism in the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 292–311.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 297.

a man confident of his own masculinity. He does, however, believe that the masculine crisis as such *exists*, opening his article with: “What has happened to the American male? For a long time, he seemed utterly confident in his manhood, sure of his masculine role in society, easy and definite in his sense of sexual identity. The frontiersmen of James Fenimore Cooper, for example, never had any concern about masculinity; they were men, and it did not occur to them to think twice about it.”¹⁰⁷ Schlesinger, it seems, has nostalgia for the apparently secure and stable masculinity of the 1890s, and points to the contemporary trend of men feeling they must perform their manhood, clinging “to masculine symbols in order to keep demonstrating his maleness to himself.”¹⁰⁸ In doing so, it seems that he recognizes the contingent qualities of masculinity—that at least in recent times it is something that must often be performed, rather than not to think twice about. Gilbert points out that this anxiety about the contingency of gender is dependent upon the idea that there are clear codes of gender, which, for Schlesinger, are rooted in the 1890s. Though Schlesinger admits the repressive nature of the nineteenth-century models of masculinity that impose upon femininity, he also marks it as an age of clarity, a period without the sexual and gender ambiguity of the 1950s.¹⁰⁹

Marketable Masculinities: The New York School and Chicago’s Momentum Group

As has been thoroughly explored in the recent art historical scholarship of the American postwar period, the discourse of masculinity was invoked in the construction of a new avant-garde archetype for the American setting. While I further explore the discourse of abstraction

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 292. While James Fenimore Cooper represents traditional heroic masculinity Schlesinger later uses a Tennessee Williams movie to exemplify sexual ambiguity and eroded masculinity.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 293.

¹⁰⁹ Schlesinger specifically refers to the widely reported sex change of Christine Jorgenson and the “cultural boom” of homosexuality. Ibid.

and its impact on the reception of the New York School in my third chapter, this chapter will now focus on the ways in which constructions of masculinity informed and supported the efforts to solidify the domination of the postwar art scene and art historical narrative by Abstract Expressionism. By the mid 1940s, European modernism held pride of place in New York's galleries and museums, but New York critics, dealers, and patrons intervened on behalf of the New York School artists and helped establish a place in the market for them. Though the New York artists were both stylistically and ideologically diverse, they were ultimately united through the postwar reconstruction of the subject of the avant-garde American painter.

Among the most influential in creating a perceptibly cohesive group of artists were critics Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg. Though Greenberg's formalist approach and Rosenberg's existential interests often wildly differed, both invoke the European avant-garde in order to legitimize the New York artists. Each focused on the artists' poverty, their apparent neglect by the art scene, and their visionary qualities—sometimes as pertained to the advancement of the visual arts and sometimes as pertained to unearthing deep truths about being. For instance, Greenberg writes in his 1947 “The Present Prospect of American Painting”:

...below 34th Street, the fate of American art is being decided by young people, few of them over forty, who live in cold-water flats and exist from hand to mouth. Now they all paint in the abstract vein, show rarely on 57th Street, and have no reputations that extend beyond a small circle of fanatics, art-fixated misfits who are as isolated in the United States as if they were living in Paleolithic Europe...Alas, the future of American art depends on them. That it should be fitting but sad. Their isolation is inconceivable, crushing, unbroken, damning. That anyone can produce art on a respectable level in this situation is highly improbable. What can fifty do against a hundred and forty million?¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Clement Greenberg, “The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture,” *Horizon* 16 (October 1947): 29–30. For other proclamations on the new bohemia in New York, see Clement Greenberg, “The Situation at the Moment,” *Partisan Review* 15, no. 1 (January 1948): 81–84.

Greenberg's statement harkens both to the established discourse of the European avant-garde, but also, as we have seen, to the postwar discourse of American masculinity. His description of the artist's isolation in a sea of "a hundred forty million" reads like a harbinger for Riesman's title *The Lonely Crowd* of just four years later. His description of their isolation is echoed in Harold Rosenberg's contribution to the first and only issue of the journal *Possibilities*, in 1947, co-edited by Rosenberg, Robert Motherwell, Pierre Chareau, and John Cage. He writes, "[t]hese painters experience a unique loneliness of a depth that is reached perhaps nowhere else in the world."¹¹¹ These assessments of the "crushing" "loneliness" of the artists is a testament to their individuality; implied is that they see through the crushing, feminizing, conformity.

Furthermore, Caroline Jones points out that the rhetoric of romanticized artist's studio invoked the language of the pioneer, which is also common to the postwar discourse of masculinity. She writes:

That this romance had particular (if not peculiar) appeal to Americans might be imagined, by its congruence with the ideology of individual pioneers (an ideology that concealed, and conceals, more structured and centralized power, an ideology of freedom-loving loners who somehow coalesced almost seamlessly to form the advancing front for Manifest Destiny around the world).¹¹²

As we have seen, the pioneer or "rugged individual" of the west as Whyte might have it, is a common element of the postwar construct of the ideal masculine subject. She also deftly points out the structure that enabled these "pioneering" artists to coalesce into a recognizable and marketable school all the while maintaining the mythic notion of their isolation—indeed it was *in part* because of this notion that they could adopt the status of the avant-garde that helped them become so established.

¹¹¹ Harold Rosenberg, "Introduction to Six American Artists," *Possibilities* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1947-48): 75.

¹¹² Jones, *Machine in the Studio*, 7.

Bradford Collins has articulated the manners in which the coverage of the widely-consumed *Life* magazine positioned the group as a force of contemporary art to be reckoned with even if it was not unambiguously flattering in its description.¹¹³ Two of its greatest contributions to the formation of a recognizable, if not necessarily cohesive, New York School were its 1949 profile of Jackson Pollock, which asked “Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?” and the 1951 publication of Nina Leen’s famous portrait of a majority of artists affiliated with the New York School, the “Irascibles.” (figs. 2 and 14) Though the infamous article on Pollock diminishes his work, writing of his severest critics, “others condemn his pictures as degenerate and find them as unpalatable as yesterday’s macaroni,” and refers to paintings as “interesting, if inexplicable decorations.”¹¹⁴ Though at odds with the Greenberg and Rosenberg’s heroic picture of the artist as deciding the fate of American art and grappling intensely with existential plight of humanity, Collins points out that *Life* coverage regularly included the institutional investment in Abstract Expressionist artists, citing which Museums had purchased how many artworks and how much they paid for them.¹¹⁵ While Greenberg emphasized the art world’s neglect of his champion artists—crucial to the construction of the New York School artists as avant-garde—*Life*’s pejorative descriptions of Pollock’s paintings juxtaposed with a record of his institutional recognition played out this construction of the avant-garde for a larger audience, wherein the museums and collectors who invest in Pollock are equivalent to Greenberg’s “fanatics” and the somewhat confounded reaction of the public is equivalent to his picture of the disinterested art world.

¹¹³ Bradford R. Collins, “Life Magazine and the Abstract Expressionists, 1948-1951: A Historiography of a Late Bohemian Enterprise,” *Art Bulletin* 73 (June 1991): 283–308.

¹¹⁴ “Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?,” 42.

¹¹⁵ This dynamic of simultaneous stylistic suspicion and economic recognition is also at play in the 1956 *Time* magazine article on abstract painting “The Wild Ones,” which Chicago critic Peter Selz used as the starting point for his call for the broader recognition of the figural painting happening in Chicago. I discuss this further in my third chapter. See “The Wild Ones”; Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting.”

Nina Leen's photograph was also a crucial element in establishing the New York School as a recognizable, apparently discrete avant-garde. The photo was included in the January 15, 1951 issue of *Life* in reference to the artists' protest action against the Metropolitan Museum of Art and has become for all intents and purposes the portrait of the New York School. In 1950 the Metropolitan had planned a juried exhibition of contemporary art, but cautious of alienating the many varied artist groups and their supporters, the museum instituted an elaborate screening process with both regional and national juries. Furthermore, Director Francis Henry Taylor had been openly dismissive of the new abstract painting and the New York School artists believed the jurors would reject their work. The artists had been meeting since 1948 to have informal and open discussion on art as a cooperative in a loft on 31 East Eighth Street, right around the corner from the Cedar Bar, where many of the artists met in the mid-1940s. They balked at the Metropolitan's esoteric jury process and Taylor's obvious bias, and so publicly boycotted the exhibition, publishing a petition in the *New York Times*. Echoing Greenberg's 1947 assessment, they argued that society always undervalues the most progressive and ultimately most enduring work, while the artists that would be chosen by the Metropolitan would surely fade into obscurity.¹¹⁶

When *Life* covered the boycott, the text below Leen's portrait described the action as such: "Their revolt and subsequent boycott of the show was in keeping with an old tradition among avant-garde artists. French painters in 1874 rebelled against their official juries and held the first impressionist exhibition. U.S. artists in 1908 broke with the National Academy jury to

¹¹⁶ The New York jury for the Metropolitan's show was conservative by reputation, but the New York artists' concern occurred elsewhere throughout the country. See Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven Levine, eds., "Art Museums and Living Artists: Contentious Communities," in *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 105–36.

This sentiment is reproduced almost exactly in Roger Brown's 1981 *Giotto* works, which I discuss in the introduction to the next chapter. Brown's works are directed at the short-sightedness of Chicago critics who forgo the exciting and new local work for the now well-established abstract work in New York.

launch the famous Ashcan School.”¹¹⁷ While *Life* may not have always been the most complimentary of abstract work, in this text the magazine aligned the artists with the French avant-garde and the Ashcan School, an earlier New York centered avant-garde, and gave the group a name that embodied this progressive intractability: the “Irascibles.” The photo features fifteen of the eighteen signatories of the petition: William Baziot, James Brooks, Richard Pousette-Dart, Jimmy Ernst, Adolph Gottlieb, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, Theodoros Stamos, Hedda Sterne, Clyfford Still, and Bradley Walker Tomlin.¹¹⁸ While the *Life* profile of Pollock did not make him a household name, it did unequivocally establish him as a major actor in the contemporary art scene to those who were paying attention, and his peers were aware of this. Conscious of the recognition earned by the profile, his New York School artists pointedly invited Pollock to be in the photo—he is placed conspicuously in the middle and is set apart from his peers, framed by his own bent arm.¹¹⁹ Though they embraced the bohemian construction of the avant-garde both New York critics and artists were conscious of how to use more mainstream media, like *Life*, in order to build their careers as artists. Collins suggests that this is evidence of the shift from understanding of art as a “vocation to be followed” to a “career to be manufactured.”¹²⁰ Of course, the construct of the former was crucial in the effective enacting of the latter, or as Collins points out, the artists “understood, probably instinctively, that maintaining their bohemian

¹¹⁷ Author unnamed, “Irascible Group of Advanced Artists Led Fight Against Show,” *Life*, January 15, 1951, 34.

¹¹⁸ The three not pictured, Hans Hofmann, Fritz Bultman, and Welton Kees were not in New York at the time of the photograph. Collins, “Life Magazine and the Abstract Expressionists, 1948-1951: A Historiography of a Late Bohemian Enterprise,” 293.

¹¹⁹ While the “Irascible” group met regularly in their 8th street loft or “The Club” for forums, Pollock usually only joined for the more informal conversation in the bar afterwards. Thomas B. Hess, *Willem de Kooning* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1968), 73. For more on the environment of the Cedar Bar and 8th Street Club, see Sandler, “The Club.”

¹²⁰ Collins, “Life Magazine and the Abstract Expressionists, 1948-1951: A Historiography of a Late Bohemian Enterprise,” 302.

credentials was necessary to their acceptance both within and outside of their profession.”¹²¹

Much like performances of normative masculinity, the New York School artists had to perform their bohemian-ness for both the art establishment and a broad American public, but it was crucial that it appear completely natural. Crucially, even while the artists appear as a group, their name and their defensive postures—closed off to the viewer, arms often crossed—mark them as individualistic.¹²² Not only are they at odds with the institution, they are also set apart from each other; the sociality implied in their regular meetings at the loft and in the Cedar Bar is not visible in this staunch portrait in which, despite their proximity, no artist seems to touch another.

This internal independence was, perhaps, a result of the suspect sexuality of the artist subject. As Gavin Butt argues compellingly in *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*, the artist, in part *because* of his bohemian quality, was often popularly perceived as a non-normative masculine subject, and therefore potentially queer. Especially in the years after the Kinsey Report and the in the context of the growing culture of suspicion around homosexuality, Butt argues that the artist was a sexually liminal figure; recall Seltzer’s classification of subjects on the “weaker” end of the spectrum of the masculine component as having personalities that tended towards the arts.¹²³ Indeed, Butt parallels the

¹²¹ Ibid., 303.

Collins dates this shift from art as vocation to the postwar period, but other scholars have effectively argued otherwise. See Michael C. Fitzgerald, *Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1994); Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). As pointed out by Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 125.

¹²² In 1957, *ARTnews* editor Thomas Hess wrote an article privileging abstraction over figuration. In his retelling of the mythic origin story of the Abstract Expressionists, he wrote:

Some fifteen years ago, American painters, working in isolation but with a growing sense of togetherness, created a new attitude towards art, a new ambience (they were forced by public hostility literally to form their own audience which was, and remains, largely composed of artists) and a new style that was cosmopolitan, international, revolutionary and in the revolutionary sense, historical.

Hess, “Younger Artists and the Unforgivable Crime,” 47.

¹²³ Seltzer, “The Relationship Between the Masculine Component and Personality,” 33.

concern over homosexual “infiltration” of government agents with the perception of the New York art world.¹²⁴ Consequently, public representations of artists often worked to avow their normative sexuality, as has been thoroughly explored by scholars like Michael Leja and Amelia Jones.¹²⁵

While the New York artists invoked the codes of the European avant-garde, they had to be reconfigured. Now that the United States had taken its place as the political and economic capital of the western world, American artists had to resonate with American codes of masculinity, which as we have seen, also had decidedly important political implications. This performance of hegemonic masculinity is evident in the persistent myth of the Abstract Expressionist. It manifests in the anecdotes of swaggering and brawling artists at the Cedar Bar, Pollock imaged as embodying a new kind of masculinity in *Life*, in his working-class denim costume with arms crossed defiantly as he peers out at the viewer, and even the reframing of painting as an “Action” which aligned it with the empowered masculine subject.¹²⁶ The affinity of their mythos with both the European construct of the avant-garde as well as the American rugged, individualistic construct of masculinity helped establish the New York artists as a viable American postwar avant-garde.

¹²⁴ Butt, *Between You and Me*, 39.

Butt cites a particularly phobic article by Thomas Hart Benton about a homosexual conspiracy in the art world, particularly as “Americanist” art of the sort he was known for was waning. Rhetorically, his text reflects the public anxiety over the queer body; he both insists on the legibility of gay men (their deviant embodiment) like Seltzer, as well as their ability to “pass” and infiltrate, a fear bolstered by the finding of the Kinsey report. *Ibid.*, 23–29.

¹²⁵ See especially Leja’s reading of the husband-wife portraits of Pollock and Lee Krasner and Willem and Elaine de Kooning, and Jones’ article on the changing sartorial codes of the artist from the nineteenth century into the postwar years. Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 253–256; Jones, “‘Clothes Make the Man.’” See also Wagner, “Lee Krasner as L.K.”

Butt also describes the ways that the *Life* profile of Alfred Kinsey actively works to present him as normatively masculine, pictured in a well-appointed suburban home with his wife. Butt, *Between You and Me*, 34.

¹²⁶ The coding of Pollock as working-class of course *does* have a European parallel: artists such as Gustave Courbet allied themselves with agrarian labor in the mid-nineteenth century, contributing to his self-fashioning as an anti-bourgeois bohemian. See Jones, “‘Clothes Make the Man.’”

The term “action painting” was coined in 1952 by Rosenberg. Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters.”

Contemporaneously in Chicago, the students of the School of the Art Institute were trying to garner similar recognition for themselves. As detailed more thoroughly in the next chapter, the Chicago artists simply did not have the kind of infrastructure that would enable them to achieve the level of celebrity as, say, Jackson Pollock. However, both the promotional materials produced by the students and the art critical conversation around them employed the same rhetorical terms of the avant-garde to help establish them as worthy of recognition. While I go in to more detail on the conditions that prompted the Chicago school's anti-institutional formation of the artist collective "Exhibition Momentum," at this juncture it is crucial to know that the Art Institute of Chicago banned its students (of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago) from participating in the 1948 Chicago & Vicinity Show, due to a variety of both internal and external pressures. This annual exhibition, for all intents and purposes, was the only way to become recognized as an artist in Chicago and in order to get gallery representation and eventually earn money from the sale of artwork. If one hadn't exhibited with the Art Institute, the chances of becoming a professional artist were slim to nil. As one Chicago student put it in 1950:

there is only one common meeting ground where they all weighed one against the other, so to be rejected from the Chicago show means you've been judged lacking by your peers, and that your work is not good enough to deserve display... Incidentally, sometimes I have been told that people buying a picture will say to the artist, 'Are you exhibiting at the Art Institute?' They are suspicious. Maybe they are getting something that is not so good. They're not sure of their taste...unless it's got the okay of the Art Institute...¹²⁷

Unlike the older artists of the New York School, the students of the Art Institute were in their mid- to late-twenties, many of them only recently returned from serving overseas during World War II. They were not established artists, but eager to get their careers on track. Recognizing

¹²⁷ Daniel Joseph, "Career and Social Protest: An Analysis of a Chicago Art Group" (M.A., University of Chicago, 1950), 110–111, Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago.

that the official path to legitimacy was effectively closed to them, they formed an independent artist group, Exhibition Momentum, and launched counter exhibitions.

Like the New York School, they relied on the established construction of the European avant-garde in order to validate their anti-institutional actions. Due to the relative neglect of the Chicago School in the art history, there are very few thorough narratives of the postwar Chicago art scene, despite how influential it was on the city's later art scene. However, in 1950, a University of Chicago graduate student in the department of sociology (a fast-growing discipline in postwar America, as we have seen) wrote his Master's thesis on the development of Momentum. Entitled *Career and Social Protest: An Analysis of a Chicago Art Group*, Daniel Joseph's MA thesis includes researched derived from over one hundred interviews with members of the group, and provides an immensely valuable picture of some of the common motivations, goals, and self-perception, of these young Chicago artists.¹²⁸

Joseph often refers to the recently published *History of Impressionism* (1946) by John Rewald to emphasize his points about the disadvantages of the ostracized art students. The above quote clearly echoes the following passage from Rewald's text about the unfair jurying practices of the late nineteenth-century French art establishment:

In all these decisions they naturally favored their most docile pupils, who in turn were favored by that public which sees in medals and prizes the proof of an artist's talent...People not only refused to buy pictures rejected by the jury, they even returned those previously bought...On the other hand, an accepted painting was likely to sell, to create a favorable impression from dealers...But the jury had little consideration for the fate of the artist it held in its hands...¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Unfortunately, Joseph's interviewees are identified by number, rather than name. I was introduced to Joseph's text through art historian Mary Simpson's 2001 doctoral thesis, and my reading of it has been largely guided by her own research. She also conducts a useful comparison of the efforts of the Momentum Group to establish itself as a recognizable artist group with those of the New York School which has informed my own work. See Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 72–91.

¹²⁹ John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946), 17.

Through Rewald, Joseph repeats the myth of the neglected avant-garde artist, and encodes it into his narrative of the Momentum group.¹³⁰ Like the caption to Leen's famous photograph, Joseph aligns the Chicago artists with an already established avant-garde. In this sense their underdog and alienated position is crucial to the project of earning the Momentum group serious recognition.

The artists of Momentum, much like their New York contemporaries, also relied on the tension with the "official" art world as a key element of the avant-garde myth. Joseph's compilation of interviews of students and news reports of the struggle between Momentum and the art establishment of Chicago created a compelling narrative of the group's origin that was often repeated in the catalogues for their nearly annual exhibitions; the 1956 catalogue quotes directly from the interview conducted by Joseph.¹³¹ The antagonistic relationship between the artists and the Institute is also obviously manifest in the 1950 Exhibition Momentum catalogue insert *9 Viewpoints*.¹³² While I discuss in greater depth the extent to which this catalogue alienated and angered both members of the art establishment *and* members within Momentum in the following chapter, at this point it is worth looking closely at the rhetoric of the essays to discern how the artists were engaging with the avant-garde myth (or rejecting it as the case may be) in attempts to secure a position for themselves.

The *9 Viewpoints* essays chosen for inclusion (all written by members of the group) were voted upon by Momentum. The small volume's foreword proclaims the individuality of the artists and states "[i]t is both healthy and important" that the essays espouse no single view, so

¹³⁰ Joseph's audience, as well as a broader public would have been familiar with this construction of the avant-garde artist through texts like Rewald's history, but also more popular approaches like Irving Stone's 1934 novelization of Van Gogh's life. In addition to being reprinted numerous times (most recently in 2008), Stone's novel received renewed attention in 1956 when its inspired movie starring Kirk Douglas was released. Irving Stone, *Lust for Life* (New York: Plume, 1984).

¹³¹ *Exhibition Momentum Catalogue* (Chicago: Momentum, 1956), Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago.

¹³² *Exhibition Momentum, 9 Viewpoints: A Forum* (Chicago: Momentum, 1950), Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago.

that “no organizational doctrine” can be constructed out of them. Such dogma was what the artists were protesting. This note suggests that the group prided themselves on their diversity of viewpoints and resented the institutions that had apparently found consensus in who could be recognized as an artist. At this stage, Momentum’s critiques were focused on the policies of the Art Institute, but later in the decade major figures of the Chicago art scene, including Golub and Selz, would redirect their criticism towards the seemingly hegemonic orientation of the postwar American art world on New York abstraction.¹³³ In the 1950 essay, the Momentum’s rhetoric very closely parallels the art critical construction of the New York School as comprised of distinct individuals brought together, much like the “Irascibles” in their protest to the Metropolitan’s juridical practices.

While the essays of *9 Viewpoints* diverge in their claims on the role of art and the artist, they are all vituperative, often explicitly attacking the official art institutions of Chicago.¹³⁴ Franz Schulze, who was then a painting student but would go on to be one of the best known chroniclers of the Chicago art scene, describes with ire the conditions that led to the formation of the Momentum group in “On Painting in America, 1950.”¹³⁵ He describes with ire the misplaced power of the museum trustee: “over the art museum, high above the carrying range of the painter or musician’s voice, is the trustee, who, because there is no higher authority, is supreme.”¹³⁶ He compares the museum trustee with the board member of a hospital, no better equipped to dictate

¹³³ I explore this latter critique in my third chapter, especially as articulated in Leon Golub, “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” *College Art Journal* 14, no. 2 (January 1, 1955): 142–47; Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting.”

¹³⁴ Or each other, as in the case of Institute of Design student Alex Nicoloff’s essay.

¹³⁵ Schulze’s essay is characteristic of the position espoused by the most radicalized members of Momentum, sometimes located as painter Leon Golub’s crew. I explore the diversity of viewpoints and conflicts within Momentum in greater detail in the next chapter.

¹³⁶ Schulze, Franz, “On Painting in America, 1950,” in *9 Viewpoints: A Forum*, by Exhibition Momentum (Chicago: Momentum, 1950).

art policy than the hospital trustee is to perform an appendectomy.¹³⁷ Artist Aaron Roseman's aptly titled "Manifesto" describes the past success of Momentum's initial 1948 exhibition in Classical terms and lays out objectives for the future. "Exhibitions, catalogues, awards, juries, are only the heads of our contemporary Hydra. We must grapple with the body of the demon. Iolaus, the Herculean Assistant is at hand. Equal and uncensored opportunity was the direct stimulus. Hydra gave two for one. Momentum '48, like Hercules, also caused two heads for one. What new heads will '50 cause to come forth." He positions the artist as a timeless figure, eternally at odds with the oppressive forces of mainstream society and in doing so conjures up for his reader the mythic Greek hero, and the artist who both struggles for progress and pioneers a new path. Of the next step, Roseman decrees, "The birth throes are over. The task ahead is plain. We must reinvestigate our navels... We must redefine ourselves . . . redefine, reinvestigate, and reintegrate... Success will be measured by our physical and theoretical answers."¹³⁸ These proclamations less than humbly suggest that the future of American art lies with the heroic demon-slayers of Momentum, rather than in the hands of a few New Yorkers.

Leon Golub's contribution "A Law Unto Himself," examines the position of the artist more broadly, but evokes the rhetoric of the alienated avant-garde perhaps more overtly than any other essay. He begins, "[t]he contemporary artist is a law unto himself. His inverted, fragmented concept of reality rarely coincides with that of others." Going on to describe the process of achieving and maintaining greatness, Golub writes, "[s]lowly, without sanction, the contemporary artist measures himself and reaches significance. For some a heroic individuality

¹³⁷ Schulze's phrasing is undoubtedly a response to a rationalization of the ban of student submissions to the Chicago & Vicinity exhibition. An Art Institute Board member cajoled that the art students could be no more professional artists than a medical students could be a doctors before earning their degrees. Many of the veteran artists who were older than the average student and some of whom had art training before serving in the military deeply resented this. This is detailed more thoroughly in chapter two.

¹³⁸ Aaron Roseman, "Manifesto," in *9 Viewpoints: A Forum*, by Exhibition Momentum (Chicago: Momentum, 1950), Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago.

ensues....He needs endlessly pursue his identity and question the validity of his action. But he remains thrust aside, alienated, and a solitary.” He also calls for the reconsideration of the museum’s role in society—a fairly common theme among the *9 Viewpoints* considering the impetus for Momentum’s formation—and posits that it must serve a role in mediating between artist and society, because if the artist “cannot preserve an unthwarted and meaningful intercourse with his immediate milieu,” then he maintains a militant self-reliance.¹³⁹ He closes his essay with the proscription, “[k]now then the artist as a preserver of ancient amities and a prophet of *Liberation*.”¹⁴⁰ Like Roseman, Golub marks the artist as transcendently timeless and heroic. Like Greenberg, Golub imagines the contemporary artist’s experience as extremely isolating, and, like Rosenberg, he posits it as a matter of existential importance.

Also like the New York School, the construction of the alienated artist is perpetuated not only contemporaneously, but also in later art histories of the period. For instance, akin to the “cold-water flats” described by Greenberg in 1947, art historian and critic Peter Selz wrote as late 1994 that “in Chicago the practice of the breed was strikingly hermetic, certainly by contrast with its counterpart in New York, where a larger, more assured community of colleagues and supporters was a fact of every artist’s life. Some Chicagoans literally kept their studios in the back bedrooms and porches of family two-flat apartments, working in steadfast solitude.”¹⁴¹ Selz was an integral part of the postwar art community, championing artists like Leon Golub in national art journals and eventually organizing the 1959 exhibit *New Images of Man* at the Museum of Modern Art, which had strong Chicago representation, and so his investment in the romantic construction of his community can be compared to Greenberg’s or Irving Sandler,

¹³⁹ I use Golub’s masculine pronoun. He repeats the same bombastic claims on the heroic role of the artist in a 1968 interview.

¹⁴⁰ Leon Golub, “A Law Unto Himself,” in *9 Viewpoints: A Forum*, by Exhibition Momentum (Chicago: Momentum, 1950), Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago.

¹⁴¹ Selz, “Modernism Comes to Chicago: The Institute of Design,” 23.

whose descriptions of the New York artists 8th Street “Club” impacted nearly all subsequent art histories.¹⁴² The relative lack of art history texts on postwar Chicago, however, has enabled this myth of the solitary artist to stand more or less unchallenged. While they did not engage with such influential critics as their New York counterparts, Exhibition Momentum was a tremendously active group with a fairly extensive membership, nearly doubling in between 1948 until 1950, when Joseph began his thesis. The Chicago student artists constructed a vital and active artist community, and yet their constructed solitary status, their individuality, is crucial to the efforts of positioning them as an (as of yet unrecognized) avant-garde, even more than fifty years after the fact. At this late stage in the game, Selz continues to engage with the romantic notion of the artist by positing them as *even more* isolated than their New York counterparts. Though, indeed, by the mid-1950s the New York artists had been well-established as the dominant force of American art.

In the quote from *The History of Impressionism* Daniel Joseph chose to describe the parallel plight of the Momentum group, Rewald lamented the jury’s indifference to the “fate of the artist.” But this fate can be interpreted in at least two different ways. There exists the desire to be recognized *as* an artist, that is the postwar construction of an artist, heavily imbued as it was with the romanticized codes of the nineteenth century, but also the very practical demands of providing for themselves and their families. It seems that the isolated struggle of the artist was often at odds with being a mature masculine subject who helped to sustain the family unit—building block of the nation’s social and economic success. Joseph captures the tensions of these two disparate elements that were both parts of the “fate” of the artist in several of his interviews. One painter remarked:

¹⁴² Greenberg, “The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture”; Greenberg, “The Situation at the Moment”; Sandler, “The Club.”

About once every two months I'd get into a slump as far as my painting is concerned...I get aggravated and nervous. I wonder what is the matter with me. How am I ever going to be an artist? Where will I get the money for things? What am I missing? I look at the magazines that have automobiles...I wonder. Am I crazy? Maybe I would be better off the other way. Then in about five minutes I say, Oh no!¹⁴³

Of course this situation was not uncommon. According to a 1946 national survey of artists, only 27% of respondents could support themselves solely through their work.¹⁴⁴ While New York's art market was reinvigorated with the postwar economic boom, Chicago artists were too far away and too unknown to benefit. Furthermore, they were too young to have experienced the government support through programs like the Works Progress Administration, as many of the New York School artists had. Many of the Chicagoans counted on teaching positions, others still turned to commercial work—for instance H.C. Westermann worked as a carpenter. Commercial work was often looked down upon by the students, despite their evident consternation about how to make a living as an artist.¹⁴⁵ A woman member of Momentum noted that her practice as an artist might well be less at-risk than some of her male counterparts:

A lot of guys getting out now have been supported by their wives...Some of them are under a very bad strain. One is on the verge of being alcoholic, can't even show his work. He stays home and fixes the house all the time. He can no longer get a teaching job, because there are less veterans in school and, therefore, less need for teachers. One guy is getting a bar and is going into circus painting as a sideline. Even these freak solutions in my mind are not an honest way of making a living at art. For me as a woman, it isn't so bad, because I will get married and buy my paint brushes out of the family budget.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Joseph, "Career and Social Protest," 63.

¹⁴⁴ Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 87.

Simpson cites Joseph, "Career and Social Protest," 18–19. Joseph cites George Biddle, "Can Artists Make a Living?," *Harper's Monthly* 181 (September 1940): 392–401; Elizabeth McCausland, "Why Can't America Afford Art?," *Magazine of Art* 39 (January 1946): 18–33.

¹⁴⁵ Butt points out that Andy Warhol's commercial work is part of what marked him as not serious, in addition to his focus in window dressing as "sissy," in the 1950s. Butt, *Between You and Me*, 112.

¹⁴⁶ Joseph, "Career and Social Protest," 26.

Curiously, this artist sees her probable exclusion from the professional world, art world or otherwise, based on her gender as endowing her with a certain amount of freedom as an artist. She points out the intense pressure felt by many of the male artists who could not make a living with their work, either by exhibiting or teaching, especially considering that the American male subject was expected to fulfill the breadwinner role, as we have seen.

While some artists embraced the construct of the avant-garde artist at odds with society, others lamented it. This artist, in addition to recognizing the financial hardships of making a living at art, recognizes the socially suspect sexuality of artists: “[a]rt is simply unwanted... When you talk to somebody about painting, it's frowned on...They think it's too sissyfied (sic), queer... Basically, it's a problem of how to keep painting and still eat. It's also a problem of convincing your society that you are not a social leech...it's a matter of becoming accepted.”¹⁴⁷ While publicly, as through the majority chosen essays of *9 Viewpoints*, Momentum members fashioned themselves as avant-garde in their approach, in conversation with Daniel Joseph some artists expressed their ambivalence about what such an attitude might mean for their economic stability or family life. Or, as art historian Richard Shiff put it, the avant-garde artist “realizes a social ideal that society cannot allow to become dominant.” Being an artist, he maintains, is a “profession, like any other, struggling within the limitations of its own mythology.”¹⁴⁸ For instance, Chicago gallerist Richard Feigen suggested that the teaching positions coveted by Momentum artists were not compatible with being a successful avant-garde artist. Comparing Leon Golub’s eventual success to George Cohen’s relative anonymity, Feigen pointed to Cohen’s tenured position at Northwestern University and his responsibilities to his wife and

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹⁴⁸ Richard Shiff, “Performing an Appearance: On the Surface of Abstract Expressionism,” in *Abstract Expressionism: The Critical Developments*, ed. Michael Auping (New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987), 94.

three children as the sticking point that kept him in Chicago where he had a secure future.¹⁴⁹

Golub and Spero, without such stable positions, moved to New York in 1959 after stints in Rome and France as visiting artists. This said, Golub, too, reflected that he took a step back from Exhibition Momentum's after the 1951 exhibition because he had familial obligations: "I had gotten married to Nancy and we had two children and a dog. Life had gotten complex; it was hard making a living, living as an artist."¹⁵⁰

As art historian Mary Simpson points out, Daniel Joseph brought his own masculinist bias to his sociological work. While the Momentum had strong female membership, Joseph focused on the veteran students as the core of the group and emphasized their ambitions, which has had an impact on all subsequent histories, including this one; his interviews were reproduced in Exhibition Momentum catalogues and the majority veteran demographic of the group was emphasized in their press releases, which resulted in the broader media's focus on the veterans.¹⁵¹ This said, not only were some of the veteran students the most vocal (like Golub), Joseph was likely responding to a feminizing rhetoric of Chicago artists. Early to mid-twentieth-century Chicago critic C.J. Bulliet remarked on the "peculiar" phenomenon that woman painters often outperformed their male colleagues in competition for awards, a fact not "flattering to Chicago in general, but it may be the blunt truth."¹⁵² As with the New York school, women members were suppressed from the positions of greatest influence in Momentum.¹⁵³ However,

¹⁴⁹ Feigen recalled, "[t]he funny thing about George was that he had tenure very young. And I still believe that's what kept him from being an artist of international repute was because tenure is like a kid born with too much money. It paralyzes you." Feigen, Tape-recorded Interview with Richard Feigen, 8.

¹⁵⁰ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 5, 1994, 5.

¹⁵¹ Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 83.

¹⁵² C.J. Bulliet, "Artless Comment: Women Artists a Challenge to the Men," *Chicago Daily News*, 1945. As cited in Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 83.

Simpson points out that it was mostly the female students', rather than the veteran students', strong showing and success in the competition at the 1947 Chicago & Vicinity Show that prompted the 1948 student ban. Ibid.

¹⁵³ A specific instance of this is Golub's supplanting of Ellen Lanyon (1947 Chicago & Vicinity student prize winner) as the student to deliver the petition against the ban to president of the Art Institute of Chicago Daniel

this refocusing of power in the Chicago art group had particular significance given the high concentration of veteran members. Media campaigns sought to persuade women to forgo their own career ambitions in service of helping to reacclimatize the veteran to civilian life.¹⁵⁴ While Joseph and the Momentum Group itself emphasized the aspirations of the veteran members of the group, this may not have served them as well as they hoped. As the next section shows, the subject-position of the veteran was not necessarily congruent with normative stable masculinity.¹⁵⁵

As a way to demonstrate this point before moving on to the social construction of the veteran, I turn back to Joseph's thesis. In addition to the Rewald's text on the Impressionist avant-garde, Joseph also cited sociologist Robert Park's *Race and Culture* (1950) in his construction of the artist as a marginalized subject.¹⁵⁶ Joseph suggested that the artist experiences an identity crisis wherein their self-worth is not commensurate with their social status or experience. He writes,

As reluctant as marginal persons may be to accept the status assigned them, they cannot free themselves from it. The inability to free themselves from the unwanted assigned status may rest within themselves, as in the case of the Jew who can never break completely with his group, or with the general

Catton Rich. It was felt that Golub would better represent the veteran students' needs. This is detailed in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁴ For discussions on the aggressive return to prewar gender norms after the war, see Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1987); Eugenia Kaledin, *Mothers & More: American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1985); Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

¹⁵⁵ This is evidenced by the public call for women to abdicate their positions in the workforce to help normalize the veteran. That the veteran needs "normalizing" already makes him suspect; that he needs "normalizing" by a woman potentially calls his sexuality and concurrently his masculinity into question.

¹⁵⁶ Park, of the Chicago school of sociology, focused his work on race, race relations, and coined the term the "marginal man," whose experience he characterized in terms of W.E.B. Du Bois' notion of "double-consciousness." Park describes the marginal man as a cultural hybrid and argues that racialized subjects in America, like mixed-race subjects and the modern Jew, found themselves, in Chad Goldberg's words, "at the intersection of two worlds, not fully at home in either and internally divided as a result." See Chad Alan Goldberg, "Robert Park's Marginal Man: The Career of a Concept in American Sociology," *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research* 4, no. 2 (August 8, 2012): 203.

social structure, as is found in cases of proscribed movement involved in anti-Jewish or anti-Negro or anti-woman sentiment.¹⁵⁷

This is, of course, a false equivalence. While the artist may be a marginal subject, “artist” is also a chosen profession, as Shiff points out above, whereas “Jew,” “Negro,” and “woman,” with all their social expectations, are culturally and socially assigned, usually at birth. This association with the socially marginal, however, is standard fare in the construction of the avant-garde. I discuss in further depth, for instance, the association of the German Expressionist movement with the so-called “primitive,” also enacted within the New York School and the Chicago School. Indeed, a Momentum member echoes Joseph very clearly, when he says of his position, “I’ve always said that artists, Jews, Negroes, and women are all in the same category. They are all in the minority...they all suffer from the same thing.”¹⁵⁸ However, while both Joseph and the group

¹⁵⁷ Joseph, “Career and Social Protest,” 31.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 53. See also Gavin Butt’s article on Larry Rivers’ construction of what it mean to be a modern bohemian from “outcast” communities for analysis of a self-conscious, camp performance of this process of self-marginalization, in contrast with the “authenticity” of the Abstract Expressionist avant-garde. Gavin Butt, “The Greatest Homosexual?: Camp Pleasure and the Performative Body of Larry Rivers,” in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 107–26. This statement occludes intersectional experience. There were many women and Jewish members of the artist group Momentum, though the racial divide of Chicago (and the nation writ large) meant that Black artists groups operated unto themselves, in an even more marginalized capacity than Momentum. Marion Perkins, a highly successful, largely self-taught sculptor who came to Chicago at the age of nine during the Great Migration, serves as an important counterpoint to this rhetoric. As a social advocate, he emphasized the importance of reconnecting with Africa and the creation of a black aesthetic. At the first Black Artists Conference, held at Atlanta University in 1960, he stated “Let us not forget that we are all in the same boat with all the Negro people piloting through the storm toward the same cherished goal—full democratic rights and first class American citizenship.” Marion Perkins, *Problems of the Black Artist* (Chicago: Free Black Press, 1971), 3. As cited in Lynne Warren and Staci Boris, “Chicago: City of Neighborhoods,” in *Art in Chicago: 1945-1975*, ed. Lynne Warren (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art; Distributed by Thames & Hudson, 1996), 85.

Golub makes a revealing statement about the disconnect between artistic communities in Chicago in his 1968 interview with Irving Sandler. Discussing the limited exhibition opportunities for students in postwar Chicago, he said, “[i]n 1947 I went to a Negro community art center on the south side of Chicago. Now that’s the feedback, you know. Instead of the blacks going to the white school I went to a black center.” Golub implies that the School of the Art Institute offered such little opportunity that members of black community didn’t feel they could benefit from it, and that (in an inversion of expectations) it was Golub who had to travel outside expected circles to get exhibition space. Given the difficulties faced by the white and Jewish student population, black potential students stood even less of a chance of recognition. While the School of the Art Institute was among the first American art schools to accept black students, this fact cannot fully counter the intensely racialized and segregated nature of the city. Case in point, Ellis Wilson had to defer his attendance to the School because of the Chicago race riots in 1919. It was an issue of compounded struggle that kept black artists from gravitating towards the ostensible center of young artist communities, rather than a dismissal of the school’s ability to help them establish themselves.

For more on black artists at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the opportunities for young black artists

emphasized their veteran status in their efforts to gain wider support, they could not invoke the veteran subject's experience in their bid for avant-garde marginal identity. The veteran was insufficiently marginal, that is the construct was integral to the narrative of the nation's political and military success, but nonetheless, the male veteran was often treated with tacit suspicion.

The Veteran Subject's Precarious Place

As had been foreshadowed by Dr. Strecker's ominous warnings about the psychoneurotic weakness apparent in his screening of the nation's forces during World War II in *Their Mother's Sons*, the veteran was sometimes perceived a potentially volatile subject. The GI Bill that would support the education of hundreds of thousands of ex-servicemen caused much controversy when it was first introduced in 1946, and to assuage public concern, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Congress launched a public relations campaign that argued for the benefits. However, the campaign suggested not only that veterans were entitled to such benefits because of their sacrifice, but because they could be "a potent force for good or evil," and that mistreating them might be to the ultimate detriment of the nation.¹⁵⁹ As I discuss in the second and third chapters, this had ramifications for the Chicago artists and Monster Roster in their bids for institutional support from the Art Institute of Chicago as well as the recognition of their often

created by the Chicago Art League, the Harmon Foundation (which organized the 1927 exhibition "The Negro in Art Week" and whose primary goal was to aid black visual artists), see Roger Gilmore, *Over a Century a History of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1866-1981* (Chicago: School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1982); Margaret R. Vendryes, "Everything of Interest and Beauty," in *The Art of Ellis Wilson*, ed. Eva King et al. (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 3-11; Steven H. Jones and Eva King, "Ellis Wilson, A Native Son," in *The Art of Ellis Wilson*, ed. Eva King et al. (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 13-22; Henry Louis Gates and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Farrow, William McKnight," in *Harlem Renaissance Lives from the African American National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 192-93; F.N. D'Alessio, "Many Different Styles Shown: African-American Art Highlighted in New Exhibit," *The Free Lance-Star*, March 24, 2003.

¹⁵⁹ Olson quotes a "Suggested Radio Interview," 11 January, 1944 in "Great War-Legion Bill, Legion papers, folder 2. As cited in Keith W. Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 20.

figural and grotesque work in the national art scene. At this juncture, I will elaborate on the precarious position of the veteran subject given conflicting constructions of military service, in order to better understand how it affected the Momentum group and the Monster Roster. I also expand on my methodology of reading many of the monstrous works of the Chicago School as traumatic truth-telling, rather than using them as windows into the psyches of the individual artists.

In her 2007 “False Witness: Combat Entertainment and Citizen Training in the United States,” film theorist Karen Hall points out that media representations are the primary manner through which modern American citizens have learned about war, and argues that combat oriented film entertainment about World War II “works to standardize the process of false witness as a national norm.”¹⁶⁰ She employs psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton’s concept of false witness, which he established as a result of his work with the group Vietnam Vets against the War to discuss the “political, ethical, and psychological dimensions of veteran’s experience,” with findings published in his book, *Home from the War* (1973). While I return to Lifton’s theorizing of trauma as a mode of truth-telling later in this chapter, at this point, I will just briefly explain false witness in service of Hall’s argument about entertainment based in WWII combat narratives. False witness, which is at the core of the war-process and occurs for both the individual *and* for a nation, is when a traumatic encounter with (or disruptive knowledge of) death, which is not fully grasped, is acclimated and made reasonable by being repeated upon others.¹⁶¹ Indeed, a spate of wartime and immediate postwar films attested to so-called “soldierly

¹⁶⁰ Karen J. Hall, “False Witness: Combat Entertainment and Citizen Training in the United States,” in *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, ed. Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (London and New York: Wallflower, 2007), 101.

¹⁶¹ Lifton’s primary example of how false witness functions is the massacre at My Lai, in which the soldiers committed atrocities in a village of elderly men, women, and children in response to the traumatic deaths of the American troops at the hands of an enemy they could not see in a circumstance they could not register as war as they knew it. The massacre recreates and perpetuates (in reverse) the deaths of their fellow soldiers, which had not

ideals.” Hall argues that the films released as part of the Second World War entertainment industry conjured the image of heroic soldiers as the morally justified underdog.¹⁶² She calls these “citizen training” films as they inspire identification with the soldier (hero) without providing a realistic picture of what war and its aftermath are actually like. This is false witnessing in service of the military agenda of the state. The films Hall cites rarely show the afterlife of soldiers, leaving them in the battlefield or making use of the “last stand” narrative, in which the characters are martyred on screen. Indeed, historian Timothy Stewart-Winter writes in his article on conscientious objectors and male citizenship, “[i]n the period from the early 1940s to the early 1970s, the American mass media frequently represented military service as masculine, empowering and glorious, even though—or perhaps partly because—soldiering in the age of modern ‘total war’ has so often involved extreme deprivation, immobility, and boredom.”¹⁶³ These “citizen training” films cultivate a masculine subject who is ready and willing to become a soldier in service of the state, even while the reality of war is hardly so glamorous.¹⁶⁴

been fully-grasped. In this process, the deaths of the American GIs are avenged, and massacre is assimilated as a reasonable and justifiable result of the GIs deaths. Robert Jay Lifton, *Home from the War: Learning From Vietnam Veterans* (1973; reprint New York: Other Press, 2005), 136.

For a useful and concise definition of false witness, see Cathy Caruth, “History as False Witness: Trauma, Politics, and War,” in *Witness: Memory, Representation and the Media in Question*, ed. Frederik Tygstrup and Ulrik Ekman (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2008), 163–166.

¹⁶² The 1943 film *Bataan*, about the (unsuccessful) defense of the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines against Japanese forces and the Allies “last stand” before they suffered the so-called Bataan Death March, serves as her major example.

¹⁶³ Timothy J. Clark, “Jackson Pollock’s Abstraction,” in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 535.

¹⁶⁴ While Elaine Scarry’s important book *Body in Pain* has been pivotal to scholars discussing pain and trauma, she makes a point about soldier’s consent that I find politically conservative and deeply problematic. She argues that there can be no war without the persistent bodily consent of the soldier. Indeed, she enumerates the many points at which a soldier must reaffirm his consent in service of the argument that nuclear war is so horrific because there can be no consent. I would argue that because of thorough citizen training regarding heroism and the military, very few soldiers could know what they signed up for, so to speak. In this capacity there can be no consent because they are not aware of the conditions to which they are consenting. See the chapter, “Structures of War” in Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). I owe this realization in large part to stimulating conversations with friend and political theorist Douglas Hanes.

While two of the most vociferous ruminations on the state of masculinity and by extension society—*The Decline of the American Male*, published by LOOK Magazine and *The Crack in the Picture Window*, by John Keats—feature characters who are veterans, their war-time experience is described as a foil to the dull existence of postwar suburban middle class life. In thinking about the all-consuming drive of The Group, Gary Gray of *The Decline of the American Male* wonders when he lost his individuality:

In the free and democratic United States of America, he had been subtly robbed of a heritage that the Communist countries deny by force.

When had the theft started? Gary thought back to World War II, when he, with hundred of others, had been compelled to ride in trucks like cattle and stand naked in long lines waiting for mass physical examinations. But this was not when it started. Coercion in Army was too obvious, too open. You followed orders, but your inner self held to its privacy. Now he had no private inner self.¹⁶⁵

The Army, of course, is a collective, but deployed in service of a nation fighting against Communism, such coercion is acceptable, perhaps even necessary. In a parallel scenario, John Drone of *The Crack in the Picture Window* seems to remember his GI days with nostalgia when confronted with the dull existence of his suburban neighborhood. Keats describes the tedious emptiness of the housing development's koffeeklatsches, bridge games, and do-it yourself projects, also describing this suburban tedium in terms of totalitarianism: "[t]his communism, like any other, was made possible by destruction of the individual."¹⁶⁶ While John Drone's GI Benefits enable him to buy his first home, the corrupt housing market and encroaching pressures of consumerism mean that he is forever working to pay off the bills of the many (unnecessary) goods he has bought "on time"—on credit, that is. Every now and then, he finds himself longing

¹⁶⁵ Leonard, Jr., "Why Is He Afraid To Be Different?," 28.

¹⁶⁶ Keats specifically warns of the oppressive environment of the housing development as rooted in the isolation of the genders and the "obliteration of the individualistic house and self-sufficient neighborhood." Poor Mary Drone had "fallen into a world of women without men. She had moved into a house that could never be a home. She had moved into a neighborhood that could never be a community." Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window*, 57.

for his time in the army as a period that challenged him and offered him at least a bit of excitement.¹⁶⁷

In the second chapter of her book *Male Subjectivities at the Margins*, Silverman addresses movies of the immediate postwar era that articulate the “feminine” psychéd spaces of non-normative male subjectivities with which she is concerned. These films, unlike those discussed by Hall, often push against hegemonic masculinities as they both address the traumatic confrontation with male lack, that is the given and natural power associated with the male subject imagined as possessor of the phallus, but also image the after effects of that encounter, in which previously familiar spaces are made alien.¹⁶⁸ In the several years directly after the war Hollywood produced a spate of movies linked to the traumatic experience of WWII veterans; Silverman writes, “in Hollywood cinema, the trauma of the war had to be registered before it could be bound.”¹⁶⁹ She cites the 1946 *Best Years of Our Lives* as a movie that deals with the both the psychological and physical trauma of the war in a way that would be repressed in the

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 99.

Another postwar text that offers a useful perspective wherein the military WWII was an uncontested site of masculinity is Richard Yates’ *Revolutionary Road*, a stunning portrait of gender performance in the postwar years. His protagonist, Frank Wheeler, is constantly processing his actions and speech as a function of his performance of masculinity. His profound longing for his time in Europe in the army, in my interpretation, is not only because it has given him his best cocktail party fodder, but because of his experience on the front line as “really true.” He describes the feeling of stepping up the front lines: “[what I really felt didn’t have anything to do with being scared or not scared. I just felt this terrific sense of life. I felt full of blood...Hell I was probably just as dumb and scared as anybody else, but inside I’d never felt better. I kept thinking: this is really true. This is the truth.” The war is an authentic experience for Frank, especially in contrast with the artifice with which he coats the rest of his life. While he performs manhood for his wife and neighbors, in the war he could be unequivocally masculine, simply by virtue of his context. Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road*, Mass Market Edition (1961; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 178.

My reading of Wheeler’s performance is paralleled by Franzen’s assessment of Wilson’s protagonist’s “aliveness” in the twin (masculinized) wartime experiences of sex and death. I quote his glib (and inane) assessment again: “Whether he was killing enemy soldiers or falling in love with an Italian orphaned teenager, Tom Rath as a soldier felt intensely alive in the present.” I would argue that where Yates constructs Wheeler’s masculinity as a performance, Franzen eagerly reads this construct of masculinity into Wilson’s novel. Franzen, “Introduction,” unpaginated.

¹⁶⁸ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 52.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 64.

Conversely, E. Ann Kaplan, argues in her reading of Hitchcock’s movie *Spellbound* that it seems Hollywood, and by extension its audience could not directly confront the traumatic experience of the soldiers of the Second World War, which I discuss very shortly. Silverman points to a bevy of examples that clearly show otherwise, but the fact remains that after a passage of time, the texts and films that dealt explicitly with this trauma dwindled significantly.

later postwar years. While post-traumatic stress was not recognized as such for veterans of the Second World War, the paramnesiac practice of erasing the specificity of combat experience in favor of the state narrative of the nation's heroic role in the "Good War" effectively deprived veterans of healing access to their own traumatic experience.¹⁷⁰

The film follows the paths of three returning veterans and their relative inability to reassimilate into civilian life. In addition to two characters who suffer the psychological and social consequences of shifting from a military lifestyle to a civilian one, the movie also depicts a character, Homer Parish who has had both his hands amputated as a result of an airplane fire, played by real-life war veteran and amputee, Harold Russell.¹⁷¹ Such a character offers an image of the physical disabilities suffered by veterans as a result of their time in theater frequently overlooked in latter depictions. E. Ann Kaplan's discussion of Hitchcock's *Spellbound* makes evident the manner in which the physical and psychological trauma of the war was eventually suppressed in public discourse, "managed" by the movie; while the main character suffers traumatic flashbacks to his military experience, through the course of the movie it is displaced onto the narrative of a personal childhood trauma, positioning the events of the war as "an unhappy event, now safely over, rather than as an event whose impact and proliferating results are only beginning to be understood in the millennium."¹⁷² While *Best Years* also offers a route in which Homer's trauma and disability are reconciled with civilian life, Silverman points out

¹⁷⁰ Here, I am using Lauren Berlant's concept of "paramnesia," a practice in which evidence that runs contrary to the dominant ideology is glossed over in favor of a coherent fiction. See her chapter, "Infantile Citizenship" in Lauren Gail Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

¹⁷¹ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 72.

The other protagonists are Al, who has a family and job to return to, but whose alcoholism and loss of faith in the capitalist system of his bank and the security offered by his family unit leads him down a self-destructive path, and Fred, who finds that though he excelled in the military, his only profession option is a low level service industry job and his girlfriend, while enamored with the prestige of his uniform, eventually leaves him because of his meager income.

¹⁷² E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 85.

that there are ways in which this reconciliation runs against the grain of the dominant fiction. While he gets married, presumably to start a family (the unit upon which the nation is built), the film depicts his relationship as one of care-giving, wherein he is pictured as a subject cared for, whose life is enriched through an intersubjective relationship with his wife, who comforts him during his nightmare-flashbacks and helps him with practical tasks made difficult by his amputation. (fig. 15) He is not an autonomous subject who provides for his reliant wife. In this manner, a movie such as *Best Years* illustrates the physical traumas of WWII while also revealing how such a trauma might place the survivor at odds with the dominant fiction's conception of adult masculinity.

While Hitchcock's 1945 *Spellbound* does not address the physical trauma of the war in the way the direct manner that *Best Years* does, it is a product of the postwar interest in psychoanalysis; it even featured a dream scene by surrealist artist Salvador Dalí. The film's producer, David Selznick, conceived of the film as an effort to bring public attention to the Freudian concept of trauma without too closely dealing with the veterans' traumatic memories, which he feared would result in a popular rejection of the film.¹⁷³ Kaplan accounts for the circuitous mode of addressing war trauma by pointing out that "[i]f acknowledging the war traumas soldiers suffered in WWII was slow to gather public momentum, this was understandable. While a war is ongoing—especially a war against Fascism that had to be fought—the public needs to give it their full support."¹⁷⁴ Cathy Caruth's model of trauma, most fully laid out in her 1996 *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, is built on a

¹⁷³ Ibid., 80.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 75.

I, myself, struggle with the notion that there exist wars that "ha[ve] to be fought," given that this morally righteous rhetoric is often deployed in defense of military efforts that are far less justifiable than the so-called "Good War." While I am made uncomfortable by Kaplan's statement in the way that it seems to encourage the kind of "citizen training" that Hall perceives in many war movies, I also do not and cannot condemn the United States' involvement in the Second World War.

close reading of Freudian texts. She argues that the traumatic incident is a missed encounter with death that is not fully apprehended at the moment it occurs, but through its compulsive repetition.¹⁷⁵ This is most certainly the model exemplified by the plot of Hitchcock's film; while Gregory Peck's character (the ersatz Dr. Edwardes later revealed to be John Ballantine), represses three distinct traumas: the accidental death of his brother when they were children, coming under attack from fighter planes during a medical transport operation in Rome, and the skiing accident/murder of the real Dr. Edwardes. In each case, the death of figures close to Ballantine are the result of his trauma, and are manifested as a suppression of the original event, but recurring panic attacks when exposed to dark lines on a white ground, as in the case of the fence posts, train tracks, or ski tracks visible during each of his respective traumas.

This Freudian "missed encounter" trauma is also closely related to the trauma of being exposed to one's own lack, for instance, as one's own mortal vulnerability in the case of such a "missed encounter." Silverman defines historical traumas, including war, as that which "brings a large group of male subjects into such an intimate relation with lack that they are at least for the moment unable to sustain an imaginary relation with the phallus, and so withdraw their belief from the dominant fiction."¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, she suggests that while this is often experienced as the impairment of his "anatomical masculinity," as in the case of Homer from *Best Years*, it is really the psychic disintegration of the ego "predicated upon the illusion of coherence and control" that reveals the lack.¹⁷⁷

The plot of *Spellbound*, albeit indirectly, is concerned with the position of veterans in postwar society. Indeed, Ballantine does become a destructive force as both his childhood and

¹⁷⁵ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 4.

¹⁷⁶ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 55.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

wartime trauma result in his murder of the real Dr. Edwardes. Furthermore, the title *Spellbound* presents an experience of traumatization in which the victim is beholden, bound, to their experience in such a way that precludes normative, non-destructive functioning in postwar America. This puts Ballantine, perhaps unexpectedly, rather in the same boat as Mickey Spillane's ultra-violent private eye Mike Hammer. The war unleashed something physically dangerous in either character, reflecting the anxiety that the veteran might be a "force for good or evil" expressed in the public relations campaign for the GI Bill.

In her 2003 book *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, Jenny Edkins discusses the political advantages of pathologizing the traumatic experience of soldiers, as was potentially the case with Vietnam veterans and the establishment of post-traumatic stress as a disorder in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (commonly referred to as the DSM) in 1980. And, I would argue, is accomplished by *Spellbound*.¹⁷⁸ Under such circumstances, the events of war are reduced to "stressor events," eliminating the specificity of the experience, simultaneously medicalizing and depoliticizing the survivors. This pathologization renders the political structures behind the war moot. While there has been much written about the process of revealing such false witnessing about the Vietnam War, the same has not been done for World War II. While the political circumstances of the Vietnam War have been all but universally recognized as murky at best, the narrative of the United States as liberator in World War II has been maintained, which makes it more challenging to *see* false witnessing. Of course another reason for the relative critical focus on the Vietnam War is that the United States was not victorious. As such, phallic lack could

¹⁷⁸ Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 42.

theoretically be felt by all citizens, not only by soldiers who confronted their own physical vulnerability and mortality.¹⁷⁹

This said, articulating the process of false witnessing at work around the Second World War, through propagandistic rhetoric about the place of the United States on the global stage and the muffling (if not silencing) of veteran experience is not only an important anti-war project in itself, but also is an integral part of understanding additional reasons why figural art like that produced by the Monster Roster faced such opposition. As such this project is not as interested in reading images through a model of trauma that focuses on pathology, which would manifest in an attempt to psychoanalyze artists through their work, because as Edkins points out, this has the potential to further silence the traumatized subject *and* the structural causes of trauma. Rather I believe focusing on images that *insist upon the trauma of war* is potentially a way to get around the blindness of false witnessing; they insist on a kind of seeing that is by and large discursively blinded. As Caruth explains in a recent reading of his hugely influential 1973 text, “Lifton’s focus on the problem of false witness as something revealed by the veterans emphasizes that his book is not so much focused on psychological illness as on the ways in which veterans’ ‘symptoms’ were revelatory of certain hard-to-see truths about the war. *Trauma, here, is not a pathology but an attempt to convey truth.*”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Susan Jeffords explores the attempts of cultural reconciliation with this military loss, which she argues was a feminization of the military and by extension the political state. See Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America*.

¹⁸⁰ Caruth, “History as False Witness: Trauma, Politics, and War,” 164. Emphasis mine.

Lifton’s work was significant in establishing post-traumatic stress disorder in the DSM, which provided tangible benefits for diagnosed veterans, even as it can participate in the process of obscuring the structural causes of wars. However, Caruth points out that with the establishment of the diagnosis and the emergence and growth of trauma studies suggests an increasing “unconscious meditation” on the effects of a war that has not been fully grasped:

To understand trauma as a form of protest and attempted witness thus suggest that the war in Vietnam, conceived as a traumatic event, was not only about atrocity, death, and loss but about the specifically political ways in which the deceptions and self-deceptions of how the war was run helped both to create the atrocity-producing situation of the war and to make it difficult to perceive the way in which it was carried out.

Ibid., 152.

Political philosopher Giorgio Agamben's concept of the *homo sacer* is especially useful in understanding how the muting of the lived experience of soldiers-cum-veterans played into the false witnessing of the Second World War and its role in reaffirming the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant fiction in the postwar years. In his *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Agamben analyzes the *homo sacer*, an Aristotlean concept that translates as "sacred man"—or in more accurate contemporary parlance, "accursed man."¹⁸¹ The *homo sacer* has been banned from society and stripped of his rights as a citizen; he can, therefore be killed by anyone without consequence, and his death will not count as a sacrifice because of his accursed status. The *homo sacer* lives a bare life, and is only relevant to the order of politics and the law in the form of his exclusion.¹⁸² For Agamben, the Nazi concentration camp is the finest example of a state of exception, that which produces the condition of bare life, and in which the living, corporeal being is divided from the speaking being, that is a being with expression and agency.

The *homo sacer* has no rejoinder to his own self in the public sphere, and in this manner, it is a fitting category when discussing subjectivities that have been severely marginalized. Art historian Jonathan Flatley offers a helpful articulation of this struggle with forbidden identities in his analysis of Andy Warhol's creation of a public persona. As a queer man in postwar America, Warhol possessed an abject body, juridically unacceptable in the public sphere. Flatley points to his "mourning" pictures, those mourning Marilyn Monroe, Jackie O., the disaster victims in the Death in America series, as signifying Warhol's own mourning his own lack of representation in

¹⁸¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

¹⁸² For Agamben, this exclusion means that he is a body that can be killed (though not sacrificed).

the world of images.¹⁸³ (fig. 16) Flatley argues that Warhol's apparent obsession with his own image and his development of a public persona were the result of the need for a protective shield “that could take the abuse that might have otherwise been directed at his person. It disembodied him, separated out his image from his body.”¹⁸⁴ Prior to the development of his highly visible public persona, Warhol did not have what might be called an “easily abstracted body”—that is, white, male, and heteronormative—and as such did not have recourse to a public self. By creating a public image that was not “him” as well as what feminist theorist Nancy Fraser terms “subaltern counterpublics” in the queer space of the Factory, Flatley argues that Warhol was able to occupy both sides of the dialectic of public sphere. That is, he had access to his own bodily positivity and public self-abstraction, “something that was otherwise strictly impossible for the gay man whose appearance in public was strictly policed.”¹⁸⁵

While veterans of the Second World War did have a public self, indeed a *very* public self, laden with all sorts of expectations of “soldierly ideals,” it was often impossible to reconcile traumatic experience with this model, much as Tom Rath, the man in the gray flannel suit, feels he is expected to keep silent about his time in theater.¹⁸⁶ While publicly honored, it seems to

¹⁸³ Jonathan Flatley, “Warhol Gives Good Face: Publicity and the Politics of Prosopopoeia,” in *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*, ed. Jennifer Doyle, José Esteban Muñoz, and Jonathan Flatley (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 106. In José Esteban Muñoz’s chapter in the *Pop Out* anthology, “Fine and Dandy Like B. ‘n’ Andy,” he provides a helpful reading of Warhol and Basquiat’s relationship which discusses how both men used disidentification as a method to work against the dominant ideology from within. José Esteban Muñoz, “Fine and Dandy Like B. ‘N’ Andy: Race, Pop, and Basquiat,” in *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*, ed. Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, and José Esteban Muñoz (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 144–80.

¹⁸⁴ Flatley, “Warhol Gives Good Face: Publicity and the Politics of Prosopopoeia,” 114.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 104. Nancy Fraser discusses “subaltern counterpublics” in “Rethinking the Public Sphere, A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” and Michael Warner discusses this dialectic in “The Mass Public and the Mass Subject.” Both are found in Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

¹⁸⁶ Though in reference to the Korean War, this feeling of incongruity is expressed in an episode of HBO television program set in mid-century America *Mad Men* (“Maidenform”), in which Don Draper is made obviously uncomfortable when he is publicly honored as a veteran at a Memorial Day event. In a later episode (“The Mountain King”) we learn about his intense fear of combat as well as his subterfuge: he has switched dog tags with the commander who saved his life by sacrificing his own, and proceeds to leave his pre-war identity behind. As Don Draper, born Richard Whitman, he is awarded the Purple Heart. In this first season of the show, this secret is constructed as a threat that could unravel the character’s entire world.

have often been the case that veterans were not given the agency to discuss facets of the war that fell outside the dominant narrative about the nation's role as liberator of Europe. The silencing of soldiers' traumatic war experiences might be explained through the concept of "normal ills," elaborated upon by feminist art historian Anna C. Chave in reference to the continuing issues of female oppression in the discipline of art history in her article, "'Normal Ills': On Embodiment, Victimization, and the Origins of Feminist Art."¹⁸⁷ She cites clinical psychologist Laura S. Brown who argues, from a feminist standpoint, that the original phrasing of the definition of trauma as "outside the normal range of experience" normalizes the suffering of women in a patriarchal culture; for example, how could rape be considered traumatic when its statistical occurrence places it well within the range of normal experience of American women?¹⁸⁸ The terms set forth in Chave's and Brown's feminist approach can be employed to elucidate the correlative problems facing both men who also do not fit a constructed ideal of subjectivity, like queer subjects who live in hostile times and places, as well as subjectivities, whose specific experience is occluded in service of the maintenance of its ideal expression.¹⁸⁹

Furthermore, while psychology was heavily involved in the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity, as psychiatrist Joseph Pleck argues, it did not have an official vocabulary for

¹⁸⁷ Anna C. Chave, "'Normal Ills': On Embodiment, Victimization, and the Origins of Feminist Art," in *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity*, ed. Lisa Saltzman and Eric M. Rosenberg (Lebanon: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), 132–57. Chave credits feminist scholar Barbara Johnson with coining the phrase "normal ill" in a paper, presented in Normal, Illinois, on hysteria and madness as a mark of femininity, as read in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1892 short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Ibid., 138.

¹⁸⁸ Laura S. Brown, "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 107.

¹⁸⁹ The concept of normal ills can also be usefully applied to the circumstances of conscientious objectors to the Second World War. Their unwillingness to conform to the expectations of young American men (being willing to fight for their state) firmly rooted them as others. Like Communists, CO's were constructed as not only ideologically incompatible with American citizenship, but as feminine and homosexual. Of course, many CO's were already rooted as other because of the non-normative religious—often conservative and Orthodox Judaism or Quakerism—roots of their objection. Many CO's were subjected to profound marginalization, occasionally in the most literal sense: interned in alternative service camps without pay or dependency allowances. For more on the Second World War conscientious objector, see Timothy Stewart-Winter, "Not a Soldier, Not a Slacker: Conscientious Objectors and Male Citizenship in the United States during the Second World War," *Gender & History* 19, no. 3 (November 1, 2007): 519–42.

discussing the traumatic experience of World War II veterans.¹⁹⁰ Concurrently, while much has been written on the relationship between the First World War and trauma in art and literature, the dominant art historical narrative has virtually nothing to say about the cultural impact of the Second World War.¹⁹¹ Correlatively, art historians have been astute and thorough in deconstructing the process by which abstraction and Abstract Expressionism was utilized in the postwar project of establishing the United States' cultural dominance. Thus, even in critically assessing the place of constructed masculinities in mid-century, very rarely has the subject of the veteran (and his potentially traumatic experience) been made part of this discussion. While Kaplan suggests that this sidelining of the role of the veteran was perhaps a war-time necessity in her assessment of *Spellbound*, quoted above, in the years since we have often romanticized the experience of Americans during World War II.¹⁹² This rendering of the soldier-cum-veteran as two-dimensionally heroic, while crucial in the war-time and postwar project of "citizen training" and bolstering the nation-state, often erases specific lived experience.

¹⁹⁰ In 1983, Pleck writes that the "maintenance of masculinity [was] the dominant feature of Freudian thought" in postwar American culture. Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity*, 158.

¹⁹¹ Brigid Doherty, Ana Carden Coyne, Amy Lyford, and Amelia Jones have all written compellingly on the relationships among art, visual culture, manhood and the First World War in recent years. Similarly Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* has long been recognized as a text that employs literary and artistic records to tell a more complete story of World War I, recognizing that the trauma of the Great War is beyond supposedly "objective" methods of writing history. See Brigid Doherty, "'See:' We Are All Neurasthenics!" Or, the Trauma of Dada Montage," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1997): 82–132; Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Amy Lyford, *Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

¹⁹² Perhaps the most pervasive example of this romanticization, at least that with the greatest name recognition is Tom Brokaw's 1998 book, *The Greatest Generation*. Working at a small history museum in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, a state with a disproportionately high contribution of citizens to the United States military, I witness this nostalgia for and glorification of the Second World War by visitors to and volunteers at the museum almost on a weekly basis.

Hero[es]!!

As a conclusion to this chapter, I turn to several drawings by H.C. Westermann, Monster Roster artist and member of the Chicago contingent to the 1959 *New Images of Man* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. While I spend time examining other works by Westermann and his fellow “Monster artists” in support of my thesis on the vulnerable body and its incompatibility with the political rhetoric of postwar America, the works that I discuss here serve better than any others to argue for an attention to the vicissitudes of male lack encountered by soldiers and veterans. Like many of his classmates at the Art Institute of Chicago, Westermann was able to attend art school because of the GI Bill. He enlisted with the Marine Corps from 1942 to 1946 and again from 1950 to 1952, serving in both WWII and the Korean War. His work is consistently, almost inevitably, read in terms of his autobiography, specifically his traumatic military service.¹⁹³ While his traumatic experiences as a Marine gunner during World War II produced iconography that punctuated his sculptural and print oeuvres throughout his career, his figurative drawings and paintings from the Second World War and the Korean War imagined the bodies of soldiers as conflicted sites rather than embodiments of military heroism or triumphant masculinity. Though it is common practice to focus on this aspect of Westermann’s work, this project’s aim is not to psychoanalyze works for a better understanding of individual artists, but to examine works as manifestations of trauma that serve as a kind of truth-telling of the human cost of military engagement, as I have explained above.

Numerous scholars have suggested Westermann’s oeuvre, rife with iconography rooted in his military experience as a battleship tail gunner in the Pacific during WWII, can be read as a

¹⁹³ For a timeline of H.C. Westermann’s life, see Westermann, *H.C. Westermann*. I, too, utilized this mode of interpretation when I analyzed his *Abandoned and Listing Death Ship* of 1969 in my MA thesis. The bulk of intensely personal and reflective letters and anecdotes that fill the literature on Westermann make this method particularly seductive.

record of his traumatized psyche.¹⁹⁴ For instance the motif of the “death ship” which first appeared in his drawings in the midst of his Second World War service persisted until the end of his life. Recently, Jo Applin has posited the death ship sculptures as “cryptic carriers” of Westermann’s irresolvable trauma. Her reading is compelling, particularly in her description of Westermann’s physical work on the sculptures as a futile attempt to better grasp his own traumatic experience. I would add that this compulsive repetition of the form is not only for his own sake, but also an insistence that others witness his trauma.¹⁹⁵ In addition to his sculptures, Westermann is known for his illustrated letters, many of them collected in Barrette’s 1988 volume *Letters from H.C. Westermann*. Westermann sent out his own fleet of death ships to his friends and family, often detailed with gruesome statistics or anecdotes from his own experience. In a letter to Chicago critic Dennis Adrian dated 29 October 1966, Westermann not only depicts a three-step narrative in which a battleship, the *USS Franklin*, is transformed into a death ship, he writes at the bottom the following: “To this I’d like to add the horrible SMELL of DEATH but thats impossible damnit! Of 2300 men.” (fig. 17) This caption implies that Westermann deeply wants to convey the depth and breadth of the trauma of war, even as he recognizes it is an impossible task.

Westermann’s work would become increasingly overt in its political content during the Vietnam War, but he addresses the horrors of the Second World War and Korean War in the

¹⁹⁴ One of his primary tasks was to counter kamikaze attacks, and so the death ship and the kamikaze plane often appear as gruesome complements in his works.

¹⁹⁵ In a 1971 letter, Westermann writes “[b]ut then I have seen Death Ships’, many of them + I can’t get them out of my lousy system. You know how it is! Well I still make those ships + I am a 48 year old fart. + they still aren’t very good, but now I don’t give a damn + they satisfy some kind of need there – But they are all death ships now. Forgive me kid.” His closing apology suggests that he is aware of the potential burden his own trauma may be to others, echoing Sloan Wilson’s *Gray Flannel* Tom Rath and his reluctance to weigh down his wife with his past. Westermann, *Letters from H.C. Westermann*, 149.

language of the grotesque beginning in the 1950s, after his return from Korea.¹⁹⁶ *Sailors Grave* (1959), inspired by the 1945 sinking of the *U.S.S. Luce*, presents a dark comedy of soldiers in an impotent frenzy after their ship has been sunk by kamikaze attacks. (fig. 12) Some sailors embrace their fallen friends, while others turn on each other or are victims of shark and squid attacks, and one figure in the lower left with a forked tongue and cross around his neck dreams of the devil and holds a gun to his temple.¹⁹⁷ One figure emerges from the bow, clutching the American flag with bulging eyes and mouth wide open in a hysterical smile: the last to go down with the ship. Dozens of eyes peer out from the water, while disembodied arms, legs, and penises seem to flail for help. Below the horizon and on the left of the painting is a figure whose lower body is visible, his genitals utterly exposed and urinating, presumably from fear. These disembodied parts defy physical coherence; not a single uncompromised body is visible, illustrating the sheer vulnerability of the ideally heroic soldier-subject. Westermann represents both the physical violence wrought against these figures and the range of emotions in this mass death scene, from terror, anger, hate (emblazoned on the first mate's cap), and panic to despair, guilt, repentance, empathy, and ecstasy.

Such complex and harrowing images addressing the fates of soldiers were not part of the public discourse. In his book *H.C. Westermann at War: Art and Manhood in Cold War America*, art historian David McCarthy compares this work to a drawing by *Life* illustrator, combat artist,

¹⁹⁶ David McCarthy does a helpful interpretation of Westermann's figural drawings in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's construction of the grotesque as well as the satirical tradition of drawing and printmaking which Ralph Shikes identifies as the "indignant eye." Both work against "rhetorical simplification and consistently [challenge] authority." They picture an "estranged and absurd world that may constitute the real world if only humans could see it clearly." This is akin to my interpretation of representations of the traumatized body as an insistent truth-telling. David McCarthy, *H.C. Westermann at War: Art and Manhood in Cold War America* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 56.

¹⁹⁷ David McCarthy suggests the violent soldier who screams "YOU GOD DAMN—I BEEN WANTIN TA", might be a self-portrait of Westermann, who was court-marshaled for assaulting a superior officer in 1945. *Ibid.*, 44.

and regionalist-inspired artist Thomas Lea, the 1942 *Over the Side*.¹⁹⁸ (fig. 18) Lea's image, as McCarthy points out, was published in *Life* in the midst of the US' involvement in the war and as such "could not be explicit about combat fear."¹⁹⁹ The rugged and sturdy bodies of the soldiers affirm their capability and, while they don't look particularly comfortable, there is no sense that fatality is a given. Unlike their counterparts in *Sailors Grave*, these soldiers' sturdy corporeality is affirmed through the uniform academic style (as contrasted with Westermann's ghoulish caricatures) and the visible *wholeness* of the figures not yet in the water. The figure in the upper left even seems to be posing in contrapposto as he descends the rope from the battleship to the water—an image of grace apart from his surroundings. Westermann's figures, on the other hand, are torn apart by their environment, quite literally in the case of the pictured shark attack in the lower left corner: insufficient bearers of phallic power.

The iconography of the violently disembodied soldier reappears in *A Tribute to the Men of the Infantry* of 1964 as well, which refers to Westermann's service in Korea.²⁰⁰ (fig. 19) *Tribute* features the American flag as a death shroud, enveloping a dead soldier, and clasped in the beak of a bird of prey, some hybrid of a vulture or bald eagle. Perched atop a rifle and helmet, it sports a violent and quivering erection, perhaps ironically (or earnestly, conversely) aligning the death and destruction pictured with Schlesinger's call for aggressive democratic exertion.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 46. While an invaluable resource on Westermann's life and work, McCarthy's text ultimately takes a fairly uncritical approach to gender, devoting a few paragraphs to the construction of postwar masculinity in a moment of crisis and Westermann's own performance of precarious masculinity before going on to more or less reify these gendered codes. Furthermore, like Jonathan Franzen, McCarthy interprets the main character of Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* as "long[ing] for the immediacy of life in wartime when objectives were apparently clear-cut," and situates it as part of the literature of masculine malaise of postwar sociology, like many before him. Given McCarthy's interest in reading Westermann's work in light of his quite obviously traumatic wartime experience, it's disappointing that McCarthy seems not have actually read *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 45.

²⁰⁰ Westermann re-enlisted to go to Korea, putting his education at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago on hiatus until he returned in 1952. In Korea he was assigned to G company of the 3rd battalion, 5th regiment, referenced in the skull-and-crossbones flag attached to the shovel as well as the central American flag. Ibid., 65.

²⁰¹ K.A. Cuordileone argues that the real power of Schlesinger's *The Vital Center* was in its call for a dominant, centrist voice that was aggressively masculine, especially in terms of virility:

The bird, then, is an allegory of the nation as a function of war and death. Indeed, Westermann was very conscious of the symbolic correlation between the male body and violent domination and use the imagery of male genitalia (both in erect form but also while urinating either out of fear or on to vulnerable subjects). In *Destructive Machine from Under the Sea* (1959), an anthropomorphized battleship-cum-fantasy-war-machine with bright red genitalia and matching scrotum-shaped tongue tramples, shits and pisses on fleeing bodies, while in *Brinkmanship* (1959) the silhouette of an erect penis alongside an eagle and an automobile stand in for emblems of American eminence, rendered ironically dangerous in the context of the Cold War showdown between world powers.²⁰² (figs. 20 and 21) As in *Sailors Grave*, disembodied genitalia punctuate the picture. Penises and scrotums are blown from bodies in explosions, or spurting fluid in the parade of violently undone bodies. These body parts testify to the physical vulnerability of the marching soldiers. On the right margin of the drawing emerges a gun barrel, which has fired ammunition in the form of an erect, though disembodied penis. This, alongside the bird's erection, is a potent metaphor for phallic power. In this image, Westermann violently unveils the supposed power of the phallus, to reveal the vulnerable—indeed castrated—penis, grotesquely transformed into a parody of its virility. Indeed, the forefront of the parade of soldiers imagines regulated, intact bodies that eventually crumble, inevitably reduced to bits; yet

...the concept of a virile vital center had unusual resonance. It promised that a liberal could be a centrist *and* a radical, a voice of the reasonable center *and* a hard, tough talking rebel at the same time. As if to underscore the virility of the center, the illustration accompanying Schlesinger's article of the 'vital center' in the *New York Times Magazine* showed a huge clenched fist with an enormous torch rising above and between masses of frantic people, who were on each side toting banners signifying left and right.

Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, 35.

²⁰² For a detailed discussion of the symbolism and metaphor at play in *Brinkmanship* relative to the political practice of brinkmanship in Cold War America, see David McCarthy, "H.C. Westermann's *Brinkmanship*," *American Art* 10 (Fall 1996): 50–69. Also see his most recent article for a brief discussion on the explicit Cold War symbolism of Westermann's 1958 *Evil New War God (S.O.B.)*, exhibited at the 1959 *New Images of Man* and discussed in more detail in my third chapter, and its ultimately anti-chauvinistic stance. David McCarthy, "The Face of Evil: H.C. Westermann's 'Evil New War God (S.O.B.)' 1958," *Source Notes in the History of Art* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2013): 37–42.

another visualization of the disintegration of phallic power and ego. Besides the sexualized allegory of state and death, the specter of a man on fire is ironically the most substantial figure visible. Westermann's picture unequivocally points to the gruesome physical suffering behind the orderly façade of the military and its implied ideal masculinity.²⁰³

As a final example, I point to Westermann's invocation and dismantling of the public label of "hero" almost unequivocally applied to soldiers-cum-veterans like himself. At least three times, Westermann depicts himself as a statue on a plinth, clearly in military uniform, both arms amputated.²⁰⁴ In the first image (13 December 1962) he sports the flattop haircut of the marines. (fig. 22) In the second (24 May 1964), he has begun to decay. (fig. 23) His head, the only visible part of the body, is emaciated, with hollowed out eyes and cracks or scars running over it. Both he and the symbols of nation-state, like the two-dimensional emblems of the eagle and the sergeant's star, are surrounded by question marks, around him the ground is littered with rubble, barbed wire, and at his feet lays a grenade. Again in 1964, Westermann is placed on a plinth with the inscription "Hero!!" and "H.C.W. '64." (fig. 24) Here, he is turned monstrous with his fangs, but his (lack) of arms point to the paradox of embodied phallic power forwarded by dominant fiction. While the left arm is transformed into a projectile weapon, the other decays and falls off, the impossibility of congruence between the power of the phallus and the inherently vulnerable human body.

Westermann's inscriptions on this final self-portrait raise several issues. The histrionic "Hero!!" conjures a mythic, ideal subjectivity that overshadows the physical and mental

²⁰³ Indeed, he teases out the morbidity of what was a point of pride for the regiment; the smaller flag proclaims "We always pick up our own DEAD!" The regiment consistently entered no-man's-land to rescue the wounded and retrieve the dead, but in Westermann's drawing this reads as an ironic joke rather than a sign of military heroism: again aiming at the fragility of the bodies that populated the military.

²⁰⁴ All three drawings were made for Rolf Nelson, his Los Angeles art dealer. McCarthy, *H.C. Westermann at War*, 121.

suffering endured by those at war. Rather, they become crucial actors in an epic narrative; I would argue this particularly true in relation to World War II, the so-called “Good War” which has become a lynchpin in dominant narratives about the United States’ modern identity. This not only assimilates the suffering of soldiers, it also renders veterans silent subjects, just as does, as Edkins argues, pathologizing PTSD. While Westermann’s figure is elevated on a plinth, he also is enshrined, or entombed, a reading supported by his static pose over the course of multiple editions, and the final drawing’s tomb-like inscription with initials and date.

There was a brief media kerfuffle on Memorial Day of 2012 after MSNBC’s Chris Hayes, in rather self-effacing language, said he was “uncomfortable” with unequivocally linking the nation’s war dead with the word “hero,” and that to do so assumes that all soldiers have acted heroically and the term is used to justify unjust wars:

I think it's interesting because I think it is very difficult to talk about the war dead and the fallen without invoking valor, without invoking the words "heroes." Why do I feel so [uncomfortable] about the word "hero"? I feel comfortable—uncomfortable—about the word because it seems to me that it is so rhetorically proximate to justifications for more war. Um, and, I don't want to obviously desecrate or disrespect memory of anyone that's fallen, and obviously there are individual circumstances in which there is genuine, tremendous heroism: hail of gunfire, rescuing fellow soldiers and things like that. But it seems to me that we marshal this word in a way that is problematic. But maybe I'm wrong about that.²⁰⁵

He was immediately attacked as unpatriotic and un-American and the next day, he issued a public apology for questioning the respect due fallen soldiers as a civilian who has never had to endure battle. He points to the divide between the civilian and military perspective as a contemporary problem of American warfare, noting:

how small a percentage of our population is asked to shoulder the entire burden and how easy it becomes to never read the names of those who are

²⁰⁵ Jack Mirkinson, “Chris Hayes Apologizes For Saying He Feels ‘Uncomfortable’ Calling Killed Soldiers ‘Heroes’ (VIDEO),” *Huffington Post*, May 28, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/28/chris-hayes-uncomfortable-soldiers-heroes_n_1550643.html; accessed May 8, 2014.

wounded and fight and die, and to not ask questions about the direction of our strategy in Afghanistan, and to assuage our own collective guilt about this disconnect with a pro-forma ritual that we observe briefly before returning to our barbecues.²⁰⁶

While the universally heroic soldier is an untenable myth after the highly publicized horrors of My Lai and Abu Ghraib, it is so ingrained in public discourse that a pundit whose ultimate point was to rethink military strategy that has resulted in the wanton waste of American lives was angrily dismissed as “not anchored in the very real and very wrenching experience of this long decade of war.”²⁰⁷ As we have seen Karen Hall argue, the “citizen training” films and discourse of World War II helped establish the process of false witness as a national norm.²⁰⁸ Its entrenchment is made startlingly obvious by the fervor with which Hayes was attacked. The marginalization of veteran experience following the Second World War helped establish a pattern that, presently, has discursively made the label of “hero” more significant than the actual experience of soldiers and veterans. I would argue that, in fact, Hayes is far more aware of the “real” and “wrenching” conditions of war than those staunchly defending an empty ideological signifier.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Hall, “False Witness: Combat Entertainment and Citizen Training in the United States,” 101.

Chapter Two: The Making of the Second City

Introduction

While the first chapter of this project illustrated the pervasive and anxious discourse of masculinity in the United States in order to sketch more fully the context in which the Monster Roster was defined, this chapter aims to elucidate the discourses built around specific urban sites. Here I aim to explore how each specific site ultimately enabled or limited the success of the artists working in those spaces.

In 1981, Chicago Imagist painter Roger Brown produced a lithograph and a painting, respectively titled *Giotto in Chicago* and *Giotto and His Friends: Getting Even*, allegorically critiquing the Chicago art scene.¹ (fig. 25) Brown depicts himself as the fourteenth-century Italian painter Giotto, who is credited in Giorgio Vasari's canonical 1550 text *Lives of the Artists* with establishing the aesthetic ideals that were the basis for the high Renaissance.² The caption of the lithograph's first narrative panel begins, "[i]n Giotto's time there didn't exist an abundance of provincial art critics mourning the passing of the abstract conceptual style. Had there been a scene in Florence similar to the one in Chicago, however, the story of Giotto might have gone something like this...." He proceeds to compare the Chicago-based artists with the school of St. Francis, bored of the "lifeless" Byzantine art of Italy's east coast. This Eastern abstract style dominated the scene until the ingenuity of Giotto and his friends' "strongly visual" work caught on. The local critics, whom Brown describes as "two effete monks"—one tall and gaunt, and one a lute player, both having failed in their creative endeavors—were unable to

¹ The painting is in the Buchbinder collection in Chicago, and the print is in the collection of the Brauer Museum, Valparaiso University. Thanks to Gilda Buchbinder for inviting me into her home to look at her remarkable collection, including the Roger Brown painting. Thanks to Lisa Stone of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for providing me with a transcript of the text from the lithograph.

² Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, (1550) trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 15.

recognize the value of this new work, instead caught up in the “word games and mental crap about abstraction” from the East. So even while this “local” work Brown alludes to became popular with collectors and garnered some critical praise, the two effete monks babbled on about the supreme value of the Eastern work. Brown ends his narrative with vindication: “Justice prevails, however, for the name of Giotto is remembered forever, but no one remembers the name of the lute player or the tall gaunt monk.”³

While Brown addresses the dynamics of Chicago’s 1970s art scene in his vituperative commentary, the “Byzantine” abstraction of the East just as easily can be applied to Jackson Pollock’s webs of paint or Barnett Newman’s enveloping color fields; and in the crassest terms, “mental crap about abstraction” might describe Clement Greenberg’s and Harold Rosenberg’s writings about the new American painting.⁴ The complex discourses of Abstract Expressionism, birthed in New York, have largely overshadowed American art produced outside of the new Western cultural capital.⁵ Indeed, when Leon Golub was asked whether Chicago artists found sympathy with other locales working in a figural mode, as in the Bay Area of California, he responded that they were unaware; Chicago was almost entirely focussed on New York.⁶ It is impossible to examine Chicago’s postwar art scene without considering it in relation to the

³ This is not technically true, perhaps to Brown’s dismay. While Brown “skewered” Chicago critic Alan Artner in several paintings, in the Giotto works he treats both Artner and Franz Schulze. As described in the introduction, Schulze has been a pivotal voice in Chicago art history. Lisa Stone, “Giotto in Chicago/Giotto and His Friends: Getting Even,” e-mail message to author, June 27, 2012.

⁴ Leon Golub certainly writes about it with such suspicion in his “Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” discussed at length in the following chapter. Golub, “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism.”

⁵ Scholars have long explored how and why New York came to be the new home of the avant-garde in the postwar years; some of the most influential texts on the discourse include Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting*; Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*; Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*; Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg’s Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁶ He does note that they also were aware of the European scene, which has particular resonance given the revered place Dubuffet would come to occupy in art histories of Chicago. I explore this hierarchical tension between Chicago, New York, and Europe later in this chapter.

Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 23.

apparent juggernaut of the New York School, and the dynamics between the two art movements are paralleled by the rivalry between the cities themselves.

Furthermore, the popular image of Chicago has often guided the interpretation of its artists. Take, for instance, this assessment of H.C. Westermann in a 1990 survey of contemporary artists: “Westermann was from Chicago, *a curious American city* set on a lake which is notable for its importance as a railroad center, its slaughter houses, its grain exchange, and its modern architecture... Somehow all these things have helped to produce a very odd group of artists....”⁷ Here, Chicago is painted as almost incongruous, home to both blue collar industries and the high modernist architecture of Mies van der Rohe—indeed, the modernist guru purchased the first sculpture that Westermann ever sold.⁸ However, it is more often the grim spectacle that has caught the public’s eye, as in John Russell’s words on Roger Brown and his peers: “And Chicago is, after all, a very special and peculiar place. Killing has always been fundamental to it, whether in the stockyards or elsewhere, but there is also in that great and ferocious city a raw unprocessed energy that can be tapped to lifelong advantage.”⁹ Russell taps into a construction of the city rooted in primal savagery, based in part in the meat processing industry—internationally exposed in Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*—and the legacy of organized crime. In the art world, this rhetoric also served as fertile ground for Jean Dubuffet’s widely influential 1951 lecture *Anticultural Positions*, which he gave at the Arts Club of Chicago, often

⁷ *Contemporary Artists*, 3rd ed. (Chicago and London: St. James Press, 1990), 1024, as cited in Warren and Boris, “Chicago: City of Neighborhoods,” 93. Italics mine.

⁸ Mies van der Rohe bought Westermann’s *Butterfly* in 1957 for \$100 and kept it in his collection throughout his life. Westermann, *H.C. Westermann*, 228.

⁹ John Russell, “ART: ROGER BROWN, NEW CHICAGO PAINTER,” *The New York Times*, September 24, 1982, sec. Arts, <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/09/24/arts/art-roger-brown-new-chicago-painter.html>.

interpreted as a rejection of beauty and an embrace of “savage” values, and a germinal text for the Monster Roster artists of the postwar period.¹⁰

Indeed, the marginalization of the Chicago School is inextricably linked to its city’s “secondary” status. This chapter begins with a brief history of Chicago’s efforts as a contender for most important American city, most spectacularly with the 1893 World’s Fair.¹¹ I will discuss how the Columbian Exposition made Chicago both nationally and internationally visible, but the city’s vice and crime caught the public’s eye just as much as the shining White City. Despite Chicago’s attempts to project an idealized vision of itself, the city’s corrupt, industrial edge ultimately would come to define it. Eventually, the possibility of the city’s reputation superseding New York’s ended when A.J. Liebling declared Chicago “The Second City” in his 1952 series of articles published, appropriately, in *The New Yorker*.

I then discuss the practices of Chicago’s art institutions, most notably the Art Institute of Chicago and the conservative responses to Modernism in the early twentieth century. This stultifying environment encouraged the development of independent art groups like the Cors Ardens and, later, the Momentum Group. The conservatism of the early twentieth century eventually gave way in the 1940s and 1950s, with the immigration to Chicago of Modernist icons such as Mies van der Rohe and László Moholy-Nagy (both involved in the Bauhaus) and the broader national acceptance of the New York School as the new avant-garde, but the infrastructure that supported such innovation in its rival city simply did not exist in Chicago.

Following this, I go on to examine the conditions that resulted in the cohesion of the student community of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), which would give rise

¹⁰ Indeed, Russell begins his article by using Dubuffet’s famous 1951 lecture as a reference point for reading Roger Brown’s work, though Brown was only 10 years old and living in Alabama at the time.

¹¹ As stated in chapter one, the 1890s is the same point in time in which many scholars anchor the postwar construction of masculinity.

to the independent artist group “Exhibition Momentum.” The social politics that governed the exhibiting and operating practices of the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC) and its affiliated school, as well as the uneasy position of the veteran student in the early years of the GI Bill, created a stifling environment for many young Chicago artists. By looking closely at Exhibition Momentum’s efforts to establish a support structure, both through the group’s contemporary rhetoric and the reflections of key members such as George Cohen and Leon Golub, it becomes clear how these artists’ attempts to carve out a space for themselves in the national art scene positioned the Chicago School in opposition to both unsupportive local institutions and the perceived dominant trends within New York Abstract Expressionism. Members of the Chicago School and the Monster Roster often aggressively asserted their identities as Chicago artists in spite of and because of the city’s marginalized position—as the art critical, and eventually the national political, discourse increasingly insisted that *New York* was the new home of the avant-garde.

The tensions produced through such binary relationships are a well-established part of the narrative of postwar American art, neatly evidenced by titles like Serge Guilbaut’s title of his 1985 book *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*.¹² Guilbaut’s catchy phrasing suggests a binary narrative of the postwar avant-garde; while Paris had been the center of the pre-war art world, New York usurped its position. Such language insists on an antagonistic dynamic between the two sites, and the positioning of New York in relation to Paris necessarily overshadows other sites or modes of artmaking, or at least renders them incidental. Similarly, Chicago artists and proponents thereof often made use of this divisive rhetoric as they worked to make a space for themselves on the national art scene, which ultimately obscured many ways in which the Chicago and New York Schools overlap. Crucial to my arguments that Chicago is a

¹² Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*.

discursive site as well as a physical urban space, and that the historical rivalry between the two cities necessarily informs the art critical relationship between the Chicago and New York Schools, is the binary structure underpinning the processes of marginalization. Examining the reception of Jean Dubuffet, an artist almost universally (though not unproblematically) posited as germinal to the formation of a Chicago style, in both cities enables a clearer picture of the hierarchal relationships between Paris as the site of the old avant-garde, New York as home to the new, and Chicago as peripheral.

An Interlude: The Quintessential and the Exceptional

Before delving into the body of this chapter, I would like to offer an insight on the discourse of Chicago as relative to New York, a binary that has helped guide my understanding of my research. While the discourse of masculinity, discussed in the first chapter, constructed an ideal American male subject unbounded by geography, the discourses of New York and Chicago as sites of cultural production make very different claims on American identity. While certainly the best known, A.J. Liebling's 1952 "The Second City" was not the only outsider assessment of Chicago in the postwar years. Some, like Daniel Seligman's 1955 "The Battle for Chicago," were even laudatory.¹³ But even Seligman could not resist appraising the city in relation to its Eastern rival, echoing and reinforcing the city's internal rhetoric: "Chicago is the peculiarly American metropolis. New York is a world capital." In this comparison, Seligman articulates a hierarchical tension that has informed many Chicago historians and art historians and resulted in the embrace, to some extent, of the city's secondary status.¹⁴ A city cannot be representative of a

¹³ Daniel Seligman, "The Battle for Chicago," *Fortune* 51 (June 1955): 117.

¹⁴ That Chicago *had* been competing with New York for world recognition is evident in many of the quotes in the following section; language of "empire" and "world-class" status pervades. Seligman also describes Chicagoans' intense civic pride and boosterism as they framed Chicago as "the capital of a vast 'inland empire' known as

nation for itself (“peculiarly American”) *and* representative of a nation on the global stage (“a world capital”).

American cultural critics such as Clement Greenberg famously argued that “American-type” painting of the New York School represented the possibility for the renewal of the lineage of heroic modernism, begun in nineteenth-century France.¹⁵ Scholars such as Serge Guilbaut have suggested that Abstract Expressionism was exported to Europe in the service of the federal government’s decision to showcase the best of American art (or at least that which best carried the political weight of the nation’s role as a leader to the so-called free world). There is an inherent tension between these two claims on Abstract Expressionism: by definition the avant-garde cannot *also* represent American art more broadly.¹⁶ It is *this* lack that many proud Chicagoans have latched on to in defense or in support of the city’s cultural importance. This, the American-ness of Chicago, is what Monster Roster artist and Chicagoan Ted Halkin embraces when he says, “I stay in Chicago because it’s *really* shitty, it’s *really* AMERICA. I stay here *because* of the indifference, not in spite of it. I know who I am anyway. And I know who they are. I was never confused about my own idiosyncratic behavior. It’s the only thing I’ve got, for God’s sake. Why should I lose it in the turmoil of Acceptance in New York? Who am I then?”¹⁷ In this intractable attachment to Chicago and its “authentic” American quality, Halkin articulates some of the paradoxical dynamics at play in the structures of marginalization that

Chicagoland.” Ibid. Such imperialist language also is used in the 1946 promotional film, *Chicago*, produced by the Film Council of the Board of Education, which describes the city as “A great empire set in the heart of America. Vast, stimulating, spread over miles and miles of prairie land, bordered by the great blue waters of lake Michigan.” *Chicago - A Film from the Chicago Board Of Education*, 1946, <http://vimeo.com/88065833>. However, by the mid-century, it seems that Chicago would have to make do with being the American capital.

¹⁵ Greenberg, “‘American-Type’ Painting.”

¹⁶ I discuss the significance of the construction of the New York School as the inheritors of the European avant-garde at greater length in chapter three.

¹⁷ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 30–31.

enabled the New York School to represent the nation's avant-garde, while Chicago could serve as the quintessential American city. In short, a city cannot be both quintessential *and* exceptional.

Of course this dynamic of alienation is always already at play in the discourse of the avant-garde. As I will discuss shortly, the heroics of the Impressionist *salon de refusées* was invoked in Chicago by independent artist group Exhibition Momentum and the Cors Ardens before them, as well as by the New York School. Indeed, Halkins perhaps was overestimating the “turmoil of Acceptance” in New York. Articulating the relationship of the “Irascible” New York School and the general public, Adolph Gottlieb spat, “[y]ou’re stupid. We despise you. We don’t want you to like us—or our art...I’d like more status than I have now, but not at the cost of closing the gap between artists and public. I’d like to widen it.”¹⁸ Just as Gottlieb embraces disdain for the public taste and convention that has often defined the avant-garde, in much of its discourse, Chicago’s artists and critics have come to embrace its secondariness—its “shitt[iness]”—because this puts the city in an unassailable position in relation to New York. Its secondary status enables interpretations of the Chicago art scene in terms of underdog heroics. In her analysis of the Museum of Contemporary Art’s (MCA’s) 1996 exhibition and catalogue *Art in Chicago 1945 to 1995*, art historian Mary Caroline Simpson points out that many have a “sentimental attachment” to the myth of the “Second City.”¹⁹ Essays by such established Chicago critics as Dennis Adrian, Franz Schulze, and Peter Selz “fondly remembered a Chicago defined by the actions of powerful unions and blue collar laborers, organized crime lords and

¹⁸ “Irascible” refers to the title of Nina Leen’s famous 1951 *Life Magazine* photograph of members of the New York School. I address the avant-garde construction achieved in part by this portrait, and Schulze’s attempt to mirror this with the Monster Roster designation, in chapter one.

These remarks were made in an interview with Sheldon Rodman between January and July 1956. Sheldon Rodman, ed., *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), 89–90.

¹⁹ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 540.

corrupt ward politicians...In their Chicago, the self-reliant, hard-nosed artist is a warrior who fought his own city's cultural conservatism and the condescension of New York art experts."²⁰

Crossroads of America, and/or "it's really shitty, it's really AMERICA"

While my study is primarily focused in the years of the mid-to-late 1940s and 1950s, it is crucial to understand the conditions that nurtured the "East-West" tension between New York and Chicago, which arguably came to a climax when A.J. Liebling coined the moniker "The Second City" in 1952. In spite of, or perhaps because of, its "secondary" status, Chicago has often been posited as the epitome of an American city.²¹ In his tome on the development of the city, Daniel L. Miller argues that "the epic of Chicago is the story of the emergence of modern America."²² This is a position articulated as early as 1920 by journalist and social critic H.L. Mencken, who pronounced Chicago the most "thoroughly American of American cities."²³ This construction of Chicago was alive and well in years just after the Second World War, as is evident in a promotional video produced by the Film Council of the Board of the Education merely titled *Chicago*. It features sweeping panoramic views of the city, focusing on its important institutions, ranging from the museums to the universities to the steel mills to the

²⁰ Ibid., 541.

See the last chapter of Simpson's doctoral thesis for criticisms of *Art in Chicago*, which range from its excessive inclusivity to its perpetuation of common art world marginalization (particularly of women artists and artists of color) in favor of this narrative of favored artists like Leon Golub and H.C. Westermann.

See also Lynne Warren's contribution to Westermann's 2001 catalogue raisonné for a (self-aware) example of how the myth of the city has come to inform readings of artists. Warren, "'Right Where I Live': H.C. Westermann's American Experience."

²¹ Articles and books on Chicago are brimming with quotes from some famous someone or other, many of them positive, many of them negative.

²² Donald L. Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 17.

²³ Writing about the primacy of Chicago's literary scene, Mencken diminishes New York as a "shoddily cosmopolitan, second-rate European town," an interesting inversion of Siegler's Chicago - New York comparison. H.L. Mencken, "The Literary Capital of the United States," *Nation*, April 17, 1920, 92. As cited in Neil Harris, "The Chicago Setting," in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 12.

stockyards. It extolls the virtues of the city as such: “Chicago: A city of beauty, strength, and power. Chicago: Commercial capital of the nation. Agricultural market and industrial center of the world. Chicago: The most American of American cities.”²⁴

This narrative continues to be proudly bolstered by the city’s official institutions; at the time of this project the Chicago History Museum’s main exhibit hall greets visitors with a plaque that reads: “Complex, contested, and ever changing, Chicago is the most American of American cities. Chicago is the crossroads of America.”²⁵ The city’s central Midwestern location turned it into a thoroughfare for laborers, businessmen, and tourists and a national hub of trade and transportation. The exhibition tracks how the city expanded and eventually flourished, pointing to the fur trade, the meat-packing industry, the steel industry, and the furniture trade industries that established Chicago as a formidable financial center in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such a narrative establishes work, especially strenuous physical labor, as the foundational underpinning for the city’s success. The historical event that spatially dominates the exhibition, and by extension the origin story of modern Chicago, is the 1893 World’s Fair, also called the Columbian Exposition as a celebration of the four-hundred-year anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ “discovery” of “America.”²⁶

The rivalry between New York and Chicago began not so long after Chicago itself was established as a city in the 1860s, when it became a serious contender for the 1893 Fair. As explored in the previous chapter, the late nineteenth century was a seminal moment for masculinity discourse in its contemporary form, but as we will see presently, it was a golden age

²⁴ *Chicago - A Film from the Chicago Board Of Education.*

²⁵ Special thanks to Steven Cianciarulo for taking the time to show me around the Museum.

²⁶ The scare quotes here are meant to draw attention to the obviously problematic popular construction of Columbus’ expedition, but this narrative is also helpful in underscoring the function of the 1893 World’s Fair: It established, on the international stage, Chicago as the locus of American identity during the celebration of the nation’s “discovery.” In effect, it established the city as the culmination of four hundred years of American progress.

in Chicago's history as well.²⁷ Winning the bid for the official site of the Columbian Exposition was a coup for the city. It had just been declared the second largest city in the country, behind New York and ahead of Saint Louis, and the Fair was an opportunity to prove the city's worth on a global scale. It also would serve as the culmination of Chicago's reconstruction after the Great Fire of 1871. The Great Fire was the greatest natural disaster that the United States had ever experienced; it wiped nearly all of the city's landmarks from the map, completely changing its terrain. This trauma, biblical in scale, inspired the remarkable sense of boosterism and civic pride for which Chicago would be known.²⁸ The rapidity with which the city recovered, to host the Fair just twenty-two years later, became evidence of the citizens' commitment to the rebirth of their city in the narrative of Chicago. On rising up after the fire, the Board of Education's *Chicago* proclaims grandiosely, "Chicago is young in years but challenging in its immensity. ... Today it is an empire, the culmination of the dreams and labors of great men. Men who sacrificed and worked unselfishly for what they believe in: their city."²⁹

By 1893, Chicago claimed to have the busiest and most modern city-center in the country and had "made good its boast as the city that could accomplish almost anything."³⁰ The fire made way for some of the greatest American architects of the period—John Wellborn Root, Daniel Hudson Burnham, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright—to rebuild the city in a thoroughly modern image. One of the many reviewers eager to share their experience of visiting the World's Fair wrote, "[Chicago is] the very embodiment of the world-conquering spirit of the age."³¹ The Fair was colloquially known as the "White City" for the neo-classical palaces

²⁷ 1893 is the apex of Miller's sweeping historical narrative of Chicago's growth as a national and international city.

²⁸ Miller, *City of the Century*, 16. Ted Halkins' earlier quote as a gritty taste of such pride.

²⁹ *Chicago - A Film from the Chicago Board Of Education*.

³⁰ Miller, *City of the Century*, 16.

³¹ "The Civic Life of Chicago: The Impressions of an Observant Englishman." *The Review of Reviews*, August 1893, as cited in *Ibid.*, 17.

erected for the Exposition, but Chicago also had become home to a multitude of technological innovations. (fig. 26) While perhaps there was no symbol of this spirit quite so elegant as the skyscraper, hallmark of the new urban landscape, the city's infrastructure was a modern marvel:

fourteen hundred miles of paved streets, thirty-eight thousand street lamps, (many of them powered by electricity), almost a thousand miles of streetcar lines, a fleet of 129 fire engines, a waterworks that pumped 500 million gallons of water a day, a system of fifteen hundred miles of sewers, a Sanitary and Ship Canal that was the biggest engineering project of the 1890s, over two thousand acres of landscaped parks, and twenty and more of the tallest, most impressively constructed buildings of earth.³²

Such massive projects brought thousands upon thousands of new workers to the city; they arrived on the network of railroads that quickly expanded across the Midwest in the 1870s.³³ The city more than doubled its population in the decade following 1880, and the 1890 census included 1,100,000 people.³⁴

By the 1880s, the physical landscape of the city had tripled in size—expanding into the prairie and even into Lake Michigan, building new land by dumping debris from the fire into the lake—making room for its new residents and industries. In addition to its established role as processing and distribution center for the country's meat and grains, Chicago also became a manufacturing city, producing many of the materials necessary for its own expansion. Miller claims, “no city in the world grew faster in the 1880s or was more chaotically alive than Chicago.”³⁵ When considering the rapidity of Chicago's growth in the late nineteenth century, it

³² Ibid., 177.

³³ Chicago would grow even more in the early twentieth century. Before the Great Migration, African-Americans accounted for just two percent of the city's population, but Chicago soon became known as a Mecca for Black Southerners. Somewhere between 50,000 and 70,000 Black Southerners came to Chicago in the years between 1916 and 1919 alone. The city also became home to the first African-American industrial working class and was recognized as a “Black metropolis” in Black communities across the nation by the 1920s. James R Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 4,5,130.

³⁴ Liebling, *Second City*, 43–44.

³⁵ Miller, *City of the Century*, 178.

is important to remember that it was a new city, especially when compared with Eastern cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. The relative youth of the city (also mentioned in the above quote from the 1946 promotional film) enabled it to make the most of developing technology while building infrastructure, but also put Chicago in the position of trying to prove it was worthy of recognition. This is exemplified in both the title and the content of the 1928 text *Chicago: The World's Youngest Great City*. The text was published as part of the (successful) bid for the 1933 World's Fair. It features articles on the many virtues of Chicago—industry and commerce accounting for more than one fourth of the text's pages—and begins with a naturalizing account of Chicago's deserved eminence, in Colonel Robert McCormick's chapter "The Natural Capital of the Continent."³⁶ (fig. 27)

With the Fair, Chicago reached the height of its global visibility and became a city that almost everyone had something to say about. The city was becoming known as the place that embodied both the very best *and* the very worst that the nation had to offer. Of the pivotal moment after the fire, famous native and author Saul Bellow said, "[r]ough-and-tumble-business Chicago after the great fire was a regional capital, and in many ways, because of its innovations in industrial method and in architecture, because of its mixture of brutal wickedness and revolutionary newness, the blood of the yards, the showpiece gems of the lakefront, the seething of its immigrant slums, because of its violence, corruption, and creative energy, it was also a world city."³⁷ As the city was working towards metropolis status, the seedier aspects of life in Chicago drew international attention as both a site for reform and a source of titillation. The 1893 World's Fair was host to a huge variety of global visitors, cultural displays, and

³⁶ Rush Clark Butler, *Chicago: The World's Youngest Great City* (New York: American Publishers Corporation, 1929).

³⁷ As quoted in Miller, *City of the Century*, epigraph. The parallels between Bellow's words and Russell's quote about the "killing" inherent in the city point to the way that Chicago is lauded both in spite of and because of its violence. This raw quality is constructed as a source of primal energy.

technological innovations, but the huge influx of new residents and tourists were prey to both petty and grand scams. It also served as the background for the gruesome exploits of one of America's first serial killers, H.H. Holms, who made more than one of his boarding-house-visitors—in town for the Fair—his victims.³⁸

The incredible outpouring of media stories about the city and its vices made the Levee, the city's red-light district, famous and drew reformers from all over the world. Local evangelists such as Dwight Moody and Frances Willard warned visitors about Chicago's dangerous neighborhoods, all the while describing them in lurid detail. William T. Stead's *If Christ Came to Chicago*, published in 1894, even featured a color-coded map of the Levee, locating brothels, pawn brokers, and saloons. While Stead's book includes his own thoughts on how Chicago might be made a beacon of humanity, it is best known for its enumerations of the widespread corruption of the city.³⁹ Among the most famous of the book's "characters," is Maggie Darling, who warrants her very own chapter.⁴⁰ A working girl in Madame Hastings' sporting house, or brothel, Maggie recounts her tale of woe to Stead. Conned into giving up her virginity by the lies of love from a secretly married man, Maggie has abandoned her job and boarding room in San Francisco to marry her lover, who, unbeknownst to her, is already married. When he does not meet her at the train station, she is too frightened of her violent father to go home to Boston. Pregnant, having "lost her character and her place, and...friends," she is taken

³⁸ Finally apprehended in Philadelphia two years after the World's Fair, Holms, born Herman W. Mudgett, confessed to murdering 27 people, though police close to the case estimated the number of his victims in 1893 as upwards of one hundred. Ibid., 593. The scintillating tale of Holms and the World's Fair has most recently been rehashed by Erik Larson in his book *The Devil in the White City*. Its best-seller status is a testament to the lasting fascination with both the splendor and the gruesomeness of 1890s Chicago; in this reader's opinion, it is the inherently compelling story of the city and its people, rather than Larson's confabulations and ham-handed writing, that made the book popular.

³⁹ The book is valuable as a sociological text, considering the wide range of subjects that Stead addresses, from politicians to prison inmates. W. T. Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago!: A Plea for the Union of All Who Love in the Service of All Who Suffer* (1893; reprint Chicago: Chicago Historical Bookworks, 1990).

⁴⁰ The chapter begins with ruminations on Mary Magdalene, and I am sure I am not the only one to have noticed the consonance between Magdalene and Maggie Darling.

into a brothel in what amounts to indentured servitude. Her child “fortunately” dies not long after it is born, and two years after joining the sporting house, a kindly (as well as young and handsome) patron takes pity on her and regularly provides her with money, though not in exchange for services, so that she might buy her freedom.⁴¹ Finally she saves enough and goes to live with her savior and his mother, where she eventually finds employment with a devout Irish Catholic family in California. Tragically, when a former client from her brothel days recognizes her at a restaurant, he reveals her previous occupation to her current employers, who throw her out without so much as a letter of reference, leading her back to a life of prostitution in Chicago. Neglected by the so-called Christians in her life, Maggie loves Jesus, but has no love for “the other ones.”⁴²

Maggie’s trajectory was familiar to the public, as the popularity of the sex trade in Chicago resulted in many tactics to bring women into brothels, some more gruesome and brutal than others.⁴³ Such stories became intensely popular in news media, inspiring Theodore Dreiser’s novel *Sister Carrie*, first published in 1900.⁴⁴ While the novel received some critical acclaim for its realism, Dreiser had trouble initially publishing it because of its scandalous

⁴¹ Stead, *If Christ Came to Chicago!*, 15.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴³ *Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America’s Soul*, Karen Abbott’s book about the Everleigh sisters’ palace of desire, The Everleigh Club, describes the manner in which “professional rapists” would steal a woman’s virtue and then sell her to a brothel. The author prefaces her book with a note on “the girls who disappeared,” among them her great-grandaunt, who disappeared after arriving in Chicago from Slovenia, quite possibly lured away by con men to suffer a similar fate. Karen Abbott, *Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America’s Soul* (New York: Random House, 2007), xii. Abbott’s book offers useful descriptions of the areas and atmosphere of the period, arguing that the Everleigh sisters worked hard to elevate sex work to a desirable occupation that offered security and wealth to women, but were met with Progressive Era reformers who spouted accusations of “white slavery”—not unjustly, given the conditions of other brothels to be found in the Levee.

Furthermore, the concept of “white slavery” is inherently problematic, and thankfully is now an outmoded term. In effect, it naturalizes *other* kinds of slavery (which need no race qualifier), specifically the enslavement and abuse of Africans brought to the United States and their descendants, while insisting on the un-naturalness of despoiling white women. This race-specific blindness to abuse is exemplified in the June 3, 1907 *Chicago Record Herald* article: “There is undoubtedly more actual physical restraint imposed on these modern slaves of our cities, than was ordinarily imposed on the black slaves of the old plantations.” As cited in *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁴ Dreiser became a journalist in 1891 and covered the Levee district long before he began his novel. Miller, *City of the Century*, 522.

content—it tells the story of an unspoiled country girl who moves to Chicago to live with her dour sister. Disenchanted with the hard factory life, she becomes the kept woman of a charming Chicagoan who keeps her in a lavish apartment. As she becomes more sophisticated in appearance and mannerisms, she gets involved with another man of stature, and eventually becomes a famous actress. Dreiser describes Carrie’s actions without judgment, and while she eventually succeeds at her own version of the American Dream, she is not necessarily content with her life. This recognition that money and fame do not bring fulfillment, however, was not sufficiently moralistic for many publishers, which led to its delayed publication and lack of publicity. While Dreiser may have been telling an “authentic” Chicago story, the city’s reformers were not content with its message.⁴⁵ Much more popular were the tragic news stories of the white slave trade.

The scandalous case of Mona Marshall’s abduction and manipulation into a life of prostitution, prosecuted by Clifford Griffith Roe in 1907, inspired a spate of newspaper profiles of young women who had similar stories to tell. Minister Ernest Bell, a reverend who proselytized against the sins of the Levee during his Midnight Missions, estimated that newspapers of all levels of repute devoted more than half a million pages to the “war on white slavery.”⁴⁶ This was a coup for progressives who were ashamed for their city, after nationally distributed *McClure’s Magazine* published an eighteen-page article, merely titled “The City of Chicago,” that detailed the twenty million dollar a year business of Chicago’s prostitution trade just a month before Marshall made her way to the police in May of 1907.⁴⁷ Never mind that

⁴⁵ Like so many of Chicago’s artists and writers, Dreiser eventually relocated to New York. Susan Noyes Platt, “‘The Little Review’: Early Years and Avant-Garde Ideas,” in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 143.

⁴⁶ Abbott, *Sin in the Second City*, 129.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

there were certain inconsistencies between Marshall's police report and court transcript, while the war against the sex industry was not won, the reformers of the city certainly were energized.

With even more lasting power in the public mind than the real-life case of Mona Marshall, Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* was published in 1906. While the book paints a bleak picture of the slave-wage life of many immigrants working in factories in the meat-packing industry, most found the description of the corrupt conditions of the industry the most disturbing part of the book. After Theodore Roosevelt read the novel, he instituted tighter federal meat-inspection standards.⁴⁸

After the spectacle of the World's Fair, Chicago continued to hold the public's attention through these tales of vice, corruption, and refuse. It is this picture of the city that has been most popularly maintained, rather than the intensely conservative reform movements that arose in response to this projected image. Ironically, it is partly because of this conservatism that the early twentieth-century Chicago art scene was so reluctant to adopt modernism. The reform movement that grew in response to the now-infamous vice and corruption of Chicago also set its sights on other "unsavory" aspects emerging in the city. While Chicago was a place where innovation, individualism, and entrepreneurship were highly valued in the business world, the same could not be said for the general attitude towards the arts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Art historian Sue Ann Prince suggests that while the city was thoroughly modern in many aspects, what made it difficult for modernism to find a receptive audience was the belief that "art should be an antidote to the workaday world, an expression of ideal 'beauty and truth' that could be used both to enlighten the entrepreneur and to elevate the masses of

⁴⁸ Miller, *City of the Century*, 215.

workers whom he employed.”⁴⁹ This conception of art’s role was widely held by members of the cultural elite, the public, and many within the art community as well. While the Columbian Exposition proved to be an international success, its designers had relied heavily on the forms and ideals of nineteenth-century European neo-classicism. Furthermore, one third of the American artists represented at the Fair were from New York, four times the number of Chicago artists.⁵⁰ As critic Franz Schulze points out even years later in his 1972 survey of Chicago Art *Fantastic Images*, while the character of New York might be measured in terms of its artists, “one is ordinarily inclined to size up or get the feel of Chicago some other way: by poking at its politicians or its businessmen, its journalists, its novelists or its social critics, but surely not by studying its painters and sculptors.”⁵¹ Indeed, it has been the former points of reference that underpin my own textual representation of the city thus far.

The Struggle of Modern Art in Chicago

An early-twentieth-century event exemplifying the common distrust of modernism was the arrival of the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art. Chicagoan art collector Arthur Jerome Eddy was so impressed by the show at the 69th Infantry Regiment Armory in Manhattan, commonly referred to as the Armory Show, that he convinced the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC) to exhibit a smaller version of the exhibition just a month later.⁵² Lorado Taft, one of Chicago’s

⁴⁹ Sue Ann Prince, “Introduction,” in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), xxi.

⁵⁰ Harris, “The Chicago Setting,” 7.

⁵¹ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 8.

Over a decade later, Harris similarly writes, “For a city that is probably one of the best analyzed, most carefully described, and incessantly invoked in the western world, Chicago’s art history remains a closely guarded secret.” Harris, “The Chicago Setting,” 3.

⁵² Indeed, he was so impressed, Eddy purchased twenty five works from the show. Arguably, it was a daring move of the Art Institute to agree to host the Armory Show, as the Metropolitan Museum of Art refused to do so, thus its placement in the armory. This said, then-director of the Art Institute William M. R. French remained in California for the duration of the show in Chicago, as he was not a fan of modernism himself and wanted to avoid what he

preeminent artists from the late nineteenth century into to the early twentieth century, resonated much of the critical response to the show when he claimed of modernism, “[t]he excremental school makes no appeal to the average American.”⁵³ Taft represented the neo-classical styles and values promoted by the art establishment; educated at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, his work for the Horticultural Building at the 1893 Fair established him as the most revered local sculptor. In his early career, Taft was both stylistically and ideologically an institutional darling. For Taft, art historian Allen Weller argues, “[a]rt was to convey a noble message, to teach, to uplift.”⁵⁴ (fig. 28) Shocked at the work then being produced in his beloved Paris, he spoke of a Matisse sculpture in a public lecture: “You can imagine the emotions of a wistful artist returning to the scene of these early loves to find them replaced by strange new gods like this foolish caricature of a woman.”⁵⁵ While Taft might have been a product of art education of an older age, his reaction was shared by many of his younger colleagues at the School of the Art Institute.

The AIC was largely governed by the philanthropists who funded it, and so it was expected to share their civic-minded and conservative views. In the nineteen teens, these views—which supported a theory of art that privileged order, beauty, and universal truths, or as Sue Ann Prince puts it, “everything that nineteenth-century academic art had to offer”—were held as gospel by the people put into power at the Art Institute and its School. While the “Exhibition of Contemporary Scandinavian Art,” held at the AIC from February 25 to March 16, 1913, was generally well received (if not without some lighthearted ridicule), the reaction to the Armory show was, literally, riotous. A group of students from the School of the Art Institute

suspected would be an unpleasant critical reaction to the show. Charlotte Moser, “‘In the Highest Efficiency’: Art Training at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago,” in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 200.

⁵³ From Lorado Taft, *Modern Tendencies in Sculpture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921), as cited in Allen Weller, “Lorado Taft, the Ferguson Fund, and the Advent of Modernism,” in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 45.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

held a mock trial of “Henri Hairmattress” for sins against art, and burned effigies of some of Matisse’s more controversial paintings, including the 1907 *Blue Nude*—an ironic contrast to the anti-institutional efforts of the Momentum Group.⁵⁶ (fig. 29) Charlotte Moser argues that the neo-classical aesthetics and ideals of the Fair had “so profoundly shaped the city’s identity as it evolved from a sprawling frontier settlement to an urban center that, a generation later, its proclamations about high art remained intact.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, Moser suggests that it was the picture of the morally bankrupt city made nationally known by (among other things) the novels of Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair and the subsequent perceived need for moral reform that resulted in the high-minded pedagogic aims of the School of the Art Institute.⁵⁸

In response to the Armory exhibit, art critics as well as writers with no arts background whatsoever filled pages of newspapers and magazines with articles, poems, and cartoons that, in turns, mocked, derided, and expressed outrage over the exhibit. The fractured and contorted nudes, such as Marcel Duchamp’s 1912 *Nude Descending a Staircase*, often inspired moral outrage. This echoed an incident just a few days before the show opened in which the police forcibly removed Paul Chabras’ *September Morn* (1912), an academic nude, from an art dealer’s window due to complaints of indecency.⁵⁹ (fig. 30) Indeed, in response to the Armory Show, a woman wrote the director of the Art Institute arguing that a respected expert in insanity declared the art exhibited “to be the work of distortionists, psychopathologists, and geometric puzzle artists,” and expressed concern for the moral and mental wellbeing of visitors.⁶⁰ For some, the

⁵⁶ Prince notes that the art critics of Chicago had time to carefully peruse the often snide reactions to the show in the New York press and craft equally snarky headlines and phrasings. Sue Ann Prince, “‘Of the Which and the Why of the Daub and Smear’: Chicago Critics Take On Modernism,” in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 90.

⁵⁷ Moser, “‘In the Highest Efficiency’: Art Training at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago,” 194.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁵⁹ Harris, “The Chicago Setting,” 17.

⁶⁰ Director French, anticipating the reaction to the exhibition, conveniently arranged to be on vacation for the entirety of the exhibit. Platt, “‘The Little Review’: Early Years and Avant-Garde Ideas,” 139.

affront of the Armory show was aesthetic, while for others it was moral; but for many it was the aesthetic changes that rendered the work immoral. The attack on the physical ideal was also an attack on the correlative ideals of beauty and truth.⁶¹

Harriet Monroe, the *Chicago Tribune* critic and one of the major voices in the conversation on the show, expressed her frustration at the immediacy with which the works of the exhibit were dismissed: “[w]e are fighting one of those battles of the intellect—those of us who have any—which are common enough in Paris, but altogether too rare in our provincially shortsighted and self-satisfied community...It is to be deplored that our discussion is not always quite urbane...Better the wild extravagances of the cubist than the vapid works of certain artists who ridicule them.”⁶² Though Monroe was not the most ardent supporter of the artists featured at the show, she understood that the works represented a break from the realism of the nineteenth century and an attempt to find a new kind of beauty, and her reviews, in a context of overwhelming vitriol, attempt to consider the works in the show fairly in light of art history and an understanding of the need for change and experimentation.⁶³

Despite Monroe’s sensitivity to modernism, the dominant voices in response to the show were outraged, and then dismissive.⁶⁴ Prince argues that this tone dictated the tenor of criticism

⁶¹ This correlation would come to play in a very different way in the 1950s, when Abstract Expressionism was touted as an “authentic” (i.e. true) representation of individual experience. I explore this more in chapter three.

⁶² Harriet Monroe, “Live Exhibit at the Art Institute: Visitor’s Opinions Strong,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 1913. As cited in Prince, “‘Of the Which and the Why of the Daub and Smear’: Chicago Critics Take On Modernism,” 101.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 102.

Monroe’s sensitivity to modernism might be even more significant given that she wrote for the *Tribune*, widely considered to be one of the nation’s most conservative papers. Harris, “The Chicago Setting,” 15.

Monroe belonged to an older generation of critics, which might explain her less than full-throated praises of the work at the Armory Show. She gained initial notice through her composition for the World’s Fair, “Columbian Ode,” which was sung at the Exposition. Platt, “‘The Little Review’: Early Years and Avant-Garde Ideas,” 157.

⁶⁴ Harris writes that the Institute took a “smug pride” in the event, arguing for their liberal policies in their annual report, but nonetheless managed to condescend to the exhibit. Harris quotes from the report, writing, “Hardly anyone took the ‘more extreme’ parts of the exhibition seriously,” the Art Institute concluded. The art school students, the “most susceptible” to passing influences, “appear not in the least affected.” Harris, “The Chicago Setting,” 16.

of modern art for the next two decades, especially in the writing of *Tribune* writer Eleanor Jewett, who would go on to be a major ally of Josephine Hancock Logan, founder of the regressive “Sanity in Art” movement of the 1930s.⁶⁵ (fig. 31) But there certainly were alternative voices inspired by the Armory Show: Clarence J. Bulliet of the *Post’s Magazine of the Art World* and later of the *Chicago Daily News* was an avid proponent of modernism who felt compelled to work against the static aesthetic standards in place since the Columbian Exposition.⁶⁶ He developed a decades-long rivalry with the much more conservative Jewett that kept both strong pro- and anti-modernist voices active in the press. Chicago was filled with societies, clubs, and organizations formed to deal with the arrival of modernism. Or as art historian Sue Prince writes, “[f]rom design guilds to artists’ clubs, avant-garde exhibition clubs to conservative amateur painting societies, no-jury exhibitions to groups promoting ‘aesthetic sanity,’ nearly every cause, both conservative and modern, was represented by at least one organization.”⁶⁷

Margaret Anderson’s *The Little Review*, a flamboyantly modern publication originally based in Chicago, espoused the values of feminism, anarchism, and socialism. First published in 1914, it reproduced images by local post-impressionist artists, featured articles on futurism (as well as reprinting Marinetti’s 1909 futurist manifesto “War, the Only Hygiene of the World”) and anarchism and art, and even advertised the 1914 English translation of Wassily Kandinsky’s “The Art of Spiritual Harmony.”⁶⁸ Such avant-garde initiatives also can be traced to independent collectors of the period. Art historian Stefan Germer argues that the collecting patterns of Martin A. Ryerson, Arthur Jerome Eddy, Frederic Clay and Helen Birch Bartlett, and Annie Swan Coburn between 1890 and 1930 that would come to form the foundation of the museum’s

⁶⁵ Prince, ““Of the Which and the Why of the Daub and Smear’: Chicago Critics Take On Modernism,” 112.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁶⁷ Prince, “Introduction,” xxii.

⁶⁸ Platt, ““The Little Review’: Early Years and Avant-Garde Ideas,” 148.

modernist art collection often ran contrary to the AIC's objectives of building a collection that would uplift the masses.⁶⁹ Ryerson and Eddy were the oldest of the collectors, and they embraced the formalist aesthetic, which had often guided post-impressionist painters. Ryerson used it to guide his collecting of works from the past, while Eddy extended the theory towards contemporary art; he was especially drawn to the Blue Rider group, which included Kandinsky and Franz Marc. Coburn and the Bartletts, conversely, did their collecting after the First World War, when the post-impressionist paradigm was well established internationally.⁷⁰ And indeed as these collectors were slowly building their collections, the Art Institute was also shifting its taste, such that it would be prepared to receive these modernist collections in the 1920s and 1930s.

The collecting practices of each of the "Modernist Five" were guided by individual aesthetic aims and conviction, but this personal approach is perhaps best observed with Frederic Bartlett's donation to the Art Institute after his wife, Helen Birch Bartlett's death. He submitted their impressive collection of post-impressionist works with a specific plan for its installation, demanding that the works be hung without any distractions: The rooms should be painted white and stripped of decorative molding, and all paintings equipped with identical white frames. Guided by Paul Signac's 1899 text *D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionisme*, Bartlett wanted to emphasize the autonomy of the artwork and articulated its development in purely visual terms; this strategy reinforced a concept of modernist art that was elaborated upon by many, perhaps

⁶⁹ Germer calls this group the "Modernist Five." Stefan Germer, "Traditions and Trends: Taste Patterns in Chicago Collecting," in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 179.

⁷⁰ Germer suggests she acquired works "casually," but with the clear intent of composing a coherent collection for an institution, eventually bequeathing it to the Art Institute in 1932. Her focus on French modernist works from 1860 to 1900 has resulted (in part) in the excellent state of the Institute's collection of works from this period. *Ibid.*, 188, 187.

most famously Clement Greenberg.⁷¹ The Art Institute did not follow Bartlett's plan, but Germer argues this aestheticizing attitude was crucial in the integration of avant-garde into the museum.⁷²

The Institute cautiously engaged with modernism after the excitement of the Armory Show. A rare exhibit of contemporary art that might be termed "modern" in the same spirit of the Armory Show occurred in the teens when Albert Bloch, member of the German Blue Rider group, exhibited twenty-five paintings in 1915.⁷³ In the 1920s, however, there were several modern and even some avant-garde exhibits, often due to the regular arrangement that the Art Institute had made with the Arts Club of Chicago, founded in 1916.⁷⁴ Through the energies of Rue Winterbotham Carpenter, who had taken a leadership position in 1918, The Arts Club arranged for the most progressive shows in the city to be held in a gallery in the Institute, bringing avant-garde art to Chicago without offending many of the Art Institute's conservative donors, through the late 1920s.⁷⁵ Carpenter's mission of bringing the avant-garde to Chicago included not only the many visual exhibits she arranged through the Arts Club, featuring works by Auguste Rodin, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Berthe Morisot, but extended to dance, theater, music, and poetry.⁷⁶ The Club invited such innovative

⁷¹ Paul Signac, *D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme* (1899; reprint Paris: H. Floury, 1921).

⁷² Germer, "Traditions and Trends: Taste Patterns in Chicago Collecting," 187.

⁷³ Arthur Jerome Eddy convinced the museum to hold the exhibition. Sue Ann Prince and Richard R. Brettell, "From the Armory Show to the Century of Progress: The Art Institute Assimilates Modernism," in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 214.

⁷⁴ Both Ryerson and Charles Hutchinson, president of the AIC Board of Trustees, were founding members of the Club. *Ibid.*, 216.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Like the Bartletts and Coburn, Carpenter was focused almost solely on French modernism, neglecting the movements that Katherine Dreier's similar organization Société Anonyme was championing in New York: constructivism, Dadaism, and expressionism. *Ibid.*, 219.

musicians and poets as Sergei Prokofiev, Igor Stravinsky, Leonid Massine, and Edna St. Vincent Millay to perform their works.⁷⁷

There were also a number of alternative art groups that organized “no-jury” exhibitions for local artists, including the phonetically named Cor Ardens, or the “ardent hearts.” The Salon de Refusés exhibit of 1921, inspired by the 1863 Paris Salon des Refusés, featured many Cor Ardens works, and was so successful that it spawned the Chicago No-Jury Society of Artists, whose exhibits were arguably even more of a public success.⁷⁸ While the No-Jury Society was clumsily named, Bulliet, an avid supporter of the group, asserted they represented a strike against the elitist methods of the Art Institute—a claim also made by and about Exhibition Momentum.⁷⁹ The Society held flamboyant and entertaining, if not entirely lucrative, fundraising events like the “cubist” balls, for which attendees dressed as works of modern art.⁸⁰ In 1926 Rudolph Weisenborn, the Society’s first president, broke with the group to found Les Arlimusc, which aimed to unite Chicagoans interested in art, literature, music, and science (which are the components of “arlimusc”). These groups represent the collective efforts of Chicago artists to find alternative exhibition spaces, and concurrently public narratives, of acceptable art practice.

In 1933, the World’s Fair returned to the Chicago as the “Century of Progress.” Miles away from the beaux-arts aesthetic of the 1893 “white city,” the Century of Progress buildings

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Paul Kruty, “Chicago’s Alternative Art Groups of the 1920s,” in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 79. The Cor Ardens attempted to mount their own regular no-jury show, but Kruty claims that the very openness of the group, whose members featured no stylistic links to each other and whose idealistic but very broad goal was to bring together “sympathetic isolated individuals,” resulted in their inability to organize more than one show. However, the diversity of styles is also characteristic of the New York School and the Chicago School, and Exhibition Momentum exhibited regularly for over a decade, initially with little external support. Ibid., 79, 80.

Quote taken from the “Tentative Constitution of Cor Ardens,” 1921. As cited in Ibid., 79.

⁷⁹ Kruty, “Chicago’s Alternative Art Groups of the 1920s,” 83.

A key difference that I expand upon later is that Exhibition Momentum insisted on a jury process, which they found necessary in order to legitimate their work.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

and sculptures obviously were influenced by the Art Deco movement, which first began to coalesce in the 1925 Exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris.⁸¹ While both world's fairs made heavy use of sculptural programs for their buildings, the neo-classical ideal of the 1890s gave way to the linear, geometric, adornments of the 1930s.⁸² Furthermore, the 1933 sculptures were decidedly forward looking in their titles, such as *Stellar Energy*, *Atomic Energy*, and *Science Advancing Mankind*. (fig. 32)

Furthermore, at this point, after bringing contemporary works to the public only through the Art Club, the AIC finally put its institutional stamp of approval on modern works. To complement the 1933 Fair, the Art Institute put on the *Century of Progress* exhibition, which heavily featured works from the Helen Birch Bartlett collection. Robert Harshe and Daniel Catton Rich, then-director and special assistant to the director, respectively, for the *Century of Progress* exhibition, dismantled the donor rooms in order to create a chronological display that incorporated modernism within a narrative of artistic progress. In doing so, the Art Institute had assimilated modernism (though the works were never termed “modern” in the catalogue) into its official narrative.⁸³ The show culminated in a two-level gallery, which featured works by many of the artists whose pieces in the Armory Show had inspired such vitriol twenty years earlier, including Duchamp's 1912 *Nude Descending a Staircase*, appropriately placed at the top of the stairs, and Kandsinky's 1913 *Improvisation 30*.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Weller, “Lorado Taft, the Ferguson Fund, and the Advent of Modernism,” 46.

⁸² Many of the sculptural programs for the buildings during the 1893 Fair were almost freestanding—three-dimensional structures that often became the centerpieces of the architecture—the *Century of Progress* sculptures often took the form of reliefs, appearing to be carved into the facades, while individual figures “emerged organically” from the architecture, exemplifying that dictum of modern architecture popularized by Chicago-linked architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright: function over form. *Ibid.*, 47.

⁸³ Harshe became director in 1921 and is credited by many as a driving force committed to establishing a permanent collection of modern art. Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 17.

⁸⁴ Prince and Brettell, “From the Armory Show to the Century of Progress: The Art Institute Assimilates Modernism,” 224.

However, while the *Century of Progress* might have legitimated European modernism in the Art Institute, the American artists' contribution to the exhibition was uninspired according to the tenets of the newly accepted "avant-garde"; it featured one work each by 178 artists, most of whom worked in a traditional figurative mode.⁸⁵ Furthermore, while the exhibit did not incite the outrage that the Armory Show had, its inclusive view of modernism set the stage for the 1936 Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture at the Art Institute. The brazen modernism of *this* exhibition inspired Josephine Hancock Logan's notorious 1937 book and movement, *Sanity in Art*, which gathered followers nationwide.⁸⁶ Logan's screed against modern art argued that artistic freedom must not be stifled, but nonetheless moralized about "the restoration of real art and a resumption of progress," which for her, referred to the ideological and didactic works common to the nineteenth century, rather than the "modernistic moronic grotesqueries...masquerading as art."⁸⁷ This said, Logan was heartily lampooned by local artists and critics, including Bulliet, despite the popular support for her movement.

Gallery owner Katharine Kuh was another independent who would provide an alternative venue for works unaccepted by the Art Institute. She received her MA in art history from the University of Chicago in 1929, but her doctoral work at New York University was cut short by her marriage to George Kuh in 1930. They were divorced in 1935, shortly after which she opened her gallery and began her professional career in art.⁸⁸ Her gallery was open from 1935 to 1942 (at which point World War II made the importation of European works of art impossible) and routinely featured the works of well-known European modernists such as Picasso, Fernand

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Josephine Hancock Logan, *Sanity in Art* (Chicago: A. Kroch, 1937).

⁸⁷ As quoted in Prince, "'Of the Which and the Why of the Daub and Smear': Chicago Critics Take On Modernism," 112.

⁸⁸ Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 21.

Léger, Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee, and Joan Miró.⁸⁹ (fig. 33) To support the gallery, Kuh taught summers at an art school in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and ran an employment bureau for the AIC in the winters.⁹⁰ Kuh would go on to be one of the most beloved curators of the AIC, but in these early days at her gallery, she faced acerbic criticism at the hands of Jewett and even threats and vandalism by members of Sanity in Art.⁹¹ She also organized art classes at the gallery—in part because sales were not successful as one would hope—where Leon Golub got his earliest art education. Golub recalled not only learning the studio skills that he would later hone at the Art Institute, but also that the gallery provided his first exposure to modernism, specifically citing Henry Moore, Paul Klee, and the Chicago exhibition of Pablo Picasso's 1937 *Guernica*.⁹² (fig. 34)

The value of modern art was a subject for intense debate in the years between the Armory Show and the Century of Progress exposition, but by the 1940s, it had been effectively institutionalized, much as it had in New York. After closing her gallery, Katharine Kuh became Public Relations Counsel at the Art Institute as well as the curator for the Gallery of Art Interpretation. This special gallery was opened in 1944 with the express purpose of providing adult education on modern art. As Simpson explains, “[t]he targeted audience for the Gallery... was the person who had given up on modern art because he or she did not understand the ‘art-world insider’”—more specifically, those who, for lack understanding, became followers

⁸⁹ Avis Berman, “The Katharine Kuh Gallery,” in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910-1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 166.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* Sanity in Art's protests began with written letters, escalated to menacing visits and culminated (allegedly) in a whiskey bottle thrown through the gallery's plate glass window. *Ibid.*, 166.

⁹² Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 13.

The figural bent of these artists, as well as the frequent allusion to war in their works seems worth noting, considering these features are also common to Golub's work.

of Jewett and Logan's conservative positions. Rich and Kuh shared ambitions to put the AIC on the art-world map as an institution with a progressive collection.⁹³

Kuh was promoted to associate curator in 1948 in no small part because of her work co-curating the controversial 28th Annual American Exhibition *American Abstract and Surrealist Art* with Frederick Sweet, which opened in November of 1947.⁹⁴ Rich approached the AIC's Board of Trustees in 1946 with a plan for an invitational exhibition of painting and sculpture in the abstract or surrealist mode, perhaps following New York's Museum of Modern Art's *Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism* exhibit in the winter of 1936-1937. The AIC's exhibit, however, was to focus on American artists, rather than on the European originators featured in *Fantastic Art*.⁹⁵ Kuh attempted to lay foundation for the exhibit with a preparatory exhibition entitled *Explaining Abstract Art* in the Gallery of Art Interpretation four months before the Annual American Exhibition, as Jewett primed her readership to reject the show months before it even opened. Though there were detractors, the critical reaction to the exhibition was largely laudatory, including coverage in both Chicago and New York that applauded the AIC for its progressive endorsement of abstraction. The museum pointed to the approval of New York authorities, including Museum of Modern Art director Alfred Barr, who commented that the AIC had created an exhibition with "a great many new faces and real talent...despite a great deal of hostility on the part of the people," to legitimate the success of their exhibition.⁹⁶

⁹³ Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 22-23.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁵ For a detailed account of Kuh's journey and process in selecting artists for the show, see her memoir Katharine Kuh and Avis Berman, *My Love Affair with Modern Art: Behind the Scenes with a Legendary Curator* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc., 2006). See also Simpson's succinct but thorough account of the works included and passed over from artists soon to be nationally recognized, such as Pollock, de Kooning, and Richard Diebenkorn, and a summary of the critical reception. Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 20-31.

⁹⁶ Art Institute of Chicago Archives, Department of Painting and Sculpture, 58th Annual American Exhibition, PR and Related Material 503, 11/16/1947-1/11/1948 "Rough Draft of Interview of Fifty-eighth Annual American Exhibition," 1. As cited in Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 31.

The vigorous conversations about art and its value, however, did not make it into A.J. Liebling's tongue-in-cheek critique of Chicago, "The Second City," initially published as a series of articles in *The New Yorker*, and released as a book in 1952.⁹⁷ Indeed, Liebling writes absolutely nothing of Chicago's visual art scene, not even in order to disparage it. This was not an unprecedented assessment; the struggle of local artists against the dominance of the New York scene is articulated as early as 1929 when Walter Sherwood wrote, "...as soon as a Chicago artist won his spurs he packed his paint kit and took a fast train to New York."⁹⁸ Franz Schulze echoes this sentiment more than forty years later in his survey of Chicago art, writing "Chicago has long been a wholesale supplier of talent to New York City...It has almost, although never quite, become accustomed to watching its most gifted artists depart as soon as they are ready to 'make it' on the more competitive and more lucrative Manhattan scene."⁹⁹ Painted in crass and patronizingly "colorful" terms, Chicago consistently has been imagined as a decidedly blue-collar, oppressively industrial city, described in terms of its slaughterhouses, railroads, grain exchange, and notorious corruption. Even Lynne Warren, curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, writes about Westermann's 1947 arrival to the city, "[t]he only poetry found in Chicago, a city dedicated to industry and mercantilism, was that penned by Carl Sandburg, celebrating its slaughterhouses and criminal intent."¹⁰⁰ But in his 1952 article, Liebling seems to long for the gangland days of the city, arguing that even this would be more

⁹⁷ Liebling, *Second City*.

⁹⁸ Sherwood wrote this as part of propagandistic text about Chicago that extols its virtues and struggles as "The World's Youngest Great City" in preparation for the 1933 Century of Progress International Exposition. In his chapter on "Chicago's Place in the Fine Arts," he is optimistic about the growth of the art scene, especially the role of the Industrial Art School that was being founded at the time. Butler, *Chicago*, 35.

⁹⁹ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Warren, "'Right Where I Live': H.C. Westermann's American Experience," 51.

interesting than the blandness the city projected in the postwar years.¹⁰¹ What could be a less worthy site than a second-rate city past its prime?

Before and After “The Second City”: Emergence of a Chicago School

The long-running rivalry between New York and Chicago seemed to be effectively settled by Liebling’s screed, when he coined the moniker “The Second City.” His critique purports to be tongue in cheek but is filled with aggressively disparaging claims: [t]he “boring and provincial” town was well past its Prohibition Era excitement while still exceedingly corrupt; its intellectual community was uninformed and consequently over earnest and strident in its opinions; its idea of a literary scene was no more than a Great Books group for business executives.¹⁰² More than anything, however, Liebling notes how so many Chicagoans seemed to be constantly trying to make up for the fact that they were not New Yorkers. For instance, he writes:

I found Chicago women pretty and they looked well-dressed (sic) to me. It just interested me that so many didn’t *think* they were well-dressed (sic) unless they had bought their clothes somewhere else.

A very smart (in both senses of the word) Chicago woman I know looked around her in a New York restaurant and said, “There’s something about New York women that makes me feel awkward.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Perhaps the most famous figure of the Chicago Outfit is Al Capone, but there is enough of a legacy to warrant bus tours of famous Prohibition Era gang-related sites through the city, including the Biograph Theater where John Dillinger was shot by the FBI in 1934 or the site of the Saint Valentine’s Day Massacre. Untouchable Tours purports to be “Chicago’s Original Gangster Tour.” <http://www.gangstertour.com/>, accessed September 1, 2013.

¹⁰² In a particularly gendered attack on Chicago’s “desperately earnest” and “wholly isolated” intellectuals, Liebling writes, “A man condemned to earn his living by writing, and therefore accustomed to talk about football or the proper temperature of beer, finds himself conversationally impaled by determined ladies who want to discuss Lionel Trilling.” Liebling, *Second City*, 109, 110.

The Great Books club that Liebling smugly derides was a course for business professionals co-founded by Mortimer Alder and University of Chicago president Robert Hutchins. James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, Modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Cultural Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 79.

¹⁰³ Liebling, *Second City*, 65.

He goes on to note that most of the women in the saloon were low-level reporters, recently arrived in the city, probably wearing “popular-prices department [store]” clothing, and that the Chicago woman’s feelings of inferiority was entirely contrived.¹⁰⁴ Of course, Liebling’s lambast of Chicago and its residents suggested that the inferiority was not merely self-conscious paranoia.

That said, the anxiety about status is often repeated as part of the rhetoric about the city, its art scene, and its patrons. Active and original member of Exhibition Momentum Ellen Lanyon recalled a frustrating and recurrent part of conversations about the city’s art scene in the postwar years: “[W]e started having all of these ‘what’s wrong with Chicago?’ talk panels [in the 50s]. And everybody got to be on them and every time a panel would come up no matter what was announced as a title, you’d think you were really going to get your teeth into something really important, it would end up [being] (sic) ‘what’s wrong with Chicago?’.”¹⁰⁵

This pseudo self-loathing is presented as alive and well in a 1970 issue of *Art Gallery* in which New York critic Jay Jacob quotes Chicagoans to support his picture of the Midwestern city as an “artistic backwater,” including the former director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Jan van der Marck, who remarks with disdain that “[Surrealism] is still considered *modern* in Chicago,” and an art dealer who says “the people out here are barbarians. They may buy some

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ She continues, “I got so sick of it I decided, not that I thought there was so much wrong with it, but it influenced everybody. And they’d write about it. I mean Artner still writes about it. I can’t believe it. So I think that I felt that there must be a place where artists thought things were okay.” While artists like Leon Golub left Chicago because they felt they could not earn recognition, Lanyon moved to Indiana because she was frustrated by the negativity of the community. She points to Alan Artner as a detractor of Chicago, who is one of the subjects of Brown’s 1981 *Giotto* works discussed earlier. This interview was conducted in 1994, which in itself indicates a decades-long, persistent hand-wringing about Chicago as a viable art scene. Ellen Lanyon, Tape-recorded Interview with Ellen Lanyon, interview by Lynne Warren and Barbara Jaffee, September 23, 1994, 14, Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art Archives.

I also refer my reader back to footnote 91 of chapter one, in which I cite historian James Gilbert describing the frequency of “characteristic what-is-wrong-with-our-men symposium.” There is an articulable parallel between the crisis of confidence in Chicago’s art scene and the so-called postwar crisis of masculinity. Of course the difference is that Chicago was trying and failing to compete with the dominance of New York, whereas however “wrong,” the seemingly universal male subject (*i.e.*, white, straight, and middle class) invoked in popular symposia was still, and remains, the privileged subjectivity. Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*, 65.

beautiful Surrealist paintings, but not because they're beautiful. They like Surrealism for all the wrong reasons. If a painting doesn't tell them a story, they can't see it."¹⁰⁶ Even in his acquiescence that Chicago women are "pretty," Liebling did nothing to alleviate Chicago's apparent inferiority complex in his assessment of the city, or, as Chicago critic Schulze put it: "If New York in New York's eyes, had overtaken Paris, where did that leave Chicago but 800 miles inland, worth reach most appropriately by the back of Liebling's hand?"¹⁰⁷ Their home and workplace slandered in a nationally read magazine, Chicago artists grew increasingly frustrated (some of them quite vocally) with how easily they seemed to have been overshadowed by the art scene in New York. This would eventually lead to the increasing engagement with New York critics and artists, as with Exhibition Momentum's juror selection in the early-to-mid-1950s. Even before this, however, much of the institutional politicking in Chicago made it difficult for its young artists, students of the Art Institute in particular, to gain significant recognition locally, let alone on a national scale.

While the SAIC had been known as a "genteel place," with a mostly female student body and very traditional educational practices, the postwar years saw an influx of male students, many of whom were veterans enrolled on the GI Bill.¹⁰⁸ By the Second World War, the SAIC

¹⁰⁶ These quotes place Chicagoans at the rearguard of art consumption in two ways: van der Marck remarks on the temporal distance from Surrealism as a movement, while the dealer questions his average consumer's ability to appreciate paintings in the "right" way—that is, a non-narrative way. It seems that for this dealer, Greenbergian formalism continues to take precedent over content even into the 1970s. As cited in Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 36. Jacobs' article in support of an argument that Chicago is less concerned with art historical evolution and that the embrace of Surrealism has to do with the city's cultural embrace of primitivism and "raw" energy.

Interestingly, while many Chicago artists hoped that the MCA, opened in 1968, would be more supportive than the AIC had been in the late 1940s and 1950s, Jan van der Marck explicitly stated that it would not be a "regional" museum, which he argued would do Chicago art and artists a disservice. Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 534.

¹⁰⁷ Schulze, "Art in Chicago: The Two Traditions," 15.

¹⁰⁸ Warren notes that the reputation had it that "a mostly female student body drew from plaster casts and copied the museum's Impressionist masterpieces in nearly deserted galleries." Warren, "'Right Where I Live': H.C. Westermann's American Experience," 53.

At the start of US involvement in the war, enrollment in the School of Fine Art's Day School (rather than night or weekend classes) included 288 men and 532 women. Eight years later, enrollment consisted of 290 women and 697 men, 503 of whom received educational benefits. Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 39.

consisted of three smaller schools—Fine Art, Drama, and Industrial Design—with the majority of veterans who attended studying in the School of Fine Art.¹⁰⁹ The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the GI Bill of Rights, was one of a series of measures designed to help veterans assimilate into civilian life and avoid the economic stagnation following the First World War. The key components of the Bill included a stipend for unemployed veterans (little used compared to the other benefits); loan guaranty for homes, farms, or business; and funds for higher education or training.¹¹⁰ This eager utilization of services is evidenced by the fact that neither Westermann nor Golub could start at the SAIC the year they first applied because the school’s GI quota had been filled, but this boom of veteran students was not uncontroversial. Anticipating opposition to the educational benefits, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Congress launched a public relations campaign that suggested veterans were due “certain rights” for their service. Moreover, as art historian Mary Caroline Simpson writes, this campaign “cautioned the public that the veteran was a ‘potent force for good or evil’ in society. If treated properly after the war, the veteran would uphold democracy. If not, he would ‘scrap it’ and destroy the nation.”¹¹¹ Such a warning about the volatile status of the veteran resonates with my arguments in the prior chapter that this subject, while ostensibly a symbol of American military victory, was ultimately unstable and consequently marginal; the controversy around the flood of veteran students into institutions like the SAIC reflects this.

Benefits became available in 1944, and that year 8,200 veterans enrolled in colleges and universities. Enrollments exceeded one million by the fall of 1946.¹¹² In 1947, veterans

¹⁰⁹ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 39.

¹¹⁰ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, “Born of Controversy: The GI Bill of Rights,” accessed June 17, 2013, <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp>.

¹¹¹ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 37.

¹¹² Joseph C. Goulden, *The Best Years: 1945-1950* (New York: Atheneum, 1976), 52, 56. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 37.

accounted for 49 percent of college admissions, and by the time the original Bill ended in 1956, nearly half of the 16 million American World War II veterans had taken advantage of access to education.¹¹³ While there was substantial media attention to the success of veterans in higher education, some, like University of Chicago president Robert Maynard Hutchins, denounced the program, as in his 1944 article in *Collier's* magazine entitled "The Threat to American Education."¹¹⁴ Hutchins claimed that "handing out degrees" would lessen institutional prestige and cheapen the educational process.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, the number of students that chose liberal arts education over vocational training surprised both government officials and school administrators.¹¹⁶ Rebuttals claimed that such universities were out of touch with student demands and veterans' goals, and this conflict between student and institution played out in the setting of the SAIC as well.¹¹⁷

The art historical discourse of postwar Chicago art locates the veteran as an underdog subject, heroically driven and committed to their success, as has been exemplified in above quotes by key scholars like Lynn Warren, Franz Schulze, and Dennis Adrian. According to these accounts, the veteran students at the Art Institute, many of whom had seen violent action, were older than the average undergraduate, highly self-motivated, and eager to get their careers on

¹¹³ United States Department of Veterans Affairs, "Born of Controversy: The GI Bill of Rights."

¹¹⁴ Positive media coverage argued that veterans were diligent and committed students, as in Author unnamed, "The GI Student Is Good," *Newsweek*, July 9, 1946, 82.

¹¹⁵ Robert M. Hutchins, "The Threat to American Education," *Collier's* 114 (December 30, 1944): 20–21. Many university administrators felt that veterans' desires to graduate quickly would lower university standards. For similar critiques, see Author unnamed, "Do GI Students Think?," *Newsweek*, June 30, 1947, 74; Authors unnamed, "Education for Veterans: Letters to the Editor," *Architectural Forum*, November 1945, 44;48;52;56;60;64;70. The GI Bill resulted in a dramatic shift in higher education student demographics. As Simpson points out, before the war, only fourteen percent of the population attended college. Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 63. The Bill also helped make higher education more available to women and African-Americans; 60,000 women veterans and 70,000 African-American veterans were enrolled in college. Edwin Kiester, Jr., "Uncle Sam Wants You...to Go to College," *Smithsonian Magazine* 25, no. 8 (November 1994): 131–132.

¹¹⁶ Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 38.

¹¹⁷ Such rebuttals include Author unnamed "These Boys Won't Ask for Free Sheepskins," *The Saturday Evening Post*, March 24, 1945, 100; Kyle Crichton, "GI Bill of Complaint," *Collier's*, June 2, 1945, 14–15, 72; Alfred E. Kuenzli, "The Challenge to Education," *Collier's*, March 3, 1945, 37.

track.¹¹⁸ This eagerness, while in line with the entrepreneurial spirit so prized in Chicago, was perceived as incongruous with the educational and artistic milieus of the postwar period.

While the increased enrollment of veterans enabled the financial growth and stability of the school, fears over the changing nature of American art education due to the growth of university programs and Daniel Catton Rich's increased focus on establishing the AIC's collection rather than the school's program, meant that the SAIC did little to support its veteran students. Some shared Hutchins's opinion that veteran students would diminish the quality of the school, and Dean Hubert Ropp, though he appreciated the economic stability made possible by the GI Bill, noted that the veterans were "hard-headed" and "a little different" and portrayed them as troublemakers.¹¹⁹

There was resentment of the veteran students outside of the Institute as well. Older artists like Rudolph Weisenborn—former president of the No-Jury Society—who long had been dissatisfied with the Art Institute's support of local artists now resented having to compete with the growing student body for art prizes. The jury of the Art Institute 51st Annual Exhibition of Artists of Chicago & Vicinity (C&V) selected mostly contributions from students or recent SAIC graduates, excluding over one thousand artists from the show.¹²⁰ Even rival critics Bulliet and Jewett united in their attack on the students; they pressured Daniel Catton Rich to ban students from the C&V exhibition, and he acquiesced in hopes that this would quell local

¹¹⁸ Warren, "'Right Where I Live': H.C. Westermann's American Experience," 53.

Dennis Adrian refers to the "maturity and seriousness" of the students as a direct result of their time in theater, echoing the points made in the above *Newsweek* article quote. Dennis Adrian, "Private Treasures, Public Spirit," in *Art in Chicago: 1945-1975*, ed. Lynne Warren (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art; Distributed by Thames & Hudson, 1996), 74.

Golub also notes the eagerness of his fellow classmates. Leon Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, interview by Irving Sandler, October 28, 1968, Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art Archives.

¹¹⁹ "Art Institute Grads Different--Want to Eat: Hard Headed Approach Credited to Vet's Influence," *Chicago Daily News*, June 9, 1947. Cited in Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 41, 65.

¹²⁰ Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 32.

tensions.¹²¹ The Joint Committee for Exhibitions of Chicago Artists, headed by painter Gustaf Dalstrom, presented Rich with a petition that demanded the student ban; it included signatures from over five hundred artists from eleven participating art organizations and complained that the Art Institute had been so “notoriously inhospitable to its artists” that many had “left to find more congenial surroundings elsewhere,” echoing Sherwood’s 1929 lament that Chicago artists soon left the city for New York.¹²² Also responding to anxiety regarding exclusion incited by the Annual American Exhibition held just months prior, the petition also argued that this show should ensure that ten to fifteen percent of works included were of Chicago artists.¹²³ At that time, the C&V art show was one of the few ways for artists to connect with collectors, sell their work, and establish a reputation. The older artists felt this domain belonged to them, as they used it to make a living—it was almost exclusively this generation of artists in Chicago who were able to support themselves financially through their art—but the ban elicited the same complaint from the students.¹²⁴

The prior generation that included Weisenborn and Dalstrom all but controlled the few recognized art organizations like the Chicago Gallery Association and the Artist’s League of the Midwest, and there were virtually no opportunities for new artists to exhibit. As of 1947, there were three “serious” private galleries: Benjamin, Main Street, and Associated American Artists, but according to Schulze, even “they had no power to shape taste and opinion in town.”¹²⁵ Even

¹²¹ As is usually the case, there were actually several factors that led to Rich’s decision, including the critical dissatisfaction with the Surrealist nature of the prior show. Additionally, Barbara Jaffee suggests this policy change was a result of the accusations of communist leanings Senator George Dondero made against the AIC’s director, Daniel Catton Rich, after the 1946 C&V exhibition. I discuss this in greater detail in the following chapter. Barbara Jaffee, “Pride of Place,” in *Art in Chicago: 1945-1975*, ed. Lynne Warren (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art; Distributed by Thames & Hudson, 1996), 56.

¹²² Archives of AIC, Scrapbook of Art and Artists in Chicago, Rolls 7-9, 1947-1950. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 32.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 42, 66.

¹²⁵ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 10.

later, when the economic prosperity of the 1950s inspired a burgeoning gallery scene in Chicago, the spaces that showed local artists focused almost exclusively on prewar Expressionists.¹²⁶ While the Art Institute's exhibitions had shifted focus towards non-objective art in the late 1940s, reflecting a movement towards modernism and away from the previously conservative policies of the museum, the 1947 ban meant there was effectively no opportunity for the students to exhibit their work.

Frustrated by this stifling of the student community in a city with already limited resources, a group of Art Institute students led by Golub and Cosmo Campoli mobilized and started a petition to protest the exclusionary policy. They gathered over 800 signatures, most of them from veteran students. On March 18, 1948, undergraduate and graduate students demonstrated at the museum to protest its undemocratic policies, under the united complaint of "DON'T DISCRIMINATE AGAINST ONE GROUP. LET ALL COMPETE ON AN EQUAL BASIS."¹²⁷ While the group included younger women members and older sympathetic professors, the group was mostly comprised of veterans in their late twenties. After this first group action, the students gathered and voted to form an alternative exhibition society, initially called the Midwest Guild of Contemporary Artists," shortly renamed "Exhibition Momentum." Their first chairman was Roy Gussow, student council chairman at the Institute of Design (ID); he persuaded his fellow students that a counter-exhibition would prove more effective, while some of the "sillier ones wanted all sorts of demonstrations."¹²⁸ The ban was the ultimate catalyst for the cohesion of what could be called the "Chicago School."¹²⁹ As Warren describes

¹²⁶ Jaffee, "Pride of Place," 57.

¹²⁷ Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 43.

¹²⁸ This quote from a student interview described the efforts of student John Laska, a veteran and "experience[d]" leftist protester. From Joseph, "Career and Social Protest," 119. As cited in Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 66. The Institute of Design was also often called the "New Bauhaus." See Selz, "Modernism Comes to Chicago: The Institute of Design."

¹²⁹ Jaffee, "Pride of Place," 57.

it, the Chicago scene was characterized by “a group of passionate individualists who were forced into intense cooperation by the lack of exhibition venues... There was no established way of doing things, no entrenched art network. Artists of the immediate postwar years in Chicago made it up as they went along.”¹³⁰ In his 1972 survey text, Schulze paints a picture of the students developing an independent community: “As they pursued their labors at the School of the Art Institute, they had far more to say to each other than to their teachers... They spent as many hours in libraries and in coffee shops as they did in school, reading and talking as much as painting and looking.”¹³¹

The “hard headedness” of the veteran students (and their vocalized dissatisfaction) was in part what so upset the SAIC administration. Painter Seymour Rosofsky articulated a common sentiment among the students when he said, “[b]ecause of the army we were older—instead of just a few strong people you had lots of them. We had ideas beyond our years.”¹³² Furthermore, like their modern elders Wiesenborn and Dalstrom, the younger artists wanted to be able to make a living from their art; thus the rather tongue-in-cheek title of a 1947 article that featured an interview with SAIC Dean Ropp: “Art Institute Grads Different—Want to Eat: Hard Headed

¹³⁰ Warren, “‘Right Where I Live’: H.C. Westermann’s American Experience,” 55.

Artist-run alternative art spaces are still a crucial part of the Chicago art scene for the same reasons that they were in the days of Exhibition Momentum. In August of 2013, *fnewsmagazine* profiled several local art spaces and quoted Lynne Warren: “Alternative spaces are really important to Chicago because even today there aren’t that many mainstream organizations. There are lots of artists who come to Chicago to go to art school. There have been since the turn of the twentieth century. So it’s a way that artists can take matters into their own hands and have a place to show and to develop community.” Joseph Ravens’ origin story of the Defibrillator Gallery as an urge he felt as he was on the verge of leaving Chicago for New York after the censorship of and unforgiving response to his performance during a Chicago Loop Alliance event in 2010. Patrick G. Putze, “Alternative Art Spaces in Chicago,” *fnewsmagazine*, August 29, 2013, <http://fnewsmagazine.com/2013/08/alternative-art-spaces-in-chicago/>.

¹³¹ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 9.

In the postwar period, Schulze was an artist—a co-founder of Momentum, no less—and so was part of this community he describes. Leon Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, interview by Irving Sandler, November 11, 1968, Tape 2, Side 2, 22, Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art Archives. Indeed, he attended the celebratory banquet of the first Exhibition Momentum show in 1948.

¹³² Dennis Shapiro, “A Dialogue with Seymour Rosofsky,” *New Art Examiner*, June 1974, 4. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 42.

Approach Credited to Vet's Influence.”¹³³ But others seemed to be uneasy about the veteran subject's position in civilian context. In 1946, Peter Selz, then an art history instructor at the ID, approached Daniel Catton Rich with a proposal to host an exhibition of work by Chicago veterans. Rich, however, felt that such an exhibition would be tantamount to a social service and understood the veterans' painting and sculpture as rehabilitative exercises, rather than art worthy of public exhibition—not in line with his goal of creating a world-class art institution.¹³⁴ While this dismissal echoes the University of Chicago president's wariness about admitting veteran students on the GI Bill at risk of diminishing the quality of education, Rich was struggling to promote his own agenda.¹³⁵

Some students, however, were convinced that the SAIC was biased against veterans. There is some evidence for this suspicion in the vitriolic disparaging of a student who received a medal in the 1947 C&V exhibition, the year before the student ban. Mitchell Siporin's *End of an Era* (undated) was inspired by his two years in Italy as an artist-correspondent for the Army. Again, Jewett and Bulliet united in their distaste. Jewett described the painting “the cream of the crop of horrors,” and Bulliet wished that Siporin and his veteran classmates would “exorcise themselves of the ‘withering and blighting influences of the war.’”¹³⁶ Established Chicago painter Ivan Albright also railed against the work in an editorial in particularly anti-Semitic terms, claiming that Siporin was not an artist but a Jewish radical promoting a political agenda. Albright ignored the fact that although he was pursuing his MFA at the SAIC, Siporin was quite well-established for a student; he had work in the permanent collections of the Museum of

¹³³ “Art Institute Grads Differ--Want to Eat: Hard Headed Approach Credited to Vet's Influence.”

¹³⁴ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 65.

¹³⁵ Simpson notes that museum offered a few smaller exhibitions to veterans in its Chicago Gallery, including one that featured “Ex-Paratrooper and Veteran of Air Corps Harold Zussin and Kenneth Nack,” but it is unclear whether this specifically exhibited veteran work, as was Selz's intent, or was just a coincidence. Ibid.

¹³⁶ Simpson dates Siporin's canvas to 1948, but this is incorrect, given its presence in the 1947 C&V exhibition. Ibid., 62. Simpson cites C.J. Bulliet, “Army Artist Wins in Chicago Show,” *Chicago Daily News*, June 14, 1947.

Modern Art, the Whitney, and the Art Institute of Chicago.¹³⁷ Such anti-Semitism characterized much of the critical discourse in Chicago at this time, which could have exacerbated the feelings of alienation of many of the students, many of whom, as Schulze pointed out, were Jewish.¹³⁸ Furthermore, though often obscured in favor of works that support the art historical narratives dominated by Greenbergian formalism, representational works of war were produced in the postwar years, by both non-veterans and veterans: take for instance Ben Shahn's 1944 *Death on the Beach*, or 1945 *Reconstruction* or Jacob Lawrence's *War* series, which focused on the emotional response to the war.¹³⁹ (fig. 35) The figural content of Shahn's work, let alone his often politicized subject matter, eventually would result in difficulties during the McCarthy Era,

¹³⁷ Siproin's contribution to the C&V show, which Albright described as "full of bitter crying, loud stamping, and much shouting," was hung alongside works by his mother and sister, Jennie and Shoshannah Siporin. Albright referred to the grouping as "the only wailing wall in the entire exhibition." Ivan Le Lorraine Albright, "Chicago Art Exhibition Shakes Provincialism," *Chicago Herald-American*, June 4, 1947. As cited in Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 62.

¹³⁸ This anti-Semitism is only implied in much of the current existing literature, as in the invaluable anthologies, *The Old Guard and Avant-Garde* and *Art in Chicago*, but it became very clear to me that it was a noticeable force in the postwar years through conversations with Lynn Warren, Smart Museum curator Richard Born, and artist Leo Segedin, and through reading interviews with gallery owner Richard Feigen and collector Joseph Shapiro. While it is outside the scope of my project, Simpson's thesis includes a chapter on Shapiro that in part discusses the anti-Semitic tenor at the Art Institute and its impact on the postwar art scene in Chicago. In addition to a useful and thorough profile of Shapiro including a description of his support of Jewish artists, and role as a founder of the Museum of Contemporary Art, she adds nuance to the "Jewish/non-Jewish dichotomy" of collectors in Chicago articulated by critic Max Kozloff. Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 368–435.

Simpson also discusses the parallel situation in New York, wherein critical voices like Greenberg and Rosenberg asserted an assimilationist view of many Jewish-American artists (discussed in, for instance, Greenberg's 1940 "Towards a Newer Laocoön"), as well as of themselves. For some key voices in this conversation, see Norman L Kleeblatt, "'Passing' Into Multiculturalism," in *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America and The Jewish Museum, 1996), 3–38; Margaret Olin, "C[lement] [Hardesh] Greenberg and Company," in *Too Jewish? Challenging Traditional Identities* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America and The Jewish Museum, 1996), 39–59; Baigell, *Jewish-American Artists and the Holocaust*; Donald Kuspit, "Unconsciously, Always an Alien and Self-Alienated: The Problem of the Jewish-American Artist," *New Art Examiner*, April 1997, 30–35.

¹³⁹ Shahn worked for the Office of War Information (OWI) from 1942 to 1943, but did not serve abroad. Only two of his illustrations were published as posters, as his work tended to be less overtly patriotic than the OWI preferred. For more on Shahn, see John Morse, *Ben Shahn* (New York: Praeger Publisher, Inc., 1972).

Lawrence was drafted in 1943 and went on to serve on the first integrated ship in the naval services, the USCGC *Sea Cloud*. His commanding officer, Carl Skinner, knew of Lawrence's prominence as an artist and established him as Public Relations Specialist, documenting life on the *Sea Cloud*. Lawrence received a Guggenheim Post-Service Fellowship that supported the production of the "War" series. See United States Coast Guard, "Jacob A. Lawrence (1917-2000)," *Jacob A. Lawrence (1917-2000)*, March 19, 2014, http://www.uscg.mil/history/FAQS/Jacob_Lawrence.asp; Carlton Skinner, *The Lost Wartime Paintings of Jacob Lawrence*, u.d.

as I discuss in the next chapter. Although artists, including those as well known as Shahn and Lawrence, were addressing the war, critics like Jewett and Bulliet (in spite of their differences) argued for a distinction between art and politics, which would help “achieve some semblance of normalcy in the art world.”¹⁴⁰ As exemplified in my reading of Sloane Wilson’s *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* in the previous chapter, and Bulliet’s particularly telling quote above, there was a common desire to bind the trauma of the war in support of the dominant fiction of the postwar years.¹⁴¹

While trying to garner support from local art organizations, Exhibition Momentum employed patriotic rhetoric, arguing not only that the student ban would “certainly mean the exclusion of the most progressive, stimulating, and potentially significant work,” but also that it would quite practically hamper the career advancement of the already mature veteran students.¹⁴² Indeed, artist and Momentum original Ellen Lanyon, who had won several juried prizes and was a well-respected artist in the student community, was the first choice to deliver the petition against the ban to Daniel Catton Rich, but Golub replaced her at the last minute, because he was viewed as better representing the veterans’ concerns.¹⁴³ The emphasis on this aspect of Momentum’s demographic continued into the next decade; each subsequent catalogue included the group’s origin story, often referring to the neglected veterans most affected by the Institution’s restrictive policy. For instance, the 1956 catalogue notes that the immediate conditions that prompted the 1948 exhibition are no longer an issue, and even points to the

¹⁴⁰ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 62.

¹⁴¹ E. Ann Kaplan argues in *Trauma Culture* that the collective American trauma of the Second World War could not be part of public discourse, and instead was dealt through narratives that sublimated collective trauma as individual experience, as in her reading of Hitchcock’s *Spellbound*. This is somewhat complicated by Kaja Silverman’s discussion of postwar films that deal explicitly with male lack made physically and socially visible by the war in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. This said, the points are mostly reconcilable by Silverman’s argument that the trauma to hegemonic masculinity had to be registered before it could be “bound,” that is, absorbed into/erased by the dominant fiction. Kaplan, *Trauma Culture*; Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*.

¹⁴² Foreword, *Exhibition Momentum Catalogue*, 1948. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 45.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 44.

protest response of the “veterans and students” as ultimately resulting in the repeal of the ban in 1951. At this point, the Exhibition Momentum reframed its purpose as engaging with the broader needs of the artist and relations to the community, having accepted submissions from all over the Midwest region.¹⁴⁴

However, in its earliest days, Exhibition Momentum was categorically constructed and defined in opposition to the AIC. While Exhibition Momentum’s primary goal was to overturn the ban, when Rich and the Board of Trustees refused to do so, they quickly mobilized to put on an independent exhibition that would open just weeks after the C&V show—the first of which would be an (almost) annual practice until 1964.¹⁴⁵ They invited artists of any status (student or “professional”), who worked in any style, within a one-hundred-mile radius to participate in the show.¹⁴⁶ As I discussed in chapter one, the myth of the Parisian avant-garde pushing back against oppressive French cultural ministers as described in John Rewald’s 1946 *The History of Impressionism* would have resonated with the members of Momentum.¹⁴⁷ However, unlike their predecessors the Cor Ardens and the No-Jury Society, who also formed independent exhibitions in response to restrictive institutional practices, Exhibition Momentum felt it crucial to have a jury to legitimate their work. While the Cor Ardens rebelled against the anti-modern juridical preferences of the AIC and the general public, Momentum responded to the exclusion of students rather than style. As such, while a jury would have been perceived as inherently biased

¹⁴⁴ Foreword to *Exhibition Momentum Catalogue*, 1956, Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago.

¹⁴⁵ Jaffee, “Pride of Place,” 57.

Exhibition Momentum was not the only student-formed group in the postwar years, but certainly the most famous. Among other student efforts was the Contemporary Art Workshop, a gallery, workshop, and studio for emerging artists, opened in 1950 by John Alquist, Cosmo Compoli, Ray Fink, Leon Golub, and John Kearney—all members of Exhibition Momentum. The Graphic Art Workshop, a nonprofit printmaking studio, was founded by Roland Ginzler, Ellen Lanyon, Arthur Levin, Aaron Roseman, and Janet Ruthenberg in 1953; in the same year, Eugene Bennett and John Miller began to manage the 414 Art Workshop Gallery. *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁴⁶ This deliberate stylistic openness was surely in part a reaction to the negative reaction to the surrealism of the 1947 Annual American Exhibition.

¹⁴⁷ As I will discuss below, Daniel Joseph cites Rewald in his exploration of the purpose and motivation of Exhibition Momentum for his 1950 MA sociology thesis at University of Chicago. Joseph, “Career and Social Protest,” 98–99.

in the stylistic aims of the Cor Ardens, it was a crucial part of disproving the ban's implication of the Momentum's members' "unprofessional" status: deemed institutionally unworthy as students and as veterans, and posited by some as diluting the rigorous ideals of a college education.

The students made a list of potential jurors that were categorized as progressive, "Middle of the Road," and conservative, and chose one from each group for the jury in order to avoid accusations of radical aesthetic bias.¹⁴⁸ In publicity for the show, Momentum proudly announced its "imported jury," featuring Robert Jay Wolff of Brooklyn College, Robert Von Neuman of Milwaukee State Teachers College (who constituted the "Chicago man" on the jury), and Josef Albers. In actuality, each was linked to Chicago through prior teaching positions or affiliations. The city's own jury pool was perceived as tainted, given the anti-establishment nature of Momentum. Instead, the group felt they could earn legitimacy through outsiders, like New York's Wolff, and Von Neuman and Albers, who both held teaching positions in pre-war Germany (Von Neumann at Berlin's School of Art and Albers at the Bauhaus in Weimar, Dessau, and Berlin). Of course, these jurors were chosen in part because of Momentum chairman Roy Gussow's contacts at the Institute of Design (ID), also known as the New Bauhaus.¹⁴⁹ The group did a short run of catalogues that explicitly addressed the student ban as

¹⁴⁸ Progressives on the list included Max Beckman, Marc Chagall, Marcel Duchamp, and Chicagoans Kuh and van der Rohe; moderates included Alfred Barr of the Museum of Modern Art and Chicago artist Albright. Archives of American Art, Exhibition Momentum Papers, "General Meeting," April 21, 1948, as cited in Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 47.

¹⁴⁹ While tensions between the SAIC and ID students eventually would lead to a split, Momentum arguably benefitted strongly from ID's participation in its early days. In the 1928 text *Chicago: The World's Greatest Young City*, Sherwood proposes that this school (actually a department within the SAIC) would help invigorate the student population, but Peter Selz notes that although it was directed by well-respected Alfonso Iannelli, he was at the time the sole faculty member. It was not until László Moholy-Nagy came to Chicago as the director of the "The New Bauhaus—American School of Design" in 1937 that the organization gained any real traction in the city. Butler, *Chicago*, 35; Selz, "Modernism Comes to Chicago: The Institute of Design," 37. Indeed, "Chicago design" is recognized in a way that "Chicago art" simply is not; the Chicago History Museum devotes a substantive portion of its technological innovation exhibit, entitled "Second to None!" to design, with no evident reference to the School of the Art Institute anywhere in the city's history exhibit.

an impediment to the possibility of Chicago becoming a “vital center of art in America” by failing to provide a “universality of opportunity.”¹⁵⁰

While conservative critic Eleanor Jewett did not deign to review the exhibit, C.J. Bulliet attended both the opening and the following banquet, though his response was dismissive. He called the exhibitors “mature GIs some of whom regard themselves as professionals, even though they haven’t enough credits for diplomas.”¹⁵¹ In no uncertain terms, Bulliet critiqued the exhibit in a way that supported the AIC student ban. Furthermore, his invocation of their veteran status implied that they were irrelevant to a vibrant art scene, harking back to his critique of Siporin and ex-GIs seemingly still under the “withering and blighting [influence]” of the war.¹⁵² Perhaps his targeted response was a reaction to the exhibition’s publicity, which emphasized the largely veteran demographic of Momentum.¹⁵³ Other critics’ responses, however, were positive. They called the show “a serious first-rank affair [with] plenty of vitality, excitement, and plain spunk” and “good and well-worth seeing,” even if they expressed puzzlement at the “multisyllabic explanations” for the political origins of the exhibition.¹⁵⁴

The 1948 catalogue included “viewpoint” essays that reflected the varied positions of the members of Exhibition Momentum, including an essay by then SAIC painting student Franz Schulze, focusing on the protest nature of the show, as well as one by John Henry Waddell (also a painting student), cautioning against the dangers of self-imposed isolation from “one small

¹⁵⁰ Foreword to *Exhibition Momentum Catalogue*, 1948. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 49.

While the exhibit was organized a year before its publication, the phrasing in the catalogue is very evocative of Arthur Schlesinger’s *The Vital Center* (1949) in title and its insistence on a democratic approach to exhibiting.

¹⁵¹ C.J. Bulliet, “Critic Finds Protest Art Show Disappointing,” *Chicago Daily News*, August 13, 1948. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 49–50.

¹⁵² Bulliet, “Army Artist Wins in Chicago Show.” As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 36.

¹⁵³ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 48.

¹⁵⁴ Herman Kogan, “Spunk-Not Plush-Runs This Art Show,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 18, 1948; Frank Holland, “Protest Art Exhibit Proves Worth Public Attention,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 1, 1948. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 50.

group”—the AIC.¹⁵⁵ In fact, Waddell minimized the conflict when he contacted Daniel Catton Rich in hopes of raising funds for prizes and juror expenses and suggested that the Institute’s support could bring new patrons and benefactors to the museum. Rich replied that while he agreed with the need for more exhibiting opportunities for Chicago’s artists, the acrimonious origins of the Momentum made it impossible for him or the Board of Trustees to endorse the exhibition, and suggested that supporting local artists was neither his nor the AIC’s responsibility. Furthermore, in the fall of 1948, Rich and Kuh announced their plan to make the C&V exhibition an invitational. This incensed members of Exhibition Momentum, who published statements claiming that this change in format was a direct response to the fear of the “increasingly modern” quality of student contributions to the show—painting both themselves as a vanguard and the AIC as an anti-modern oppressive institution—though in reality, this was counter to Rich’s and Kuh’s agendas of bringing modernism to the museum. This invitational format, understood as an insult, was a catalyst for the even more politicized Exhibition Momentum 1950.¹⁵⁶

As abstraction was taking stronger hold in New York, Momentum was growing in Chicago. Though it is often invoked in Chicago art histories, there is virtually no record of Momentum’s early days. As noted earlier, Daniel Joseph, while a master’s student in University of Chicago’s Department of Sociology, observed the group over the course of eight months in 1950 as research for his thesis, *Career and Social Protest: An Analysis of a Chicago Art Group*.¹⁵⁷ Many of the quotes from his interviews made their way into later Exhibition Momentum catalogues, as it was the practice to narrate the group’s origin in accompanying

¹⁵⁵ As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 68.

¹⁵⁶ Local small businesses and organization like the Art Director’s Club and Promontory Associates, as well as some faculty from the ID helped financially support the exhibition. Ibid., 50–51.

¹⁵⁷ Joseph, “Career and Social Protest.”

catalogues. According to his research, the group more than doubled in dues-paying members in 1950, from thirty to seventy-nine, and its core leadership was still comprised of the World War II veterans in their mid-to-late twenties who had largely instigated the initial protests.¹⁵⁸

Enthused by their 1948 success, Momentum raised money to make its next exhibition grander than the previous one. Again, the leaders insisted on a juried show and concentrated their efforts on inviting experts from outside Chicago. In hopes of attracting well-known jurors, they offered to pay expenses. Art educators Lester Longman from the University of Iowa and Ernst Munst from the California School of Fine Arts agreed to be jurors, but perhaps most significantly, Clement Greenberg, New York critic and then-editor for *The Nation*, agreed to serve as well.¹⁵⁹ The catalogue, designed by the students of the ID, was a centerpiece of the exhibition. (fig. 36) An aesthetic object in itself, the text consists of a long, rectangular box containing unbound leaves with reproductions of every work included in the show, as well as a booklet entitled *9 Viewpoints: A Forum*. Like the 1948 catalogue, *9 Viewpoints* features essays from the organizers that varied in ideology, with a foreword that proclaims, “[i]t is both healthy and important” that the essays espouse no single view, so that “no organizational doctrine” can be constructed out of them.¹⁶⁰ While I have interrogated the content of these essays with regard to the prevalent artist myth and construction of the avant-garde in my previous chapter, I also must mention the upset the catalogue caused both in Chicago’s art community and within Momentum itself.

While the 1950 exhibition did not receive the critical support its predecessor had, the catalogue and its *viewpoints* were what caused outrage. The separation of *9 Viewpoints* from the

¹⁵⁸ While much of Chicago art history depends on colloquial knowledge of Momentum, the only texts I have found that attempt to write a thorough narrative of the group are graduate theses: Daniel Joseph’s and Mary Caroline Simpson’s (who relies heavily on Joseph’s work).

¹⁵⁹ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 93.

¹⁶⁰ Exhibition Momentum, *9 Viewpoints: A Forum*.

images was the result of debate between Momentum members. Catalogue designer Robert Nickle in particular, executive committee member and ID student, thought the essays were poorly written and inconsistent, calling them the “babblings of immature people,” and that they detracted from the group’s stated goal of inclusivity. Others felt that they were dangerously alienating.¹⁶¹ Most critical responses actively disapproved of the group’s aggression toward the museum’s staff and Board of Trustees, often mocking them in the press.¹⁶² The editorial committee, which included Golub, Robert Kuennen, Nickle, and Schulze agreed that the membership had to approve all its contents prior to publication, and student dissent resulted in the inclusion of an essay from ID student Alex Nicoloff that chastised the SAIC students. Former chairman and ID student Roy Gussow, still uneasy about the tenor of the *Viewpoints*, heavily edited the statements without notifying the authors. This, unsurprisingly, spawned greater tension in the group, and the essayists argued that Gussow had “castrated” their texts with his heavy hand and voted to reprint the catalogue, though they were already well over budget.¹⁶³ The use of the term “castrated” is telling regarding the construction of the postwar avant-garde artist, particularly of the extremely vocal sort (as Golub and his immediate Momentum cohort certainly were) as virile in their resistance to perceived stifling norms or authority. While Gussow and Nickle argued that their approach was alienating and infantile, Golub argued that “[i]f Momentum is to succeed” in its goal of changing the power dynamics of

¹⁶¹ His fellow committee members included Leon Golub, John Laska, Franz Schulze, and John Waddell, all elected in fall of 1949. Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 92. As cited in *Ibid.*, 103.

As Golub recalls, the ID students did the fundraising, so in this respect their attention to diplomacy makes sense. Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 5, 1994, 4.

¹⁶² They were derided as in the *Chicago Sun Times* “zealous long hairs,” whose demands to be included in the AIC shows were adolescent, as cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 95.

¹⁶³ Quote from interview Joseph, “Career and Social Protest,” 129. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 104.

the art scene, “it needs zealots and fanatics,” and the written word could be an effective way to do so.¹⁶⁴

Gussow, however, was correct in his assessment of the local reception of the catalogue; it outraged Daniel Catton Rich, who resented the catalogue’s attitude toward “restrictive institutions.” In 1949, Momentum invited Rich, Kuh, and Board president McCormick to come present their perspectives on the Museum’s role in supporting contemporary art. During this talk, Rich stressed that the student ban was experimental and evidently thought that the worst tensions had dissipated (clearly they had not, given the publication of the catalogue the next year).¹⁶⁵ Momentum also received strong criticism from the University of Illinois art department chair Kenneth Shopen, who offered Momentum use of the school’s gallery for the exhibition. While he initially wrote to the group, “[w]e are happy to participate in an event which is clearly and mutually beneficial to all concerned and one which promises that local art will not languish,” Shopen was extremely upset with Momentum after he saw the catalogue and received an angry letter from Rich.¹⁶⁶ Hugo Weber and Serge Chermayeff, ID professor and director, respectively, had both supported the 1948 protest, but claimed the complaints of abuse articulated in the 1950 catalogue were wildly exaggerated. Weber felt implicated by the *9 Viewpoints*, with which he did not agree, as he had written an introduction for the catalogue. Chermayeff was disappointed by the work exhibited, saying that the alienating publication would “cancel out the forward momentum you might have established.”¹⁶⁷ Momentum invited Weber and Chermayeff to a “philosophy meeting” on May 5, 1950, to discuss their criticism and the aftermath of the

¹⁶⁴ These statements were made at a “philosophy meeting” on May 5, 1950, that discussed the aftermath of the catalogue. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 107.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 105, 137.

¹⁶⁶ UIC, Department of Special Collections. A two-page notice, “To Faculty and Students, Subject: Exhibition of Chicago Painters and Sculptors, From: The University Art Gallery Committee—Kenneth Shopen.” As cited in Ibid., 93.

¹⁶⁷ Serge Chermayeff, “The Social Aspect of Art,” in *The Humanities: An Appraisal* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1950): 141-2. Ibid., 105.

catalogue, a partial transcript of which reveals intense conflict between the different student groups in Momentum. Many of the ID students argued for more diplomacy and called Golub and his cohort childish and unreasonable, while Golub maintained that the artist *should* be an instigator for social change. Shortly after the meeting, Gussow left the group, along with some other ID students and faculty.¹⁶⁸

Even years later in 1969, painter, veteran, and SAIC graduate George Cohen—one of Golub's crew—described the ID in an aggressively unflattering light:

Of course the new Bauhaus was then being established in Chicago so architects and other manufacturers could make neat packages according to the new absolute dictates of an authoritarian Germanic side show. The Bauhaus was anti-Hitler but not anti-totalitarian (including the techronic totality). In the late 1940s when Momentum was formed to set up its own exhibition to counter Art Institute restrictions, the New Bauhaus faction and the other, the primitive-psychotic-popular culture-expressionist oriented group were often at odds. Nonetheless it got started because of the shared enemy. Maybe being against the Art Institute was as close as the designers ever got to anticulture.¹⁶⁹

Such language paints the ID students as all but fascist, which is quite possibly rooted in the perceived imbalance within Momentum. While SAIC students were banned from the C&V show, this was never strictly true for ID students. Nickle and Gussow, as well as Weber and Chermayeff, contributed works to the 1949 C&V show. Arguably the ID community was

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 108–109.

Other in-fighting included accusations that despite the proclaimed insistence on a legitimating jury process, the group's core and executive officers, including Golub and his crew, had been automatically included. Ibid., 94.

¹⁶⁹ Cohen, "Letter to Richard Feigen," 10.

As described in my introduction, Cohen and Golub were best friends in 1950, but they later had a falling out. Others also point to ideological differences between the student groups. British art historian John Bird describes the divide between the SAIC and Bauhaus-oriented ID students as such:

...the Institutes represented powerfully opposed aesthetic ideologies and traditions. Participants from the Art Institute held to a notion of artistic practice as the expression of an alienated, solitary vision formed in reaction to an increasingly dehumanized, authoritarian society riven with the memory of the Holocaust and living in the shadow of nuclear catastrophe. The Design students were committed to an idealized Bauhaus functionalism and still believed in the possibility of designing out of postwar poverty and austerity towards a new, utopian social order.

Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 12.

embraced by the city's art establishment in a way that the SAIC students emphatically were not.¹⁷⁰ The group did have sympathizers who understood that they were fighting for recognition, though in less than diplomatic ways; Katharine Kuh sent a letter to Momentum stating she hoped they would continue to hold their annual exhibitions.¹⁷¹

While *Exhibition Momentum 1950* was, unfortunately, a critical flop that angered much of establishment, the New York School was coalescing into a recognizable and marketable commodity—the avant-garde heirs of Parisian modernism. The ambitious Chicago artists of Momentum were conscious of this and eager to establish a similar level of recognition for themselves. They broadened the scope of the exhibition, inviting submissions from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin, and again invited well-known jurors to legitimate the show. They were especially pleased to have painters Max Weber and Jackson Pollock on the jury, although Pollock proved to be a disappointment. The 1951 jury was extremely harsh, including only sixty out of nine hundred works submitted to the show, with only nine Chicagoans represented.¹⁷² A rumor began that Pollock had behaved badly as a juror, allowing his selections to be swayed by other panel members; apparently the young Momentum artists expected more of such a well-known and established artist. Even years later, in 1994, Golub retains evident resentment, recalling that Pollock “acted like an idiot” during his jurying and had been “drunk much of the time.”¹⁷³ While the motion did not pass, several members of Momentum proposed a protest exhibition against the jury and Pollock specifically, giving a hint of the anti-New York sentiment that become more pervasive as the decade wore on.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ For more on the environment at the ID under Chermayeff after Moholy-Nagy's death and the school's increasing dependence on Chicago's business institutions, see Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 98–101.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 138.

¹⁷² Ibid., 113.

¹⁷³ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 5, 1994, 6.

¹⁷⁴ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 113.

Furthermore, “since prizes do nothing to forward the principles of art,” the jurors decided not to assign any awards, which ended the practice for future Momentum shows.¹⁷⁵

The dissatisfaction with the flawed jurying process led to a rehaul of the system in 1952. Jurors were invited with expenses paid, though were not offered a stipend, and informed that each member would make an independent decision; the jurors would view the works privately on different days from each other. Furthermore, Momentum tried to be increasingly discerning about the makeup of juries. They categorized participants by occupation—educator, historian/critic, curator, dealer, and artist—each had particular biases when selecting works.¹⁷⁶ Each work selected would be included in the catalogue, with an indication of which jurors selected it. Rather than awarding prizes, the catalogues indicated which works had been selected by all three jurors. The 1952 executive committee, which included John and Ruth Waddell, George Cohen, Bob Natkin, and Alex Nicoloff, expanded the show’s boundaries from “the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico” and renamed it *Momentum Mid-continental*, effectively making it a regional show.¹⁷⁷

Though the decision to make Momentum a regional show rather than a national one was made explicitly to avoid “unfair competition with ‘hep’ eastern artists,” they nonetheless continued to invite New York jurors, turning to outsiders for legitimating authority. Future prominent New York judges included Sidney Janis (1952), Alfred Barr (1952), Adolph Gottlieb (1953), Ad Reinhardt (1953), Robert Motherwell (1954), Betty Parsons (1954), and Robert Goldwater (1956). This was also the year of Liebling’s infamous *The Second City*, which surely

¹⁷⁵ “The Jury,” in *Exhibition Momentum Catalogue* (Chicago: Momentum, 1951), Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago.

I read this as potentially deeply insulting to the participating artists, especially considering that Momentum had formed almost entirely in response to the very practical financial concerns of being excluded from the C&V show.

¹⁷⁶ For instance, Momentum claimed artists often were prejudiced by their own style of working, and art historians were too “academic” in their choices.

¹⁷⁷ *Exhibition Momentum Catalogue* (Chicago: Momentum, 1952).

reminded Momentum artists of their negligible position in not only Chicago's art institutions, but also in the national (and by extension western) art scene, now firmly located in New York. After all, AIC also was working against Liebling's label and to position itself as a progressive museum. In 1952, the Institute was ranked as "one of the nation's top four museums," with a collection valued at \$150 million in the national periodical *ARTNews*.¹⁷⁸ Daniel Catton Rich and Katharine Kuh cultivated a circle of wealthy donors and Board members, whom they encouraged to collect work by artists from the School of Paris and New York avant-garde, rather than by local artists, in the hopes that these collections eventually would make their way into the AIC. For all the accusations that the Art Institute was responsible for the plight of Chicago artists, it too was struggling against the "Second City" reputation. To this end, Rich often published articles in national periodicals to keep the nation apprised of progressive moves made by the Art Institute in Chicago.¹⁷⁹

Of course, inviting New Yorkers to serve as judges for Exhibition Momentum was something of a double-edged sword. While they provided desirable name recognition, they were not invested in Chicago's art community, nor did they recognize an aesthetic they could relate to current trends in New York.¹⁸⁰ As art historian Mary Simpson writes, "Naturally they wanted to see evidence of their own influence rather than work tha[t] perhaps contradicted their position and agenda."¹⁸¹ The struggle of the Exhibition Momentum eventually was reframed in terms not of institutional support on a local scale, but of the stylistic conflict between the figural

¹⁷⁸ Charles Faben Kelley, "Chicago: Record Years, The Art Institute's Half-Century," *ARTnews* 51 (June 1952): 111.

¹⁷⁹ Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 148.

¹⁸⁰ Indeed, Alfred Barr was surprised that not all the works were regionalist in nature, and he was especially pleased to find that there were some abstract works. *Ibid.*, 117.

Momentum artist Don Baum, who would go on to be a hugely influential member of the Hyde Park Art Center, a community art center on Chicago's south side, recalled that "they came in and they went and they did the jurying and then the dinner and then they left...there wasn't much attention paid to what was going on here in those early years by anyone outside of the Chicago area." Tape-recorded Interview with Don Baum in Chicago, Illinois January 31 and May 13, 1986, Sue Ann Kendall, Interviewer, Tape 1 Side A, pages 31-32, as cited in *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

tendencies of the Chicago School and the increasingly hegemonic force of New York abstraction—a binary tension I explore in the next chapter.

The steady importation of New York voices to preside over Momentum shows led to the bristling resentment noted above from figures such as gallerist Richard Feigen or painter Leon Golub. In 1968, with some distance, Golub reflected:

I assumed it was rough for many of the [New York painters]. But the point is that what they represented to me during the 50's was kind of a blanket situation in the art world where whatever I would try to do would be impossible to shove through because the thing was just covering everything at that point...while in reality that is not really...what you have is a relatively few number of critics, maybe museum people, and others who set a certain trend picture, so that everything else is made to look like it's out of place.¹⁸²

This feeling only could have been exacerbated by the imported authority of the New York judges, but there was no parallel infrastructure in Chicago to help establish them, as the older New York School artists had. While Simpson locates 1956 as more or less the end of Momentum's real energy (or momentum), marked by Golub and Spero's departure from Chicago to Indiana (though they still submitted work to the exhibitions), I argue that importing a Chicago contingent to New York for the 1959 *New Images of Man* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art more profoundly marked the end of Momentum years. It not only included key members of Momentum like Golub, Campoli, and Westermann, but it was effectively a part of Schulze's branding of the Monster Roster group in a bid to compete with the New York School, as I discuss in my introduction.

Although New York culture and meaning-makers made their way to Chicago for the Momentum Exhibitions, the periphery had virtually no impact on the mainstream.¹⁸³ It was not

¹⁸² Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 11, 1968, Tape 2, Side 2, 22.

¹⁸³ Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 121.

until *New Images of Man* that these postwar Chicago artists received substantive critical attention. Bringing New York to Chicago for more than a decade had little result other than the Chicagoans' building frustration, but bringing Chicago to New York resulted in the keenly negative reviews that have made the exhibition momentous in Chicago art history. In his 1972 art survey, Schulze posits that in the days before the 1959 exhibition, "the notion began to circulate locally that the figurative, 'humanistic,' story-telling art lately associated with Chicago was about to make a serious challenge to the New York School, possibly for eventual national leadership."¹⁸⁴ This was not to be, as I explored in this project's introduction. Instead, Chicago's position of alterity was stridently affirmed through its close contact with—even immersion in—what Russell Ferguson would call the "stable center" of New York.¹⁸⁵

On Marginalization: Dubuffet in Chicago and Reckoning with the Canon

It is helpful and perhaps unavoidable to consider Chicago's art scene, both in the early twentieth century and developed largely by Momentum's efforts, within a framework of marginalization. Chicago's postwar art discourse continually positioned the Chicago School and the New York School in binary opposition, propelled by the larger rivalry between the cities. The structures of the process of marginalization are useful in understanding how the Chicago School artists necessarily engaged with the art and critical discourse of New York, even as they (often biting) rejected it. Feminist literary critic Barbara Christian writes that the binary structure of marginalization means that the dominant force "sees the rest of the world as minor and tries to convince the rest of the world that it is major, usually through force and then through

¹⁸⁴ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 26.

¹⁸⁵ Russell Ferguson, "Introduction: Invisible Center," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Martha Gever et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 9.

language.”¹⁸⁶ While this chapter largely has focused on the manner in which young Chicago artists worked to find a recognizable place for themselves—first in their local art scene and then in a national setting—it is useful to see how, at the same historical moment, New York was positioning itself as the new cultural capital of the world. Rather than rehashing the extensive literature on how this was accomplished, I will focus on the particular example of Jean Dubuffet, a figure who has special significance in the narrative of the Chicago art scene.

Art historian Aruna D’Souza’s 1997 article “*I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet: Dubuffet and America, 1946-1962*” works to distinguish why Dubuffet, who achieved both critical and commercial popularity in postwar America, is absent from narratives of Abstract Expressionism’s development.¹⁸⁷ Though Dubuffet’s paintings were decidedly representational, figural, even, in nature, Greenberg described him as the most important and original artist to come out of Paris in the 1940s.¹⁸⁸ (fig. 37) Dubuffet was thus very well received in New York; his art was highly visible and popular among collectors as well.¹⁸⁹ While Greenberg lauds him as a superlative postwar European artist, he is never described as an *influence* on the New York School. For Greenberg and his like-minded colleagues, Dubuffet belonged to the European old guard and as such could be respected, but not recognized as

¹⁸⁶ Barbara Christian, “The Race for Theory,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 70.

¹⁸⁷ She writes, “Dubuffet’s encounter with New York was an ambivalent one – his art was highly popular and very marketable, but ultimately, if one believes contemporary accounts, irrelevant to the developing practice of Abstract Expressionism.” Aruna D’Souza, “‘I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet’: Dubuffet and America, 1946-1962,” *Oxford Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (January 1, 1997): 61.

¹⁸⁸ Of course, Willem de Kooning is often pointed to as an Abstract Expressionist painter who was not strictly abstract. I discuss his *Women* paintings as complicating the perceived divide between abstraction and representation in chapter three.

¹⁸⁹ In 1946, Greenberg wrote, “From a distance Dubuffet seems the most original painter to have come out of the School of Paris since Miró....” Clement Greenberg, “Review of an Exhibition of School of Paris Painters,” (1946) reprinted in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2: *Arrogant Purpose, 1945–49*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 89.

In 1949 he wrote, “Jean Dubuffet is perhaps the one new painter of real importance to have appeared on the scene in Paris in the last decade.” Clement Greenberg, “Jean Dubuffet and Art Brut,” (1946) reprinted in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2: *Arrogant Purpose, 1945–49*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 289.

influential or progressive.¹⁹⁰ The subtext of the ostensibly positive criticism of Dubuffet is that his work can be praised, but only in service of elevating the new, American avant-garde: “[w]here Dubuffet has sophistication, skill, and an ability to package pleasingly, Pollock has force, crudity, variety, and thus originality.”¹⁹¹ As previously discussed, these descriptors are part of what T.J. Clark calls an “informing metaphors of masculinity.”¹⁹² Michael Leja describes this chauvinistic discourse as “a crucial component of Cold War U.S. national identity, differentiating the nation politically and culturally from a Europe portrayed as weakened and effeminate.”¹⁹³ While Dubuffet has both skill and sophistication, the values of Pollock’s work are better suited to the postwar world.¹⁹⁴

Dubuffet is often pointed to as a crucial influence on the postwar Chicago art scene, with a germinal moment being his 1951 lecture on the Anticulture at the Chicago Arts Club. Indeed, he has become such a significant part of the Chicago art historical narrative that gallery owner Richard Feigen organized the 1969 exhibition *Dubuffet and the Anticulture*, which explored

¹⁹⁰ Here, I use the term “progressive” as a reference to Greenberg’s evolutionary narrative of modern painting.

¹⁹¹ Greenberg also linked Dubuffet to easel painting. No matter how complimentary his words, in associating the artist with this old-fashioned mode of work, he all but bars him from a position as the avant-garde. D’Souza, “I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet,” 68.

¹⁹² Clark, “Jackson Pollock’s Abstraction,” 229.

¹⁹³ Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 256.

In this framework, Clement’s phrasing about Dubuffet’s pleasing “packag[ing]” could refer to the correlative rhetoric of the cultures of consumption as feminine – a significant touchstone in the postwar discourse of masculinity, as I touch on in chapter one.

¹⁹⁴ D’Souza argues that similarly, while curator and art historian William Rubin recognized the *affinity* between Pollock and Surrealist painter Andre Masson, he would not acknowledge European influence; doing so would risk the project of unequivocally establishing New York as the new avant-garde. D’Souza explores the critical circumvention of the issue of influence, writing “Rubin points out a particular methodological issue that arises when trying to find artistic borrowing and engagements in this period of *echt*-formalist art writing: when history is written according to an internal development of form, there is little room for influence.” D’Souza, “I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet,” 66. Of course, Greenberg famously lays out the European origins of the New York School in his 1955 “American-Type Painting,” discussed in greater length in chapter three. Although D’Souza argues that there is “little room for influence” in formalist writing, Greenberg is actually quite effusive in his praise for individual artist’s innovations and achievements. This said, he locates the origins of the New York avant-garde in movements long-ended, such as Cubism, which suggests that while they provide a foundation, the Abstract Expressionists were pioneering new aesthetic territory. Greenberg, “‘American-Type’ Painting.”

Dubuffet's impact on Chicago artists.¹⁹⁵ While I expand on the significance of the lecture's content in the next chapter on abstraction and figuration, at this point it is worthwhile to focus simply on the degree to which Dubuffet could be recognized as influential in Chicago while not in New York.

D'Souza takes Claes Oldenburg's work, starting with the 1960 tongue-in-cheek drawing, *I think your work looks a lot like Dubuffet*, as the touchstone for her argument about Dubuffet's "uninfluential" position. Oldenburg's early work frequently is linked to Dubuffet by both critics and himself. His drawing quotes a phrase evidently uttered to Oldenburg throughout his early career; D'Souza notes the way in which critics used Dubuffet's influence on Oldenburg as a way to value (or devalue) his early in relation to his later work.¹⁹⁶ For instance, critic Barbara Rose writes that the most compelling shift from the 1960 *The Street* to the 1961 *The Store*, which is the artist coming into his own, is Oldenburg's movement *away* from Dubuffet's "reflexive sophistication" and Europeanism, towards a more American aesthetic—one which would place him firmly in the camp of New York Pop.¹⁹⁷ D'Souza explains, "[s]he equates the difference between *The Street* and *The Store* with the artist's coincident rejection of his Chicago roots and thus of Dubuffet....Oldenburg needed to reject European sources."¹⁹⁸ The artist, however, contradicts Rose's assessment in his contribution to Feigen's catalogue for the 1969 *Dubuffet and the Anticulture*. He explicitly names Dubuffet as an influence and says that many of his own

¹⁹⁵ Cohen, "Letter to Richard Feigen." Also see Adrian, "The Artistic Presence of Jean Dubuffet in Chicago and the Midwest"; Peter Selz, "Surrealism and the Chicago Imagists of the 1950s: A Comparison and Contrast," *Art Journal* 45, no. 4 (December 1, 1985): 303–6.

¹⁹⁶ D'Souza, "I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet," 68–69.

D'Souza writes that Oldenburg was in the audience of the Dubuffet's lecture, but Feigen in an interview says otherwise. Neither Cohen nor Oldenburg mention his attendance in their text for Feigen's catalogue, so I am unwilling to say affirmatively that he was at the Arts Club. However, given circulation of the *Anticulture* notes on top of Oldenburg's open admiration of Dubuffet, the point is all but moot. *Ibid.*, 69. Feigen, Tape-recorded Interview with Richard Feigen, 6.

¹⁹⁷ D'Souza, "I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet," 70.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

works are homages to the European.¹⁹⁹ D'Souza explores the tension between New York and Paris as sites of cultural production, as has become such an established part of the literature of Abstract Expressionism, but gives only a few lines to the very different reception that Dubuffet received in Chicago (surely a necessity of the scope of her article). In her above assessment of Rose's reading of Oldenburg's shift, however, she articulates an important point about the hierarchical relationships between the cities.

It is perhaps little known that Oldenburg got his start as an artist in Chicago, befriending older Momentum member George Cohen, and in local circles came to be understood as associated with the so-called Monster Roster. He moved to New York in 1956 and is among those artists who acquired fame once they relocated, much as Leon Golub and Nancy Spero had done.²⁰⁰ Rose positions Oldenburg, increasingly associated with New York Pop, as rejecting "European sources" (hierarchically diminished by critics like Greenberg and Rubin), and therefore his "Chicago roots." As D'Souza argues, New York discourse could not embrace European influence. Chicago, on the other hand, was legitimized by Dubuffet's presence and perceived influence. Chicago's affiliation with the European, then, could only further diminish its standing in relation to New York.

¹⁹⁹ Indeed, in Feigen's essay for the catalogue, he bombastically frames Oldenburg as both disciple and prophet: "Chicago artists were teased along the same savage paths where Dubuffet had been, and struggled while New York splashed and dripped out the last easel paintings of the forties and fifties, until Central European expressionism and surrealism were finally dead and Oldenburg went to the Lower East Side and preached the anticulture." Just as Greenberg diminished Dubuffet's work by relegating it to the passé genre of easel painting, Feigen uses the same pejorative to refer to the work of the New York School as decorative and apparently devoid of content. Cohen, "Letter to Richard Feigen," 7.

²⁰⁰ In an interview, Staci Boris asked Feigen, "So you are under the impression or belief that in order to have national recognition you had to move from Chicago to New York," and he responded unequivocally, "[y]ou couldn't make it in Chicago. There was no way." Feigen suggests that George Cohen did not have the same success as Golub because of his tenured position at Northwestern University. This financial security, which so many of the veteran students wanted when they argued against the AIC student ban from the C&V exhibition, meant "he couldn't afford to throw that away and run to New York and live in some loft and try to start making it as an artist." Feigen, Tape-recorded Interview with Richard Feigen, 8.

This said, the way in which D'Souza discusses Dubuffet's impact on Chicago would certainly have made some artists (Golub in particular) bristle. In a footnote, she writes,

While it is true that Dubuffet played a significantly different role for Chicago artists than for New York artists, it must also be recognized that Dubuffet allowed or justified a wide range of responses in Chicago itself. The comparison of Oldenburg's response to Dubuffet with that of Leon Golub, for example, clearly demonstrates the diversity of needs Dubuffet was made to serve: while Oldenburg took from Dubuffet irony, black humour, and an interest in popular culture that allowed the American artist to break out of the bounds of institutional displays... Golub took from Dubuffet – beyond any formal borrowings – the possibility of a politically relevant painting of the reconstituted human subject.²⁰¹

The issues here are of perceived autonomy and influence. In reading various accounts of the Arts Club lecture, there is a tension about the degree to which and manner in which Dubuffet affected his Chicago audience. There certainly is agreement that what he was doing resonated with the Chicago School, but the artists at work insist (to varying degrees) that Dubuffet articulated ideas that were already at play in Chicago.²⁰² In Staci Boris's 1994 interview with Golub on the influence of Dubuffet, she notes that Schulze recently said that the Anticulture lecture was overrated; in response, Golub replied: "Not only was it overrated, it was retarded. We were into this long before this. I mean 1951 is quite late already. I was doing this expressionist stuff the first year of art school."²⁰³ Even Cohen, who is quite effusive in his praise, calling the lecture a manifesto for the twentieth century, points out that Dubuffet voiced issues that already were being discussed in Chicago. While this helps to explain his warm reception, it speaks to the different kinds of art histories constructed around place: D'Souza argues that Greenberg would not mark Dubuffet as an *influential* force in New York because it would detract from the

²⁰¹ D'Souza, "I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet," 73.

²⁰² Furthermore, it is problematic to assume that Dubuffet could or would have universal impact on a group of artists as diverse as the Chicago School (or the New York School, for that matter). D'Souza does well to draw out the different manners in which Oldenburg and Golub engaged with Dubuffet; such universalizing narratives of style or influence are in part what lead to this kind of marginalization.

²⁰³ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 5, 1994, 10.

contemporary work of the New York School, but many narratives of Chicago art history posit Dubuffet as a crucial influence, even if he had been voicing issues already at play. Indeed, while struggling for eminence, New York positioned itself in relation to Paris, while Chicago pitted itself against New York.

While D'Souza acknowledges Chicago's slippery place in the hierarchical struggle between New York and Paris, she unfortunately reinforces the notion that Chicago artists were entirely calibrated on New York, not just in the sense that they were competing for recognition, by suggesting they worked towards a figural mode of painting *because* it was in opposition to New York. She writes:

Chicago had a wholly different artistic climate than New York. Artists and collectors here embraced Surrealism in a much more enthusiastic way than had those in New York, and they did not relinquish its grasp even after the latter's rejection of the European movement. And While Surrealism may have allowed a progress towards abstraction at the expense of an earlier, figurative mode of painting in New York, in Chicago it allowed the continuation of a kind of anti-formalist expressionism based on the human figure....if in New York Dubuffet's art was made to validate an Abstract Expressionist approach, in Chicago his art was seen as evidence of a viable *alternative* to New York School painting, an alternative that a diverse group of Chicago artists were desperately seeking.²⁰⁴

In this way, she replicates the structures of marginalization that Golub articulates when he recounts his own acute awareness of postwar Chicago art's otherness during a 1968 interview with Irving Sandler, one of the strongest contributors to the New York School's dominance in the art historical narrative through his 1970 *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism*.²⁰⁵ Golub notes:

So in a certain way New York could say okay there's a so-called Monster School in Chicago, it's a minor tradition; it is not a major mode. Now what happens if you think that the work that you're making is a major mode, is an

²⁰⁴ D'Souza, "I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet," 69.

²⁰⁵ Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting*.

absolutely generalized and universal kind of thing which states right where the situation is; at the same time the art world says it's not where it is at all. What happens then, you see?²⁰⁶

When D'Souza suggests that Chicagoan artists worked in this "alternative" (figural, that is) mode, she already always places them in a position of alterity relative to New York—one tinged with desperation, no less. Returning to Barbara Christian's statement on the binary dynamic of marginalization, she points out that many marginalized peoples "have never conceived of ourselves only as somebody's other."²⁰⁷ While D'Souza imagines Chicagoans as embracing with relief the figural alternative presented by Dubuffet, Golub laments that his own (and many of his peers') existentialist project, which embodied what he understood as a truth about postwar society and quite possibly human nature, was perceived only as a "minor mode," as other, in relation to the dominant trend of Abstract Expressionism.

A parallel mechanism of marginalization can be seen to be at play in art historian Mary Simpson's 2001 doctoral thesis *The Modern Momentum: The Art of Cultural Progress in Chicago*, although I must stress that her text has been invaluable to my own project for its thorough research of an archive that remains almost entirely unpublished and largely unaddressed. One of the key points of Simpson's thesis is that the more that Exhibition Momentum felt they had to engage with New York by inviting its artists, curators, and critics to be on their jury, the more the group lost its sense of integrity and independent style. However, I contend both that Exhibition Momentum's self-proclaimed democratic mission necessarily would result in a broad diversity of represented styles, and also that the marginalized group's desire for recognition *necessitated* that they grapple with New York, even as they rejected the perceived dominance of Abstract Expressionism.

²⁰⁶ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, October 28, 1968, Tape 1, Side 1, 2.

²⁰⁷ Christian, "The Race for Theory," 70.

Simpson writes that her research process revealed to her that it was not solely the AIC's neglect or the New York "establishment" that resulted in Chicago's failure to secure a reputation as an art center in the postwar years: "I now realize that a complex dynamic of conflicting agendas and unforeseen circumstances ultimately denied the city's art community a more visible art historical place....Moreover, I discovered that their authority was never as pervasive and unassailable as previous scholars of Chicago art have maintained."²⁰⁸ While art historians like Franz Schulze and Peter Selz certainly were invested in the postwar Chicago artists and worked to create legitimizing art historical narratives around them, this is the very manner in which artists make their way into the canon, as scholars of the New York School have proven again and again. To write that Momentum's "authority" was insufficient to warrant larger recognition undercuts much of the scholarship on the social, market, and cultural effects achieved by the discourse of the New York School—which Simpson herself addresses—in favor of the essentializing notion of "authority."²⁰⁹ My understanding of Simpson's use of "authority" can be articulated in terms of the "stable center," which Russell Ferguson argues becomes the organizing force of marginalization. He writes, "[t]oo often the alternatives to dominant cultural power have been successfully segregated, so that many different bodies of marginalized creative production exist in uneasy isolation. Such isolation can only contribute to the security of a *political* power that implicitly defines itself as representative of a stable center around which

²⁰⁸ She cites Schulze's survey *Fantastic Images* as an example of this view. Simpson, "The Modern Momentum," 7.

²⁰⁹ This is a slippery issue: While she recognizes that art historians largely have been responsible for the solidification of this dominant narrative of postwar American art that privileges Abstract Expressionism, she also writes that time has affirmed the avant-garde position of the New York School, as if it were an immutable revelation. She seems to accept the notion of the canon itself as if the "avant-garde" were not a constructed category.

everyone else must arranged.”²¹⁰ Or, returning to Golub’s assessment, authority is what enables a “major mode” to diminish other modes as “minor.”

In her literature review, Simpson argues that Ann Gibson’s 1997 *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* inadequately addresses the problematic nature of inserting of marginalized figures into the canon (which is ultimately Gibson’s aim), and that she aligns artists who have no stylistic resemblance to the New York avant-garde with the Abstract Expressionists.²¹¹ While she is absolutely correct about the need to admit that “the visual arts at mid-century were as stylistically diverse as America’s artists,” she also reifies the notion that there *was* uniformity (which ostensibly underpins their authority) within the New York School, a point to which the artists themselves were notoriously resistant. Indeed, I recognize no more stylistic coherence among the New York avant-garde than in the Chicago School, beyond the respective tendency—not universal in either case—towards abstraction and figuration.

Simpson and I both take as our starting the point the desire to expand the boundaries of scholarship of postwar American art, but her project ultimately contributes to the revalidation of the New York School’s authority—her main critique of Gibson’s work. She, too, insists through implication (if not outright) on an evaluative canon to which Chicago artists failed to measure up. Indeed, her approach is especially evident in her discussion of Joseph Shapiro, one of the primary supporters of the Momentum artists and eventual founders of Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art. Of his persistent support of Golub even after the critical flop of the 1959 *New Images of Man* exhibition, she writes “Shapiro...was clearly interested in the wrong

²¹⁰ This mechanism of isolation is revealed in the case of the Monster Roster when Golub tells Sandler that they had no idea about other figural artists produced in the United States, such as those in California. See the introduction to this chapter.

Ferguson, “Introduction: Invisible Center,” 9.

²¹¹ Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 6.

Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism*.

contemporary art; it had not received nor would it ever receive the same widespread critical acceptance as Abstract Expressionism....”²¹² By its very nature, the canon functions through hierarchy. As Russell Ferguson writes in his introduction to the volume *Out There:*

Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures “[i]t seems that there can be no canon without exclusion,” a sentiment particularly relevant to the construction of art historical narratives.²¹³

Even as Simpson recognizes the value of interrogating the postwar art scene of Chicago, she nonetheless insists on judging it against the New York School, even while faulting Momentum for putting itself in the same dialogue. We would do better to discard the notion of so-called “authority” that underpins an exclusionary canon.²¹⁴ In this way, the goal of my project is akin to that set forth in *Out There:* to create a space that has room for a multiplicity of subjects while recognizing the patterns that result in the invisible stabilization of particular subjectivities and the silencing (often because of their lack of claims to “authority”) of others.

²¹² Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 424. While I am inclined to read this statement with a grain of salt, as her chapter on Shapiro is an ultimately sympathetic portrait of a beloved Chicago collector, its mercenary assessment of Shapiro’s taste is cringe-worthy. I do not believe Simpson actually thinks Golub’s work is the “wrong” kind of art, but her project hinges on the notion that the Chicago artists failed to make an impact on the larger art scene, often for reasons well beyond their control, and I do not necessarily believe this is a useful mode of investigation as it mostly re-asserts the authority of the canonized New York School.

²¹³ Ferguson, “Introduction: Invisible Center,” 11.

²¹⁴ One of the recurrent debates in the Chicago art scene throughout and into the twentieth century is how to escape the “regionalist” classification of Midwestern art. While certainly not an easy (or perhaps viable) solution, I propose that truly abandoning a canon, which is necessarily informed by other hierarchies such as place, would render this issue moot.

Chapter Three: “Form v. Content”: The Implications of Abstraction and Figuration

El sueño de la razón produce monstrous.

Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, 1799¹

Introduction

In 1955, Chicago artist Leon Golub published “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism” in *College Art Journal*. As an artist working in a marginalized milieu in the supposedly outré mode of figuration, Golub opens his text with an astute reading of the influence of critical art coverage. The focus of such journals on Abstract Expressionism not only establishes and sustains the trend as the dominant mode of contemporary painting, but it creates the discourse that elevates it to metaphysical philosophy. The dominant readings of Abstract Expressionism would underpin its position as the art emblematic of the struggles of the modern man and proof of the nation’s rightful place of global leadership in the postwar era, as explored in a wide body of literature and touched upon earlier in my own project. Golub contends, however, that there is not necessarily anything in the works themselves to support such a broad claim. He quotes *Art Digest* writer James Fitzsimmons’ metaphysical description of an abstract work: “This is the cosmic theater, the universe, the unconscious, the dark night within and around us in which primordial forces are engaged in a life-giving, life-destroying struggle that can only be witnessed at a remove; in dreams, in the photographs of astronomers and physicists, and most evocatively, in art.”² Of this rather all-encompassing assessment, Golub writes, “[i]f a critic purports such an explanation, he might well ‘see’ those qualities in a painting. And while that painting might seem to

¹ This title of Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes 1799 etching serves as the epigraph for the 1959 *New Images of Man* catalogue. Selz, *New Images of Man*, 8.

² Golub, “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” 143.

intentionally characterize some such experiences, it might, also, very likely picture none of them....”³

This suspicion that abstract art might actually be devoid of the meaning ascribed to it was certainly a motif among the ambivalent press coverage of Abstract Expressionism. On February 20, 1956, *Time* magazine—a far more populist source than *College Art Journal*—published a consideration of “advance-guard painting” in America. While it begins with the controversial comparison of the modern trends in abstraction to the absurdist arithmetic of *Alice in Wonderland*’s Mock Turtle— “Ambition, Distraction, Uglification and Derision” —ultimately it works to place the artists and works it discusses in art historical context, including its Cubist lineage, and recognizes the degree to which significant collectors and art institutions have invested in Abstract Expressionist paintings.⁴ It goes on to discuss crucial points on both sides of the contemporary debates around abstraction, giving equal weight to each, concluding that it is the apparent divide between “Form v. Content” that has “split contemporary art down the middle.” *Time* eventually throws up its hands at the issue, suggesting that its layperson reader turn to the old masters “who stood for both at once, and hope that art may once again grow meaningful and whole.”⁵ Such a dismissive statement suggests that *Time* is hard-pressed to find “meaningful” content in abstraction, even as it is willing to recognize the virtuosity of its artists and their financial worth. Indeed, this perceived division between representational and non-representational art is the most pressing issue for Golub in his critique.⁶

³ Ibid.

⁴ This particular lineage of abstraction was established by Clement Greenberg in his 1955 article “‘American-Type’ Painting.” Greenberg, “‘American-Type’ Painting.”

⁵ “The Wild Ones,” 70, 75.

⁶ Ibid., 75. Peter Selz refers to this article as a “wholesale attack against the so-called Abstract Expressionist painter.” I would contest that the introduction’s reference to the Mock Turtle stylings of abstraction and the remark about turning to the old masters is a rather wishy-washy ploy to please as many readers as possible, instead of the “vilification” that Selz suggests. In this way, I would align it with Bradford Collins’s interpretation of Life

Where *Time* calls for a regression to the old masters, however, Golub defends his own artistic project, though he never explicitly refers to it. For Golub, figuration could offer a much-needed reference point, though not necessarily through a simple return to academic painting as *Time* might have it. While he supports the perceived underlying project of the Abstract Expressionists—to give form to the chaotic postwar age of anxiety—he did not believe that the apparent direct expression of abstraction could accomplish this. He writes, “[i]n a way abstract expressionism wants a very good thing indeed—the intensity of personal commitment without the specificity such a view ordinarily entails.”⁷ However, he suggests that ultimately what is lost in practice is the individual and the politicized burden of being a person in the world.⁸ This insidious anonymity of abstraction deflects the question of point of view and, with it, the role of the artist.⁹ This obscuring of self is ultimately ironic in the context of a social and economic rhetoric increasingly focused on individualism—a major component of the discourses of masculinity explored in chapter one. As I will touch upon in this chapter, while there were more congruencies between New York abstraction and Chicago figuration than the dominant narrative allows for, the crux of Golub’s argument is that, for all its claimed capacities for direct expression of the inner life of the artist and representation of universal truths, Abstract Expressionism failed to decisively situate itself within the harrowing postwar world. Ultimately, this flexibility is what enabled critics, artists, and politicians to make what they wanted of the

magazine’s role in establishing the value of Abstract Expressionism by recognizing institutional investment in its artists, even though some of its language reads as mocking. Collins, “Life Magazine and the Abstract Expressionists, 1948-1951: A Historiography of a Late Bohemian Enterprise.”

Selz’s accusation against *Time* is also a bit strange, considering he has some choice words for Abstract Expressionism in his own 1956 essay. Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting,” 290.

⁷ Golub, “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” 146.

⁸ “If an art form becomes too ‘free-floating,’ that is, disassociated from representative contents, it may lose identification and become somewhat anonymous.” Ibid.

⁹ Recall that this is the subject of Golub’s contribution to the 9 *Viewpoints* in the 1950 Exhibition Momentum catalogue. Golub, “A Law Unto Himself.”

movement, while the figuration of Chicago's so-called "Monster Roster" provided no such leeway.

This chapter begins with a description of the commonalities of the Monster Roster. While the moniker was coined fairly late in the decade, the figural and Expressionist tendencies had been in place for years. Many of the artists were former members of Exhibition Momentum, including George Cohen, Cosmo Campoli, and Leon Golub. While in the latter half of the 1940s and the early years of the 1950s these artists pitted themselves against the restrictive practices of the established art institutions of Chicago, the latter half of 1950s saw a shift in the discourse. Having established Exhibition Momentum as a recognizable force in the city, artists such as Golub turned their sights toward New York. His 1955 "Critique of Abstract of Expressionism" was among the earliest and most vociferous challenges out of Chicago to what by then had been established as the dominant mode of American painting.

Though Golub and sympathetic supporters Peter Selz and Franz Schulze actively worked to position Chicago artists against the New York School, the next section of this chapter explores some of the common origins of New York abstraction and Chicago figuration — particularly the European influences of Expressionism and Surrealism. Furthermore, the notion of the "primitive" underpinned both these European movements and the explorations of the New York School and the Chicago School. In New York, the "primitive" often was employed with the optimistic intent of individual, internal exploration, couched in terms of freedom and liberation. The freedom supposedly enabled by abstraction, however, was limited. It purported freedom from the stringent laws of academic painting and freedom of direct expression, both elements of the postwar construction of the avant-garde artist discussed in chapter one. As I have examined, the constructed subjectivity of the avant-garde artist was heavily informed by the

postwar discourse of masculinity, underpinned by the idealized qualities of individualism and virility.

Artists in Chicago also were informed by the purported possibilities of so-called primitivism, but sometimes explored it toward a different end. Jean Dubuffet's influential lecture on the Anticulture in 1951, which left a lasting impression on Chicago artists and art historians alike, promoted the exploration of the primitive and savage in the everyday. While some artists had been doing so well before Dubuffet's arrival, the French painter's lecture helped articulate these trends; furthermore, his established position in the European and New York art scenes also lent some much-longed-for validation to the "second city" art scene. As such, the efforts to publicize the Chicago School as a discrete, marketable group often invoked terms of the primitive and grotesque. While the Chicago School's loudest proponents still would emphasize the personal nature of the iconography and vision of the "monster" artists, apropos of the construct of the avant-garde artist, the figural content distinguished the Midwestern artists from their counterparts in New York.

I then discuss the political meanings invested in both figuration and abstraction, which account for much of the tension behind the two schools. The intersecting paranoia regarding Communist infiltration of American government and society and anxiety about the stability of the masculine subject discussed in chapter one meant that the discourse of art and the avant-garde was primed for close interrogation. This section outlines how the art world had to negotiate the meaning of abstraction and figuration, countering or engaging political narratives ascribed to either mode of image-making.

Finally, I return to the 1959 *New Images of Man* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, with which this project began. The preface and introduction to the exhibit assert its concern

with human condition after the global upheaval of the Second World War. The statement by curator Peter Selz and preface by theologian Paul Tillich propose that the fraught figuration employed by the artists of the *New Images* show offered a thoughtful response to the last two decades in a visual language that viewers would be able to understand. Ultimately, the critics were unimpressed, with harsh words for the Chicago contingent in particular. In Chicago art histories, *New Images* is pointed to as the disappointing climax of the momentum around the postwar Chicago School and its attempt to present a viable challenge to the New York avant-garde.¹⁰ I discuss the inclusion of two significant Abstract Expressionists—Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning—and contextualize their relationship with figuration after Clement Greenberg’s harsh rejection of them in his 1955 article “‘American-Type’ Painting.”¹¹ This section closes with readings of both Golub’s and Westermann’s practices and contributions to the *New Images* exhibition, which argue that the vulnerable figural subject of these “Monster” artists could not bear the weight of the idealized male subject necessary to the postwar nation-building project.

Figural Representation in Chicago: Building the Monster Roster

While its “second city” status certainly contributed to the marginalization of Chicago in the contemporary art scene, as explored in the previous chapter, the dominance of figuration in the postwar years undoubtedly exacerbated its provincial reputation. New York critics and intellectuals worked to establish their city as the new cultural capital of the Western world. In the realm of visual arts, this was linked to abstraction, marketed as a most modern and American

¹⁰ See especially Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 26.

¹¹ Greenberg, “‘American-Type’ Painting.”

visual language.¹² What Joshua Kind refers to as the “visual idiom” of Chicago has been defined in terms of its focus on the human body, both in art historical scholarship and in postwar critical reception. While Chicago’s cultural isolation was a large part of what solidified the artists that would work together to create exhibiting opportunities, it also was the practice of these artists, as a group, to eschew the practices of the “dominant tendency” embodied by the New York School action painters.¹³ While there are a number of potential explanations for the figural bent of the Chicago School, several of which I explore in this chapter, this tendency serves as a useful framework by which to explore some themes at play in postwar art in Chicago, and where they overlap and diverge from the qualities now firmly associated with the New York School.

While the group Exhibition Momentum formed as a response to the lack of exhibiting opportunities in Chicago, its members did not have a particular aesthetic position and prided themselves on their “democratic” openness.¹⁴ However, in his 1968 interview with Irving Sandler, Golub notes that there was an affinity, if not a mutual influence, among the Chicago artists, based in an interest in the grotesque body: “They tended to go in for skulls, expressionistic horrors of one kind or another.” While aware of what was happening in New York, they were not “moved” by it: “The way we set it up at that point was between a kind of fierce subject matter material and a rather abstract and comparatively decorative, you know, play it [sic] surfaces.”¹⁵ This opposition between the insistent subject matter of figuration and the surface treatment of abstraction is a tenuous and fluid one. For instance, Willem de Kooning and

¹² We can count A.J. Liebling, author of *The Second City* (1952), among these intellectuals.

¹³ Kind, “Sphinx of the Plains,” 38.

¹⁴ This self-fashioning of Exhibition Momentum as democratic was largely to set them apart from what its members understood as the restrictive policies of the Art Institute of Chicago. The term was used in much of its promotional materials and exhibition catalogues. See, for instance, *Exhibition Momentum Catalogue* (Chicago: Momentum, 1950).

¹⁵ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 22.

his series of “Woman” paintings in particular would challenge the binary.¹⁶ (fig. 38) The rhetoric around figuration and abstraction was deployed to wildly different, often internally contradictory, ends. As such, the distinctions between figuration and abstraction are a constructed dichotomy; both approaches to image-making can be equally concerned with or dismissive of the human condition, but there are two unassailable key facts: that the art critically hailed as the most exciting American work of the postwar period was non-representational if not wholly abstract, and that the grotesque human forms that often populated the Monster Roster’s images were much trickier to assimilate into progressive narratives about America’s political identity.

By the mid-1950s, Abstract Expressionism had been well established as the dominant trend in American painting. The myth of the isolated and struggling avant-garde artist was rooted in the modernist conception of the artist-genius, and debates continued about whether this abstraction constituted true visual and artistic innovation or simply the “childish doodles of ‘modern art’.”¹⁷ Perhaps cultivated by artists and their critics in service of this construction of the artist was the martyrdom of the avant-garde, misunderstood by the general populace. Under the heading “Martyr’s, Inc.,” the *Time* article addresses the hyperbole of such a claim: “the persecution complex that darkens, like a private rain cloud, the brows of most Abstract Expressionists can only be called subjective. On an objective level, the leaders of the movement have done quite well...Abstract expressionism [sic] does not mean Easy Street to the artist, but

¹⁶ Critic Clement Greenberg pointedly ignored the *Woman* paintings, while *ARTnews* editor Thomas Hess was a vocal proponent of de Kooning, detailing and celebrating the artist’s process in his 1953 “De Kooning Paints a Picture.” Similarly, in his 1956 article “A New Imagery in American Painting,” former Chicagoan and art historian Peter Selz suggests that while abstraction had lost its luster, de Kooning had “found a solution” in his re-inclusion of the figure. Thomas B. Hess, “De Kooning Paints a Picture,” *ARTnews* 52 (March 1953): 30–32, 64–67; Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting.” De Kooning also would serve as an important point of comparison for George Cohen’s paintings, which were increasingly rooted in iconography of the female form in the late 1950s and 1960s.

¹⁷ Here, Frascina describes the tenor of the critical response to Jackson Pollock’s *Cathedral* (1947) in the 1959 Moscow exhibition, officially titled *American Painting and Sculpture*, organized by the United States Intelligence Agency, which I discuss in more detail below. Frascina, “Revision, Revisionism and Rehabilitation, 1959/1999,” 106.

neither does it mean martyrdom....”¹⁸ Indeed, the article points out that the New York School had exhibited to very receptive audiences across Europe and the United States, that the listed artists showed in prestigious Manhattan galleries, and that more than one hundred of their paintings had been purchased at four-figure prices.¹⁹

As explored in the previous chapter, Chicago artists and critics often positioned the city’s art scene in direct dialogue with and eventually in opposition to New York’s.²⁰ Given Chicago’s marginalized status, this binary positioning was all but inevitable if the city’s artists and critics hoped for the kind of recognition, let alone celebrity, afforded to New York School artists like Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. By 1955, junior AIC curator Patrick Malone and art historian Peter Selz were asking “Is There a New Chicago School?”²¹ Malone and Selz begin their article by referring to the unique cultural setting of Chicago, which had been “variously christened hog-butcher, slum-city and hustler’s haven,” while also possessing a great literary and architectural heritage, and point to five young artists as potential leaders of the city’s own school of visual and plastic arts: Cosmo Campoli, George Cohen, Ray Fink, Leon Golub, and Joseph Goto.²² Malone and Selz write that while the artists neither are a unified group nor work in a unified style, “[t]hey share... a deep concern with the human image, which re-emerges in their

¹⁸ “The Wild Ones,” 70.

¹⁹ The article includes reproductions of paintings by and photographic portraits of Jackson Pollock, Adolph Gottlieb, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Arshile Gorky, Philip Guston, William Baziotes, and Mark Rothko. While the article arguably takes an equivocal position on the aesthetic value of New York School, it certainly acknowledges the success of its artists. Furthermore, the article features images of the artists as well as their work, as if a necessary component of this success. This visual presentation of the face of the artist to the general population exemplifies how the modernist construction of the artist-genius is reified in the white male body, discussed in recent scholarship on the New York School by authors including Amelia Jones, Andrew Perchuk, and Gavin Butt.

²⁰ This attempt at dialogue is evident in Exhibition Momentum’s invitations to the New Yorkers to jury the shows, as with Clement Greenberg, Jackson Pollock, and Alfred Barr. Leon Golub’s 1954 “Critique,” and critic Peter Selz’s 1956 “A New American Imagery” would demonstrate (and enact) a more antagonistic relationship between the two sites.

²¹ Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?”.

²² *Ibid.*, 36.

work after an age of abstraction to direct the sensations of the spectator toward more specific responses.”²³ The authors’ claims regarding figural art’s “direction” of the viewer echo Golub’s “Critique” of the year before. This new brand of figural representation, however, was far removed from the “old masters” lauded in *Time*’s article “The Wild Ones.” The figures are described in terms of their “expression[s] of terror,” their “emaciated” forms and “scabrous surfaces,” rather than the ideals of truth and beauty privileged by the academy.²⁴

As discussed in the previous chapter, the early-twentieth-century aesthetic academicism (and conservatism) in Chicago resulted in the public outrage over the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art, colloquially referred to as the Armory Show. The modern works’ “attack” on the academic standard of the physical ideal was perceived by conservative critics and the public as an attack on the correlative ideals of beauty and truth. Even forty years later, there was a popular call for a return to recognizable form in response to the confusing forms of abstraction, evidenced by middle-ground coverage like that of *Time* or *Life*. In his 1956 article “A New Imagery in American Painting,” Peter Selz describes the “cry for a new realism” in recent popular press as a reaction to the dissatisfaction with Abstract Expressionism. He argues that the answer is not a return to an academic figure, but that a new possible path for American artists can be found in the figural works of contemporary painters.²⁵

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 36, 38.

²⁵ One of Selz’s examples of the popular call for a return to figuration is *Life* magazine’s celebration of regionalist-style painter Reginald Marsh, who painted images of New York and its inhabitants during the Great Depression. This is a curious example, given the increased rejection of social realist painting in the mid-1950s, but perhaps Marsh’s death two years prior was a cause for nostalgic appreciation. His deceased status also provided a certain amount of security against the possibility that he might be revealed as a Communist. This said, many of Marsh’s figures clearly are inspired by academic standards of beauty in proportion and posture if not in subject matter. For example, his *Negroes on Rockaway Beach* (1934) is a contemporary scene, but the voluptuous and entangled female forms recall nineteenth-century Orientalist paintings of Turkish baths, while the muscled men wrestling or running down the beach in the background are physical specimens of an ideal male musculature. All the pictured bodies are replete with gendered and racialized assumptions about sexuality and virility. Dorothy Seiberling, “Reginald Marsh, Painter of Crowds Was Lonely Man,” *Life*, February 6, 1956, 80–89.

Malone and Selz discuss one work each of their five proposed leaders of the Chicago art scene. Of Campoli's sculpture *Jonah and the Whale* (1954), they write, "[h]is sculpture is frequently disturbing in its expression of terror but this experience is relieved to some extent by the very fact that the artist has come to grips with those conflicts which alarm many of us by his mastery over materials and extraordinary sensibility to formal structure." (fig. 39) Malone and Selz suggest the monstrous form of Campoli's work is tempered by his skill. While he can conjure existential horrors, he is nonetheless in control of them. This somewhat strange sentiment relies on the construction of the avant-garde that positions the artist as genius or shaman, like Pollock and the other New York "myth-makers," a point I return to in the next section of this chapter. Malone and Selz also suggest that his work is preoccupied with themes of birth and death, as evident in his *Birth of Death* (1950), which is almost certainly the sculpture they refer to when they describe "the child emerging dead from its mother's womb." (fig. 40) Campoli would revisit this configuration of figures in *Birth* (1958), a plaster model for a bronze that was never realized. (fig. 41) While the mother and child of *Birth* are arranged in a similar position to *Birth of Death*, the figure of the mother is even more drawn in on herself as she crouches down. Most visible are her bent knees, protruding stomach, and fists clenched at her hollow eye sockets. Below her is a wailing, ghostly figure.

Malone and Selz describe Ray Fink's "gothic" sculpture *Thou Sayest It* as "emaciated; its ribs and pelvis seem to cradle and bind it at once. Its scorched and scabrous surface suggest it is a memento of some holocaust."²⁶ Depicted in the article is his 1953 *Triptych*, entered into the U.S. Steel exhibition entitled "Iron, Men, and Steel." Joseph Goto's sculpture *Emanak*, also

²⁶ I have been able to find no reproduction of Fink's *Thou Sayest It*. Curiously, although he was named as an active member of the Momentum Group, and has a regular exhibition record throughout the 1950s, it is extremely difficult to find images of his work. He is included in neither Schulze's 1972 survey *Fantastic Images* nor the Museum of Contemporary Art's survey, *Art in Chicago*.

welded of steel, is described as “a mechanized jungle monster [that] suggests the frightening mutations which might result from the use of modern super-weapons.”²⁷ (fig. 13) Goto had great success in the 1951 Exhibition Momentum show; his *Organic Form I* (1951) was immediately purchased by Alfred J. Barr for MoMA’s permanent collection.²⁸ (fig. 42) Perhaps this success is part of what led to Goto’s inclusion in Selz and Malone’s “new Chicago School,” as by and large his sculptures are far more abstract than *Emanak*, a fact that kept him from being more firmly aligned with Monster Roster in later years.²⁹

George Cohen and Leon Golub, however, would become two of the best-known members of the Monster Roster, and were also two of the most educated among the group. Cohen used the GI Bill educational benefits to get his PhD in art history from the University of Chicago (having gotten his degree from the SAIC before the war), while Golub pursued a MA in art history from University of Chicago before enrolling at the SAIC in 1946. Selz focuses on Cohen’s desire to “shatter” values, both pictorially and more broadly, and cites the *Avenger* (1950) as an image of aggressive hostility. (fig. 43) The figures overlaid on one another that ostensibly comprise the “avenger” multiply outwards, with ringed eyes staring and mouths open to varying degrees from puckered to agape. At the center of the image is a toothed mouth, also at the apex of two sets of legs, like a screaming vagina dentata. This open, yonic shape set in the position of the crotch is also visible in his *Flight* (1953); given the prevalence of the Oedipus Complex, which Malone and Selz locate as an influence on Golub’s *Hamlet* in their discussion, I am inclined to read this as a motif referring to castration. (fig. 44)

²⁷ Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?,” 39.

²⁸ As discussed in the chapter two.

²⁹ Lynne Warren, “Joseph Goto,” in *Art in Chicago: 1945-1975*, ed. Lynne Warren (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art; Distributed by Thames & Hudson, 1996), 255.

Selz also points to Cohen's turn towards assemblage, particularly his incorporation of reflective surfaces like aluminum foil and mirrors. He writes, "Cohen is fascinated by the mirror because of its multiple associations and because it transports the observer into the work."³⁰ Cohen's *Dancing Girl* (undated) makes use of foil and mirrors to disrupt the surface of the work, but *Anybody's Self-Portrait* (1953) incorporates mirrors above and below a pair of doll's eyes, which reflect the viewer's own gaze back at herself. (fig. 6) Behind this work is another mirror, which reflects yet another fragmented image of the viewer. Attached to this mirror and the circular base are doll parts: the arms and legs of a baby doll as well as the torso and gold-painted hand of a more mature doll, akin to a Barbie. In *Anybody's Self-Portrait*, the mirrors incorporate the viewer into the work, but only in fragmented pieces. A photograph of the work included in the catalogue for a 1965 exhibition, "George Cohen: Paintings and Constructions" at the La Jolla Museum of Art reveals that the two smaller mirrors are set at an angle, so that the subject reflected in the mirror appears to have different facial expressions. Selz points out the works' affinity with Surrealism, specifically Hans Bellmer's reconfiguration of the figure in his doll sculptures, and suggests that Cohen's ultimate aim is to "[point] up our tenuous existence."³¹ (fig. 7)

While Cohen's works eventually show a much cleaner application of paint, his paintings of the mid-1950s show trace of an Expressionist touch. In *Hermes* (c. 1955), which was featured in Thomas Folds' 1959 article "The New Images of the Chicago Group," body fragments emerge from a muddy background.³² (fig. 45) While two faces and one ghostly, red figure in

³⁰ Malone and Selz, "Is There a New Chicago School?," 37.

³¹ In full, the authors write, "[t]he similarity of some of Cohen's work to Surrealism is only a surface resemblance; he is not concerned with destruction for its own sake, but rather points up our tenuous existence." While I concur with their point about the fragmented picture of the self presented by Cohen's mirrored works in particular, I would disagree that "destruction for its own sake" is a Surrealist aim. Ibid.

³² Folds, "The New Images of the Chicago Group."

profile suggest a vertical orientation, yet another profile along the left side of the canvas suggests that the painting's sense of space is not fully consistent. A bright pair of legs, a running figure, and a yellow high-heeled shoe each provides alternative points of reference for what might constitute up or down. In the center, a pinwheel comprised of human hands further confuses the orientation of the image. *White Figures* (1956) also works to ground the viewer with potentially recognizable forms while their fragmentary and half-obscured imaging offers an unsettled view of space. (fig. 46) Among his best-known works is *Emblem for an Unknown Nation I* (1954), in which figural signs: lips, ears, hands, legs—some in strange hybrid form—parade around the border of the work, while in the center a series of fleshy figural forms are depicted inside of each other, like so many topsy-turvy nesting dolls.³³ (fig. 5) Presented as a political symbol for “an unknown nation,” *Emblem* points to both the ways in which the body serves as a vessel for state ideology, and how the body—as belonging to embodied subjects—can never be commensurate with a coherent, single viewpoint.

Malone and Selz write that Golub's works, too, propose “insoluble conflict” as a condition of life, particularly his sphinx series. They cite *Prodigal Sphinx*, in which a scarred father figure reaches out for a withdrawn son, and *Siamese Sphinx*, in which the two heads of the creature turn away from each other: “one head stares defiantly, while the other seems to accept its destiny.”³⁴ They also examine his *Hamlet* (1952), interpreting it as an image of rage and impotence. (fig. 47) His “bird-like leg-arms...twitch” in contrast with his stout, immobile

³³ One of the fragmented body parts in the border includes a single hand in the posture of the *birkat kohanim* or Hebrew priestly blessing, which wishes blessings and protection on its recipient. The implied political content of the painting's title, then, could align this symbol with the 1954 decision to include the phrasing “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, as a result of President Eisenhower's reasoning that it was a belief in God that distinguished the United States from the Soviet Union—a point I discuss in relation to Westermann's sculpture *The Evil New War God (S.O.B.)*, later in this chapter. Considering the suspicion around the Jewish subject as inclined toward or affiliated with Communism, it is possible that this inclusion of the *birkat kohanim* is a reference to the marginalized and precarious position of Jews in postwar America.

³⁴ Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?,” 39.

torso.³⁵ His head, inspired by a classical bust in profile, features a mouth agape, and its surface has been scraped raw—foreshadowing the physically aggressive painting technique that Golub would establish in the 1950s and that would characterize his paintings well into his life. Of *Hamlet*, the authors write, “[t]he totemic degeneration of a once classic head is one of a series of ambivalences of power and frustration.”³⁶ They also quote from Golub’s “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” published the year before, both to establish his credentials as a critical voice in the art scene and to articulate his project as working against the “anonymous responses” of the contemporary artist.³⁷

While Malone and Selz phrase their title as a question—“Is there a New Chicago School?”—their objective is clearly to articulate the shape of a unifying force (if not a “group” or “style”) in contemporary Chicago art. This article was published almost certainly as a response to the AIC’s own curator Katharine Kuh’s review of a 1954 exhibition entitled *Introducing Artists of Chicago*. The exhibition was first mounted by art dealer Edith Halpert at her gallery in New York, and while its objective was to enhance the reputations of Chicago artists, it was met with middling response. An article in *Newsweek* chided, “[d]espite the steady growth of art interest the old cliché is still meaningful: ‘Anything west of New York is the sticks’.”³⁸ When Halpert re-installed the exhibition at the 1020 Art Center in Chicago, some critics were offended by the notion that Chicago had to be “introduced” to its own art. Kenneth Shopen writes, “[w]hy must we wait for a New York dealer to recognize Chicago art? With a little courage of taste, we could

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Golub, “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” 146. As cited in Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?,” 39.

³⁸ *Newsweek* made this distinction in financial terms: “the difference between having a New York reputation, even a mild one, and not having it can be something like \$300 a picture and up.” “It’s Tough in Chicago: Presenting Artists of Chicago in NY’s Downtown Gallery,” *Newsweek* 44 (September 20, 1954): 66. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 208.

recognize it ourselves. Too many Chicago artists look with dewy eyes toward the East, hoping that some New Yorker will discover their work and rescue them from their oblivion....”³⁹ Kuh’s exhibition review, however, discussed only three of the thirty-one Chicago artists included in Halpert’s exhibition, and she focused on the artists who had the closest aesthetic ties to New York: sculptor Joseph Goto, collage artist Robert Nickle, and painter Evelyn Statsinger.⁴⁰ Kuh focuses almost entirely on each artist’s affinity with a New York counterpart. The “quivering” quality of line in Goto’s sculptures recalled Alexander Calder’s mobiles, which aligned him with a progressive mode of sculpting. Furthermore, Barr’s earlier acquisition of *Organic Form I* did much of the heavy lifting in Kuh’s attempts to contextualize the Chicago artists in what were understood to be New York aesthetics. She linked Nickle’s collages with trends of New York: the well-established formalism as well as the mid-decade resurfacing Neo-Dada sensibility. In Statsinger’s large-scale and detailed work, as her *Abstract Forms* (1953), she found a resemblance to the designs of “North Pacific Indians,” and connected this perceived relationship to Jackson Pollock’s well-known interest in Native American imagery and spirituality.⁴¹ While Kuh praises the Chicago artists to a national audience, she examines only their largely abstracted work in relation to New York trends. She also points to the flight of young and established artists from the Midwest to the East, where the “possibility of sales [are] more immanent.” While she claims that the changing technology makes it possible for artists to keep in touch with trends in New York, the “center of the art market,” she also notes that Chicago painters tended towards a “strongly emotional” figural style of Expressionism. Concurrently, she concludes that

³⁹ Kenneth Shopen, “Have We Got an Inferiority Complex? If N.Y. did It, It’s Art, If Chicago Does It, It’s Doubtful,” *Chicago Daily News* (September 17, 1954). As cited in *Ibid.*, 209.

⁴⁰ Kuh, “The Midwest: Spearhead-Chicago.”

All were members of the Momentum Group, and Nickle designed the 1950 exhibition catalogue that incited such controversy, described in the previous chapter.

⁴¹ For a more detailed critique of Kuh’s coverage, see Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 209–214.

the “Midwest scene” lacked a “definable style.” Perhaps this textual sleight of hand was to diffuse the possibility of a school that runs counter to New York.⁴²

Malone and Selz, however, put it otherwise in their article. Its subtitle reads, “[a]n enthusiastic appreciation of younger talents developed in the Windy City,” which is surely intended as a balm to the bruised ego of the Chicago artists ignored by New York critics and Katharine Kuh alike.⁴³ Except for Goto, they introduce artists neglected by Kuh, and argue that what connects them is “a deep concern with the human image, which re-emerges in their work after an age of abstraction to direct the sensation of the spectator towards more specific responses.”⁴⁴ After profiling the five proposed leaders of the school, they list other artists who have “deviated from established standard to arrive at a frequently troubled and very personal imagery.”⁴⁵ Notably, while about one-third of the artists chosen for Halpert’s exhibition were women, Malone and Selz make no mention of any of them. As discussed in the previous chapter, women initially formed a sizeable percentage of Exhibition Momentum, but were pushed out of leadership roles as the publicity and rhetoric of the group moved to focus on its largely veteran demographic. Malone and Selz’s exclusion reflects this, as does their own characterization of what Campoli, Cohen, Golub, Goto, and Fink share: their education at the School of the Art Institute and their “war experiences.”⁴⁶ Though the connection between the figural representation and the war is not explicit, it often is implied. On Cohen’s turn from painting to

⁴² Art historian Mary Simpson writes, “Kuh perhaps refused to identify a counter style in order to make Chicago appear more in line with New York rather than divorced from the mainstream of modernism.”

In the previous chapter, I discuss in greater detail AIC director Daniel Catton Rich’s and curator Kuh’s particular project of establishing the Art Institute as a world-class museum with a modern collection.

⁴³ Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?,” 37.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 39. The artists included are Don Baum, Fred Berger, Harry Brorby, Robert Kuennen, Norman Laliberte, Franz Schulze, and John Waddell.

⁴⁶ They make no distinction between the artists’ experiences, arguably participating in the same kind of erasure of specificity of soldier experience explored in chapter one.

assemblage works, they quote him explaining, “I knew techniques but not what to say. Therefore, concerned with the question of meaning, I turned to the study of art history after I came back from the war.”⁴⁷ Similarly, while Goto was reluctant to discuss his work, they describe his “monst[rous]” *Emanak* in terms of potential nuclear warfare, and Fink’s anthropomorphic iron men as emaciated victims of a holocaust. Furthermore, they describe “social statement” as the most important aim for John Waddell’s paintings, another member of the potential Chicago School, and describe his *Look and See Yourself, 2* (undated) as a satire of contemporary culture and the ever-present “threat of destruction.”⁴⁸

To counter Kuh’s description of the best of Chicago in terms of its affinity with the New York School, Malone and Selz specifically note that these artists are of the generation following the Abstract Expressionists, but differ from them in this crucial way:

While not denying the accomplishments of Abstract-Expressionism [sic], they are not concerned primarily with self-disclosure through abstract means, and feel that painting and sculpture can express more than the recording of the artist’s process of working. They also believe that a work of art may communicate more than ineffable sensations, that painting and sculpture can, in fact, present visual symbols which may clarify and intensify our emotions about life and its meaning.⁴⁹

In doing so, Malone and Selz establish the Chicago School’s project as not only different from that of the New York School, but also as more socially and politically urgent, very much echoing Golub’s argument about the problems of abstraction in his article from the year before. In his “Critique,” Golub refers to European artists working with representational associations, specifically Dubuffet, Giacometti, and Glasco, as “crisis” artists, as their figural work grapples

⁴⁷ Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?,” 37.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 58–59.

with the devaluation of human life in the Second World War and the postwar years.⁵⁰ In doing so, he aligns his own work (and ostensibly that of his Chicago peers) with this existential project.

Art historian Thomas N. Folds' 1959 article "The New Images of the Chicago Group" seems to follow Malone and Selz's article four years later, as it is curiously subtitled "A second appreciative look at the younger painters of Chicago and their visions of monsters and terrors which are winning a growing audience."⁵¹ He points to recently mounted exhibition *The New Chicago Decade*, curated by art historian and critic Franz Schulze at Lake Forest College, and the upcoming *New Images of Man*, curated by art historian Peter Selz at the Museum of Modern Art, as major shows that will showcase the Chicago school. Like Malone and Selz, Folds begins with a somewhat tentative claim to cohesiveness, stating, "[t]here is always a temptation to invent some kind of collective image in defining the aims of any particular group of artists." He continues, however, with more certainty:

A number of Chicago painters and sculptors, for instance, have been intensely concerned for the past ten years with *figure* images—not only human or animal figure but often fantastic hybrids culled from historical mythology yet somehow transformed into authentic contemporary presences. Unfortunately, these images have seldom been revealed to more than a small fraction of the Chicago public, for the city has always been notoriously short of exhibition space—especially space for disturbing new imagery...⁵²

Like the Momentum artists themselves, Folds emphasizes their lack of recognition as a way to align the creators of such "radical contemporary work" with the construction of the avant-garde.⁵³

⁵⁰ Golub, "A Critique of Abstract Expressionism," 144–145.

⁵¹ Folds, "The New Images of the Chicago Group," 40.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Indeed, Folds goes on to write, "[t]he original stimulus behind ["The New Chicago Decade"] goes back to the promotional efforts of Exhibition Momentum, an organization formed by the artists themselves eleven years ago to provide a more favorable climate for avant-garde developments in the Chicago area." Ibid. I have explored the ways in which the Momentum Group represented themselves as avant-garde in chapter two.

While the rhetoric of the monstrous and the recognition of the figural tendencies of the Chicago artists began in the early 1950s and was entrenched by the middle of the decade, we have seen that it was not until 1959 that the moniker “Monster Roster” had been coined. Franz Schulze, former SAIC student and Exhibition Momentum founding member, and then an art historian and critic, recalls a conversation in which painter Irving Petlin said that the *New Images* exhibition was Peter Selz’s chance to “show the Chicago ‘monsters’ to the world.”⁵⁴ Giving the group a name, the critics hoped, would offer an affirmative answer to Malone and Selz’s 1955 question, “Is There a New Chicago School?” This question persisted into the next decade, perhaps due to the unimpressive response to Selz’s 1959 *New Images of Man Exhibition* at the Museum of Modern Art. Some critics, like Paul Carroll, wondered if there really was a Monster Roster beyond the works of Leon Golub, H.C. Westermann, and George Cohen in his brief 1964 article “Here Come the Chicago Monsters,” while artist historian Joshua Kind compiled a thorough analysis of the biggest names of the Chicago School in his 1964 “Sphinx of the Plains: A Chicago Visual Idiom,” and only obliquely acknowledged the “Monster” designation, which he felt a simplification and ultimately a disservice.⁵⁵ Both articles, however,

⁵⁴ While “monster” was a term already in use to refer some of the Chicago artist’s creations, the designation “Monster Roster” was coined by Franz Schulze. He remembers, “[t]he Monster Roster had the sound of good art lingo. I liked coining the name because—I confess it—as a young critic I wanted to be able to invent a term that would summarize a phenomenon and at the same time be easily remembered.” Schulze, “The Legacy of Imagism,” 31.

⁵⁵ Kind, “Sphinx of the Plains.”

Kind writes,

It is ironic that this group of artists, typified by a handling which lends their works a quality of tenderness and despair, even when their themes are sardonic and irrational, should have been dubbed “Monsters” and so presented to the “outside world” in art and non-art publications. Perhaps, if my feeling as to the importance of technique and surface in this art is correct; this naming came about through a “reading of the content of the works—admittedly grotesque at times—in their themes and by means of photographs, and the concomitant unawareness of the aura given the work by virtue of the manipulation of the materials which comprise it. It was also a time when any explicit content was looked down upon, and so even given the “correctness” of the appellation, it may have been picked up with malice—a kind of putting-down of the country-cousin of the middle west.

Ibid., 40.

acknowledge the figural and “humanistic” bent of the Chicago artists.⁵⁶ In a positive review of Leon Golub’s work, New York critic John Canaday wrote in 1963 that there had never been a Monster Roster, “except constituted by a single painter, Mr. Golub, with perhaps a couple of attendant dwarfs clinging to his ankles.”⁵⁷ Canaday, it would seem, wanted to divorce Golub from his provincial past in order to praise him; and perhaps recognizing their inability to succeed elsewhere, Golub and Spero would move to New York in 1964.⁵⁸ While the “representational” work of the Monster Roster and the Chicago artists was set up in opposition to the dominant trends of New York in order to distinguish them as an independent school, both Chicago figuration and New York abstraction had common influences. The next section examines the common roots of both modes of art-making in order to emphasize how the differences between the schools were tenuous, even as they were often constructed as stark in contrast.

Common Origins: Expressionism, Surrealism, and Primitivism

While the picture of Chicago artists presented by Franz Schulze and Peter Selz in the mid-1950s often placed it as working against the dominant trends of New York (particularly when discussing Golub as the figurehead of the Chicago School), both schools were influenced by the European avant-gardes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: specifically Expressionism and Surrealism. Noted SAIC teachers like painter Paul Wiegardt and art historian Kathleen Blackshear encouraged their students to explore Expressionism and Surrealism. Wiegardt, a Bauhaus-trained painter and friend and student of Paul Klee, taught at

⁵⁶ Kind, “Sphinx of the Plains,” 39.

⁵⁷ John Canaday, “Art,” *The New York Times*, November 24, 1963. As cited in Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 27. Canaday is the critic who called Westermann’s work “stale Dada concoctions” and derided him as a “guest...in a clown suit...forty years late.” See the introduction to this project. Canaday, “Art: New Images of Man,” 40.

⁵⁸ Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 205.

both SAIC and the Institute of Design.⁵⁹ The influence of both European movements is visible in the early works of the Chicago School and often verbalized in their retrospective reflections. For instance, art historian David McCarthy traces the influential shifts visible in H.C. Westermann's work from the 1950s in his essay "Becoming H.C. Westermann." Specifically, he notes the movement from a more Bauhaus-inspired utopian vision towards the "gritty imminence" of Expressionism.⁶⁰ In tracing the commonalities of the Chicago artists from 1945 to 1970, Schulze paints the postwar generation as decidedly Expressionist. He writes, "[i]ndeed the first generation to give clear evidence that some shared attitude was forming in Chicago was already working seriously in the late 1940s, and its bias was, if anything, expressionistic. The term Monster Roster, coined in the 1950s to describe some of the members of that generation, distinctly implied a bold, heavy-handed expressionism."⁶¹ In particular, critics pointed to the rough handling of the Monster Roster's canvas and sculpture surfaces. Golub became known for the process-heavy treatment of his canvases, in which he would apply layers of paint and lacquer, scrape it off, and then re-apply it. This resulted in the heavily scarred appearances of many of his paintings from the mid-1950s, as in *Inferno* (1954) or his series of *Heads*. (fig. 48) Cohen, too, built on layers of paint and added other materials to his canvases to create a rougher surface, as in his use of cord, mirrors, and human hair in *The Serpent Chooses Adam and Eve* (undated), which received positive press at the 1958 Carnegie Institute at Pittsburgh.⁶² Selz, champion of the "new Chicago School" and curator of *New Images of Man*, was perhaps predisposed to

⁵⁹ As discussed in the previous chapter, some of the Institute of Design students and faculty were key members in the formation of Exhibition Momentum.

⁶⁰ David McCarthy, "Becoming H.C. Westermann," in *Dreaming of a Speech Without Words: The Paintings and Early Objects of H.C. Westermann*, by Michael Rooks (Honolulu: The Contemporary Museum, 2006), 37. This "rationalistic" utopianism seemed to be much more the purview of the Institute of Design students—a divide discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

Alan Frumkin, one of the top Chicago art dealers in the postwar years, also regularly showed German Expressionist works in his gallery. Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 21.

⁶¹ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 6.

⁶² Kramer, "Report on the Carnegie International," 32, 35.

support the postwar artists, as his PhD dissertation for the University of Chicago had been on German Expressionism.⁶³

European Surrealism was yet another unifying element (and arguably a germinal force for both) between the abstraction of the New York School and the figuration of the Chicago School. The influx of European intellectuals and artists fleeing increasingly treacherous conditions in Europe for New York in the 1940s—including such influential figures as André Breton—is an established part of the narrative of the development of Abstract Expressionism.⁶⁴ Pollock was famously in Jungian analysis, and made iconographical use of archetypes in his early figural work.⁶⁵ Psychoanalysis and the interrogation of the unconscious so integral to European Surrealism and then Abstract Expressionism were practices explored by Chicago artists as well. Golub included in his official artist's biography that he was in Freudian analysis, and reflected that "analysis became...almost a part of growing up and becoming a member of society. I mean it was that important...among intellectuals in art."⁶⁶ Much like Pollock, Golub also made use of psychoanalytic theories to inform his paintings. His 1954 *Hamlet* had been inspired in part by analyst Ernest Jones' 1949 book *Hamlet and Oedipus*, which explored Freud's Oedipal Complex as an explanation for Hamlet's reluctance to avenge his father's

⁶³ It was later published as *German Expressionist Painting* in 1957. Peter Selz, *German Expressionist Painting* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

⁶⁴ Breton's definition of Surrealism is as follows: "SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern." André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 26.

⁶⁵ Jungian psychoanalysis underpins many interpretations of Pollock's works, for a recent example see Evan R. Firestone, "Jackson Pollock's 'The Magic Mirror': Jung, Shamanism, and John Graham," *Modernism/modernity* 15, no. 4 (November 2008): 703–24. The exploration of the unconscious was a project common to both psychoanalysis and Surrealism. Michael Leja teases out some of the overlapping and divergent qualities of Pollock's experience in analysis and the European Surrealist project in his chapter, "Jackson Pollock and the Unconscious." Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 121–202.

⁶⁶ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 5, 1994, 11–12.

Furthermore, Franz Alexander of the Psychoanalytical Institute in Berlin was the founding director of the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis. Selz, "Surrealism and the Chicago Imagists of the 1950s," 304.

fratricidal murder.⁶⁷ (fig. 47) Jones suggests that Hamlet agonizes over killing Claudius, “ignoring the imperative call for vengeance that his obvious duty demands,” because to do so would bring to surface the dangerous desires of the unconscious Oedipal Complex – to kill one’s father and marry one’s mother.⁶⁸ As Claudius is Hamlet’s mother’s husband, to kill him would make obvious Hamlet’s erotic desire for his mother: “His own ‘evil’ prevents him from completely denouncing his uncle’s...”⁶⁹ Golub imaged this impotent rage at both external and internal forces through his figure’s quivering but ultimately useless limbs and the mouth screaming in frustration.

Furthermore, European Surrealism as an arts movement was welcomed with open arms by curators and collectors in Chicago. In his 1972 survey of Chicago art since 1945 *Fantastic Images* art historian and critic Franz Schulze, writes “that the whole city’s art world is fixated on a surrealist point.”⁷⁰ The 1947 Exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago was devoted to *Abstract and Surrealist Art*, curated by Frederick A. Sweet and Katharine Kuh.⁷¹ It featured a range of Surrealist influenced work, including work by the locally celebrated painter Ivan Albright as well as many of the newly recognized New York School painters.⁷² Indeed, Kuh was close with Marcel Duchamp, “arch-Dada friend of the Surrealists,” and wrote the essay for the exhibition catalogue of the 1949 Arensberg Collection

⁶⁷ Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?,” 59.

A disciple of Freud, Jones first published an article “The Oedipus-Complex as An Explanation of Hamlet’s Mystery: A Study in Motive” in 1910 in *The American Journal of Psychology*, but later expanded it into a book.

⁶⁸ Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1949), 88.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 6.

In conversation with Golub, interviewer Staci Boris remarked, “Franz Schulze brought up the Institute of Psychoanalysis and that at that time you couldn’t go to a party or an event without the analyst being the center of attention.” Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 5, 1994, 12.

⁷¹ As discussed in the last chapter, this was the exhibition that prompted the student ban that was the impetus for Exhibition Momentum’s formation.

⁷² Albright, with his grotesque figural imagery, is often positioned as a key influence on the continued figural bent of later Chicago painters; Joshua Kind points to him as something of a father figure of the following “Monster” artists. Kind, “Sphinx of the Plains,” 39.

at the Art Institute, which included thirty works by Duchamp as well as paintings by Marc Chagall, Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, Paul Klee, René Magritte, André Masson, Joan Miró, and Yves Tanguy.⁷³ Notable collectors like the Shapiros (much of whose collection helped to establish the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago) also started to pursue Surrealist painters in the 1950s, and Maurice Culberg, who built the first major private collection of Jean Dubuffet's work. It was also Culberg who invited Dubuffet to give his important talk on the "Anticultural" at the Chicago Arts Club in 1951, and to whom Dubuffet then gave his handwritten notes. The two major art dealers of Chicago of the 1950s, Allan Frumkin and Richard Feigen tended towards Surrealist exhibits, largely because of the interest of their customers.⁷⁴ Furthermore, just as Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's presence in the Institute of Design would help shape its students, Chilean artist Roberto Matta came to the SAIC as a visiting professor in 1954, solidifying the Surrealist influence already in place at the School.

Surrealism, however, had a contentious relationship with the American schools. As New York was working to establish itself as the home of the new global avant-garde, it was a tricky prospect to position any single European source as having too strong of an influence.⁷⁵ Doing so might have cast the new school in a derivative light. Furthermore, while the construct of action painting as the visual trace of the artist's subconscious certainly resonated with Surrealism, the critical insistence on abstraction forced a distance between the traditionally representational European Surrealist school of painting and New York abstraction.⁷⁶ Another distancing factor was the dangerous territory of the Freudian unconscious. As explored earlier in my study,

⁷³ Selz, "Surrealism and the Chicago Imagists of the 1950s," 303.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 303–304.

⁷⁵ I explore this tension more thoroughly in chapter two, particularly citing art historian Aruna D'Souza's exploration on the position of Dubuffet in New York and the reluctance to recognize too strong of a European "influence" on the emerging New York School. D'Souza, "I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet."

⁷⁶ Action painting as the trace of the subconscious can also be linked to Rosenberg's interest in Existentialist philosophy, as discussed in the introduction to this project.

establishing a strong, stable, masculine subjectivity was a crucial part of the postwar political project, manifest in sources ranging from sociological studies to art criticism; a project such as this was put at risk by explorations of an unknowable unconscious.⁷⁷ The popularity of the work of artists such as Paul Klee and Jean Dubuffet in New York can, in part, be attributed to their exploration of automatism without linking it to the social or political implications of André Breton's Surrealism rooted in the unconscious.⁷⁸ Instead, in Dubuffet's materialism, critics found an "art of the trace—the markings Dubuffet left on the canvas were a record of his physical and psychic engagement with his medium."⁷⁹ This notion underpins Rosenberg's celebration of the authentic encounter inherent to Abstract Expressionist works, outlined in his 1952 "The American Action Painters." This "physical and psychic" trace does not necessarily make discernable claims about an unknowable psyche, rendering it relatively safe. In contrast, Golub's impotent and raging *Hamlet* or his internally divided *Sphinxes* insist on inherent existential conflicts through visual metaphor.

Furthermore, both the New York and Chicago Schools shared an interest in some of the inspirations of the European Expressionists and Surrealists: the "primitive." In her exploration of the "primitive" and its place in late nineteenth and early twentieth century art, British art

⁷⁷ As Leja discusses at length, the "unconscious" was constructed as *profoundly* dangerous territory, a kind of Pandora's Box. Leja writes:

In a broad array of cultural productions, Fascism and modern evil were portrayed as products of the mysterious depths of the unconscious or of the unnatural functioning of the mind...if modern man's faith in reason, science, and technology had failed him, it was probably because their opposites—emotion, instinct, unreason, that part of his nature that had been strictly repressed—had begun to intrude into his affairs. This other side of human nature had to be attended to, had to be recognized, imaged, and released; but these processes would have to be carefully controlled, so the renewal and fertility they offered could be tapped without releasing a modern deluge.

Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 199.

⁷⁸ Art historian D'Souza writes, "Klee took the route of the childlike and the primitive to each a place of intellectualized fantasy, of architectonic Surrealism. In other words, while Klee still dealt with the margins of culture, he engaged with less dangerous margins than, for example, the Freudian unconscious, concentrating rather on the relatively unproblematic aspect of the childlike. Klee's was a conservative Surrealism..." D'Souza, "I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet," 64.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

historian Gill Perry notes that the concept is flexible, construed as either negative or positive depending on the voice. For many the term signifies the uncivilized and backwards cultures. For others, this lack of civilization was a state of purity, grounded in the notion of the “noble savage.”⁸⁰ Perry characterizes the “primitivist” tradition as a construction that aligns perceived “simple” people and rarefied expression: “it exalted peasant and folk culture as evidence of some kind of innate creativity.”⁸¹ This supposedly “pure” expression of an inner experience, so much a part of the rhetoric of the schools of art who took up “primitive” sources of inspiration, is overlapping—if not congruent—with the construction of the avant-garde artist as “un-castrated” and fiercely individual. Here, again, I refer to Clement Greenberg writing about Jackson Pollock in 1946: “Pollock’s superiority to his contemporaries in this country lies in his ability to create a genuinely violent and extravagant art without losing stylistic control. His emotion starts out pictorially; it does not have to be castrated and translated in order to be put into a picture.”⁸² Indeed, the interest of the New York School in the so-called primitive—perhaps most iconically Pollock’s alignment of his drip paintings with Navajo sand paintings—have been thoroughly explored.⁸³ The invocation of the primitive was marshaled in service of pseudo-anthropological commentary on the struggles of modern life. For instance, the impact of myriad Native American arts on the New York School can be traced to anxieties regarding the suburbanization of the nation and the construction of a distinctly American character, accomplished in part

⁸⁰ This is derived, Perry notes, from an often corrupted reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry, *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 6.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Greenberg, “Review of Exhibitions of the American Abstract Artists, Jacques Lipchitz, and Jackson Pollock,” 75. As discussed in my introduction, art historian Amelia Jones posits Greenberg’s construction of the Pollock-myth circumvents an embodied subject (although the normative white male body is ever implied), thereby avoiding the threat of castration. Jones, “The ‘Pollockian Performative’ and the Revision of the Modernist Subject.”

⁸³ Leja devotes an entire chapter of his text to “The Mythmakers and the Primitive.” Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 49–117. See also W. Jackson Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde: A History of Cultural Primitivism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

through the (mis)appropriation (and consequent erasure) of Native arts and culture.⁸⁴ This alignment with the so-called primitive was discussed by New York artists, and was invoked by critics as reaching an apotheosis in figures like Pollock, who attained artist-genius-shaman status.⁸⁵

Chicago artists, too, found both aesthetic inspiration and meaning in “primitive” sources. In addition to discussing more recent Expressionist and Surrealist artworks from Europe, SAIC professors Blackshear and Wieghardt encouraged their students to explore the collections of African, Oceanic, and pre-Columbian art at the Field Museum of Natural History, then simply named the Natural History Museum.⁸⁶ In his letter for art dealer Richard Feigen’s 1969 Dubuffet exhibition catalogue, George Cohen writes of his time at the SAIC:

There was a strong interest in German Expressionism... and many student cliques had readily rejected what they felt to be the emptiness of French formalism. When we wanted something to see we often would go to the Field Museum to look at the then-not-well-displayed-not-thought-to-be-great art collections from New Guinea, New Ireland, New Caledonia and Old America. It held a hell of a lot more than form for us.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ The founding of the Boy Scouts of America was inspired by the anxiety of the late nineteenth-century “crisis” of masculinity. Like the construction of the American avant-garde artist as a masculine subject in the latter crisis moment of the postwar years, the Boy Scouts appropriated American indigenous practices and cultures in its construction of an independent, rugged masculine ideal, even as Native peoples could never fulfill this ideal, which was always raced as white. For instance, Earnest Thompson Seton, one of the founders of the Boy Scouts of America wrote and illustrated such books as *How to Play Indian* (1903), *How Boys Can Learn From A Band of Indians* (1903), and *The Book of Woodcraft and Indian Lore* (1912, republished 1922).

⁸⁵ See Eric Smigel, “Identity, Image, and the Heroic Myth of the New York School of Painting, Poetry, and Music,” *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 6–20. Firestone, “Jackson Pollock’s ‘The Magic Mirror.’” Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*.

⁸⁶ Dennis Adrian notes that these educators articulated an understanding of the Field Museum’s collections of North and South American and Oceanic objects as art “and not merely ethnographic curiosities.” This, he argues, “gave an important impetus to the collecting of Africa, Oceanic, and pre-Columbian art in the city.” Coupled with Dubuffet’s famous “Anticultural Positions” talk in 1951, the recognition of the Field’s collection “focused greater attention upon tribal art and sowed the seeds for the later appreciation of outsider art.” Adrian, “Private Treasures, Public Spirit,” 74.

As is the case for the Post-Impressionists (who found primitive sources in the French province of Breton and Tahiti), the German Expressionists (who looked to “l’art nègre”), Picasso and Braque (who took formal inspiration in African art), and the Abstract Expressionists (as with Jackson Pollock’s much discussed interest in American Indian sand paintings), this invocation of the primitive is deeply problematic. Finding inspiration in the objects of the Field Museum was only made possible by the imperial and colonial forces that resulted in such a collection.

⁸⁷ Cohen, “Letter to Richard Feigen,” 10.

While Cohen is writing about his pre-war SAIC education, this influence is evident in Golub's immediate postwar work, as in his 1947 drawing *Oceanic*, as well as Westermann's student sketchbooks from the mid-1950s, which contain pages filled with geometric patterns and designs copied from the same "primitive" sources from the Field Museum. (figs. 49 and 50) This suggests a prolonged commitment to artworks held to be intensely influential for the Expressionists and Surrealists, and now for members of the Chicago School. While Cohen's quote seems to pit the Chicago artist's Expressionist interest in the primitive against those who followed the path of "French formalism," in doing so it ignores the rhetoric about the artist's "direct" expression of his internal struggle—the "physical and psychic trace" that became such a significant discursive component of Abstract Expressionism.⁸⁸ Indeed, the insistent description of the Monster Roster artists as employing personal iconography, or as Folds writes, "[f]or a decade, young Chicago artists have pursued their individual images of 'reality,'" links them to the German Expressionists, but also to the Abstract Expressionists.

As was the case for the German Expressionists and the Surrealists, the Chicago School found "primitive" sources in more than just the art of other non-Western cultures. Cohen goes on to write "[a] lot of it seems old fashioned now—magic, psychoanalytic psyche, folk art (we

While Cohen recalls Expressionism as a key part of his education at the Art Institute, Dennis Adrian writes that in the early 1950s, "[t]he Germans, except for Paul Klee, were still almost completely ignored until a few years later." He also writes, however, that the New York artists were only starting to be recognized as "serious contenders for this kind of critical eminence." Adrian, "The Artistic Presence of Jean Dubuffet in Chicago and the Midwest," 27. However, in an interview, Golub recalls the charged excitement around a Pollock exhibition in Chicago as early as 1946-1947. Pollock was also among the earliest jurors of the Exhibition Momentum shows; it seems that Adrian understands other influences in Chicago as minimal. Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 18.

⁸⁸ Elsewhere in this text, Cohen laments the New York School's domination and the subsequent difficulty in getting recognized; he writes the scene was "blanketed and blinded by New York action paint." Perhaps this personal resentment leads him to conflate the late Greenbergian formalist interpretation of New York School artwork, which often shut out figural representation, with actual art practice. Ironically, this is the sort of generalization about the art scene that Cohen resented. Cohen, "Letter to Richard Feigen," 11. Ibid.

loved the very first statements of untutored adult beginners), schizophrenic art...”⁸⁹ Golub, too, notes the impact of these sources in the late 1940s and early 1950s: “That’s when we were talking so much about primitive art and insane art and disassociation, things like that.”⁹⁰ Jean Dubuffet would organize these varied “outsider” arts—folk art, tribal art, naïve art, like that produced by the insane or children—under the umbrella of *art brut*, which implies a raw, or “crude,” art in opposition to the artifice of culture.⁹¹ With colleagues including Surrealist André Breton and critic and artist Michel Tapié, Dubuffet formed the *Compagnie de l’Art Brut* in 1948 and shortly thereafter held the first exhibition of this “raw” work. This opposition between the *brut* and the refined was laid out in his essay for the 1948 exhibition, “L’Art Brut préféré aux arts culturels,” also underpins his 1951 lecture *Anticultural Positions*. *Anticultural Positions* sets up the tension between the realm of “elaborated ideas” and the direct, the primal, the savage. Coded into this later category are “instinct, passion, mood, violence, madness.”⁹² As with prior theories of primitivism, the West is connected to the sphere of words and logocentrism whereas the primitive is seen as enabling a purer and more direct access to expression of both conscious and unconscious experience, an idea that had distinct appeal for the New York School as well. Dubuffet had more cultural status than the artists in the Chicago School, given that he was an

⁸⁹ Cohen, “Letter to Richard Feigen,” 10.

Indeed, Golub describes his 1954 *In-Self* series as a visual attempt to depict the fractured or “schizophrenic” subject. Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 18.

⁹⁰ Interestingly, Golub describes these interests when talking about Cohen’s early anatomical abstraction, at which point their work had a strong visual affinity. In a 1994 interview he also notes about the Chicago School tendency, “I think it was kind of in the group, the whole thing, German Expressionism and the art of the insane, primitive art...” He also recalls that while he didn’t have Blackshear as a teacher while at the SAIC, he had her as a teacher during Saturday classes at the Art Institute as a child. He says “I don’t think we ever went to the Field Museum, maybe she talked about these things.” Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 5, 1994, 9.

⁹¹ Jean Dubuffet, “Crude Art Preferred to Cultural Art,” (1949) reprinted in *Art in Theory 1900 - 2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul J. Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 605–8.

⁹² Early on in his talk, he states, “Personally I believe very much in the values of savagery. I mean instinct, passion, mood, violence, madness.” Dubuffet, “Anticultural Positions: Lecture Given by Jean Dubuffet at the ‘Arts Club of Chicago,’” 2. Please note that I use Dubuffet’s lecture notes as my source; his notes differ slightly from republished versions of the essay. Pagination matches the notes, not the whole book.

established French artist who had received critical acclaim in New York.⁹³ Dennis Adrian writes, “Dubuffet’s stature as a cultivated European with a fresh avant-garde position added a special validation to his statements.”⁹⁴ In this way, the Chicago School’s very similar conversations around and explorations of these varied marginalized visual sources became a more established part of their public rhetoric because of Dubuffet’s Arts Club lecture.⁹⁵

A number of the Monster Roster artists, including Cohen, Golub, and Cosmo Campoli, were at Dubuffet’s talk, and a transcript of the lecture was circulated around the scene.⁹⁶ Indeed, Dubuffet took on such an important place in the art historiography of Chicago that when Richard Feigen organized the 1969 exhibition on the Anticulture and its reverberations in Chicago, the catalogue featured a facsimile of Dubuffet’s handwritten notes.⁹⁷ By most accounts Dubuffet’s *Anitcultural Positions* resonated strongly with the Chicago artists. For example, Richard Feigen recalled conversations with George Cohen about the Arts Club lecture in which he said something to the following effect: “Dubuffet said all the things that we’d been thinking in the

⁹³ I discuss Dubuffet’s reception in New York, as framed by art historian Aruna D’Souza, in my previous chapter.

⁹⁴ Adrian, “The Artistic Presence of Jean Dubuffet in Chicago and the Midwest,” 29.

⁹⁵ Some art histories of the period point to the talk as a eureka moment for the Chicago artists, but Golub, Cohen and scholars such as Adrian are eager to point out that Dubuffet’s paradigm simply articulated a pre-existing current in Chicago art discourse. Cohen writes, “[s]eeing Dubuffet’s work was surprising and stimulating. Its source seemed to be the source we were seeking (some Chicago artists have been called eclectic for things they did before they knew there was a Dubuffet). . . . We found many of our views reinforced by much of what he said.” Cohen, “Letter to Richard Feigen,” 10–11.

⁹⁶ Oldenburg is not often associated with Chicago since he achieved his fame in New York, but he grew up in Chicago, he attended the SAIC and was one of the younger members of the Momentum artist group. Selz, “Surrealism and the Chicago Imagists of the 1950s,” 306. Richard Feigen recalls that Oldenburg was a reporter with the Chicago American at the time of the Arts Club lecture. Feigen, Tape-recorded Interview with Richard Feigen, 7.

⁹⁷ The notes had been a gift from Dubuffet to Maurice Culberg, who had amassed the first major private collection of his work. The artists featured in Feigen’s exhibition include Jean Dubuffet (of course), Cohen, Jean Tinguely, Yves Klein, Claes Oldenburg, Christo, and John Van Saun. The catalogue, however, only features written contributions by Cohen and Oldenburg.

Golub described Dubuffet as being somewhat marginalized:

There is also a tradition in these countries of intellectuals outside of the art world completely who are very sympathetic to this kind of thing [referring to the figuralism of Dubuffet and Francis Bacon]. You find this less true of America where the separation of people who are interested in other things is much more apparent, say among writers. So that Dubuffet could really have a tremendous amount of support from all kinds of intellectuals when the art community in France refused to give him any credit whatsoever.”

Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, October 28, 1968, Tape 1, Side 1, 2.

army, and after, and there it was. He said it all. It was like a manifesto for the second half of the twentieth century.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, Dubuffet’s figural mode of painting was in tune with the figural art common to the Chicago artists.

Freedom, Myth, and Savage Realities

While primitivism was an exploratory mode for both cities, its discourse in New York was full of optimism and excitement about its potential. In the one and only issue of the magazine *Possibilities*, published by Robert Motherwell, Harold Rosenberg, and George Baziotes (among others) in 1947, so-called primitive cultures offered a method of rediscovering “the path to purity and freedom,” a rhetoric repeated in postwar American constructions of the avant-garde artist⁹⁹.

If Greenberg’s arguments about the primacy of the formal qualities of artwork dominated critical discussions about abstract art, a well-respected and vocal counterpart was to be found in Harold Rosenberg. While Greenberg insisted on the optical, Rosenberg reinforced a mythical picture of the American artist in his 1952 “American Action Painters.”¹⁰⁰ Rosenberg lauds the *act* of painting as the key element that distinguished the so-called action painters as particularly modern. He sets up this artist (always designated as male, if there could be any doubt), as a

⁹⁸ Feigen, Tape-recorded Interview with Richard Feigen, 6.

⁹⁹ Serge Guilbaut, “Early Golub: The Force of Powerlessness and the Power of Forcefulness,” in *Leon Golub*, by Leon Golub and Jon Bird (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2011), 125.

¹⁰⁰ Most famously Rosenberg writes, “At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or “express” an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.” Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” 22. Rosenberg’s “The Mythic Act” was published in 1969. The opposition between Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg is a narrative of the Jewish Museum’s 2008 exhibition *Action/Abstraction* and is well-articulated in the catalogue, edited by Kleeblatt. Norman L. Kleeblatt, Maurice Berger, and Debra Bricker Balken, *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt (New York; New Haven: Jewish Museum under the auspices of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America ; Yale University Press, 2008). For a more succinct exploration, see the review of the show by Richard Kalina, “Guardians of the Avant-Garde,” *Art in America* 96, no. 8 (2008): 47–54.

shaman: engaging in a revelatory encounter with the canvas.¹⁰¹ This generative moment could not be separated from the biography of the artist; if it were a “true” action painting it would hold something in it of the artist’s encounter with himself.¹⁰² This interpretation of painting as an existential struggle means that its value could be found outside the realm of art, “it follows that anything is relevant to it....psychology, philosophy, history, mythology, hero worship.”¹⁰³ Despite the stylistic diversity of the New York School artists, many of the artists felt that it applied not only to their work, but their lives as well. Art historians Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith write in their grandiosely titled tome *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga*: “[a]s with so many of Rosenberg’s other ideas, they knew they liked the *sound* of it. According to Leslie Fiedler, they reveled in the sheer masculinity of it. To the generation that had come through the Project (the WPA), it justified the years of barroom antics, hard drinking, misogyny, and competitive cocksmanishp.”¹⁰⁴ Others, like Leon Golub and Peter Selz doubted whether or not New York abstraction could actually carry the weight of the myths ascribed to it.

In 1956, three years before curating the MoMA exhibit, Peter Selz published an essay entitled “A New Imagery in American Painting.” Written in the year of Pollock’s fatal car crash, almost a decade after *Life* asked if he might be the “greatest living American painter,” the article

¹⁰¹ Although he doesn’t name him, it is well-established that Rosenberg is likely referring to Pollock.

¹⁰² Rosenberg explores this obliquely and ambiguously as the artist’s encounter with the “myth of self.” Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” 24.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 22.

Indeed, Rosenberg insists that the value of such painting lies outside of the art world, especially criticism. For him, Abstract Expressionism is not a “pure” art, as the reasons for the departure from representation have to do with move towards painting as a revelatory act. This is in direct opposition to Greenberg’s interpretive model. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Naifeh and Smith, *Jackson Pollock*, 712.

While such a construction of the individualistic American artist did much in the way of dispelling the rumors of the effete (and by extension homosexual and potentially communist) art world discussed in chapter two, it also left a very narrow space for artists to define themselves in these heroic terms; either as Greenberg’s aesthetic genius or Rosenberg’s generative shaman.

Rosenberg specifically takes umbrage with the notion that one could “read” a painting for clues to sexual orientation, insisting “the psychology [of these works] is the psychology of creation.” He reserves the psychologies of the heroic myth of self, which ostensibly lies beyond such issues as “sexual preferences of debilities,” as the sole interpretive model by which to read action paintings. This is undoubtedly his attempt to dismiss the aura of suspicion that surrounded the art scene. Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” 23.

outlines many of the thoughts that would eventually motivate *New Images of Man*. While Selz points out that there are artists throughout the country pushing against Abstract Expressionism, “without question the leading movement in American painting since the war,” he points to Chicago as home to a number of artists who are doing so.¹⁰⁵ He names Golub, Cohen, Fred Berger, and Compoli (all of whom would be featured in Thomas Folds’ article “Here Come the Monsters” in 1959).¹⁰⁶ He then profiles Golub as an exemplar of this broader trend against New York abstraction, of artists looking for “an adequate expression which may come to grips with the experiences of the post-World War II generation.”¹⁰⁷ Even while acknowledging the dominance of Abstract Expressionism in the critical realm, he points to the public discontent with abstraction and the contemporary desire for a new imagery.¹⁰⁸ Like the sociologists of 1950s, Selz argues that the age of modernity, characterized by mass production and culture, has sent the nation into a tailspin, and that the public is grasping for meaningful imagery. He writes:

Our culture lacks a collective myth, and no truly public symbolism is therefore granted to our artists. Instead of a collective myth, we are confronted with the mass standardization and stereotypes of television, movies, popular magazines and public opinion polls. This anonymity has become so pervasive that a great deal of contemporary painting has been affected by it and has become similarly uniform.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting,” 290.

¹⁰⁶ Selz also points to Hyman Bloom in Boston, Joseph Glasco in New Mexico, and James McGarrell in Los Angeles. *Ibid.*, 293.

Folds, “The New Images of the Chicago Group.”

¹⁰⁷ In some ways, this was a political choice: Golub had published his “Critique of Abstract Expressionism” the year before. In addition to being an audible voice in the days of *Momentum*’s foundation, Golub had become quite well respected in both Chicago and had started to earn attention in New York. In 1954 he exhibited in the Younger American Painters exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum and had a solo exhibition at the Artists Gallery in New York; in 1955 he earned the Florsheim Prize at the Art Institute of Chicago’s 61st Annual American Exhibition, exhibited at the Whitney Museum Annual, the Carnegie International, and had a number of solo exhibitions from New York, Chicago, and California. Selz included these credentials, and Golub’s building reputation served to validate his argument. Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting,” 293.

¹⁰⁸ He begins his essay by referring to the *Time* magazine “The Wild Ones,” and also cites a *Life* magazine (Feb. 6, 1956) article that dismissed the avant-garde and extolled the achievements of painter Reginald Marsh. *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 301.

This rhetoric is all but congruent with the language of sociologists like William Whyte and David Riesman, who mourn the loss of individuality with regard to what it means for not only American industry and economy, but for the national character.¹¹⁰ Selz hedges at Abstract Expressionism's possibilities; he points to Willem de Kooning as a New Yorker who has started to re-incorporate the figure in his *Women* series—infusing his work with “a deeply human content.”¹¹¹ He also takes into consideration the increasingly stifling Cold War environment, offering that “perhaps escape toward the supreme doodle is the most cogent answer for the artist in the present socio-political framework of conformity and witchhunt.”¹¹² Such phrasing, however, employs the most dismissive critique of abstraction, that these “doodles” have no underlying intention, that they are merely decorative.¹¹³ Indeed, Richard Feigen, one of the most important of the postwar Chicago art dealers, echoes this sentiment when he describes the New York artists as having “splashed and dripped out” their paintings. When Golub doubts the possibility of Abstract Expressionism's ability to make the universal claims that critics ascribed to it, he writes, “motion organization is then frequently allusive of the mannerism and rocaille decoration of the eighteenth century and of the more recent Art Nouveau.”¹¹⁴

The crucial issue for Selz is that while Abstract Expressionism may very well reveal some “authentic” expression of the interior, it stops short of communication, depriving the work of what might be interpreted as content. Selz points out that while psychoanalytic exploration

¹¹⁰ I discuss their influential and popular texts in greater length in the first chapter. Whyte, *The Organization Man*; Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*.

¹¹¹ Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting,” 292–293.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 292.

¹¹³ In Sandler's interview of Golub, they have a brief exchange on this as a critically negative quality in reference to Abstract Expressionism, and art writ large:

LG: The most damning word you could use would be “decorative.”

IS: Yes. It seems it was the most damning word in New York, too.

LG: It's the most hateful word in the vocabulary.

Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 11, 1968, Tape 2, Side 2, 30.

¹¹⁴ Cohen, “Letter to Richard Feigen,” 10. Golub, “A Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” 143.

was an inspiration for the mode of some of the New York painters, it leaves the work of interpretation entirely up to the viewer:

The finished work, however, will often remain below the level of interpretation and distillation, so that the artist leaves us with no memorable forms and experiences. The impact is immediate, and the immediate impact is what seems to matter. The artist here presents the experience undigested and leaves it up to the viewer to do the rest. His technique is similar to the free association and process used in psychoanalysis, but rarely does he go beyond random exploration.¹¹⁵

This issue was also covered in more popular press as well. *Time*'s article "The Wild Ones," (which Selz overeagerly calls an attack on modern art) quotes Worcester Art Museum Director Francis Henry Taylor making a claim very similar to Selz's: "[n]ot until the second quarter of the 20th century [sic] was the essential communicability of art ever denied.... Unless participation is allowed the spectator, it becomes a hopeless riddle and ceases to be art."¹¹⁶ Such critiques of Abstract Expressionism state that, while there may indeed be some trace of individuality in these works, their impact is either unmemorable, or in the very worst case *inartistic*, because of their failure to manifest something like a message. Indeed, these ambiguities are precisely what Golub found to be the issue in his "Critique" from a year prior. The "free-floating" quality of abstraction prompted an interpretive dilemma: "The question becomes *farcical*: what is the difference (and how can these differences be recorded) between a subliminal impulse, the cosmos, and a fanciful doodle?"¹¹⁷

As Selz articulates, what mattered to many in the reception of Abstract Expressionism was the apparently revolutionary change in the mode of painting. For many critics, including Greenberg, Pollock represented a sort of freedom. When interviewed, colleague Willem de

¹¹⁵ Selz, "A New Imagery in American Painting," 292.

¹¹⁶ "The Wild Ones," 75.

This issue of communicability was also a core issue of the Boston Museum of Modern Art's rejection of "Modernism" and its name change, discussed below.

¹¹⁷ Golub, "A Critique of Abstract Expressionism," 146.

Kooning said, “[h]e freed us,” referring to artists who would go on to explore forms of abstraction and expression inspired by the drip paintings.¹¹⁸ Speaking of the influence that the New York painters and composers had on the New York poets, John Ashbury wrote, “I think we learned a lot from [the painters] at that time...but the lessons were merely an abstract truth—something like Be yourself—rather than a practical one...”¹¹⁹ As discussed in my first chapter, individualism was a dominant ideology of postwar America, inextricably linked with a sense of personal freedom (which was only allotted to specific subjectivities, it must be noted). This compulsion to “be yourself” is at the center of this freedom. Morgan Feldman, a New York composer who has written prolifically and nostalgically about this period of postwar cultural production, asserted that “freedom is best understood by someone like Rothko, who was free to do only one thing—to make a Rothko—and did so over and over again. It is not freedom of choice that is the meaning of the fifties, but the freedom of people to be themselves.”¹²⁰ Feldman describes the freedom of artists as an intersection of liberation and individualism that is explicitly tied to artistic production. This discourse of freedom around the avant-garde suggested that art-making was increasingly understood as a venue for expression unique to the individual artist—an arena in which genius could be enacted.

Rather than understanding action painting as an image of American liberation and individuality, Selz counters that “although Abstract Expressionism lays claim to revealing the innermost psychological conflicts of the individual artist, we find myriads of ‘psyche-records’ indistinguishable from one another, a situation which is depressing in its uniformity.”¹²¹ While the discursive construction of Abstract Expressionism by influential critics like Rosenberg

¹¹⁸ As cited in Smigel, “Identity, Image, and the Heroic Myth of the New York School of Painting, Poetry, and Music,” 9.

¹¹⁹ As cited in *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁰ As cited in *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²¹ Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting,” 290.

suggested abstraction gave artists freedom to be themselves, Selz suggests that the similarity of these “psyche-records” revealed a disheartening conformity of the kind lamented by sociologists of American life.¹²² The liberating individuality of Pollock’s shift of the canvas from the easel to the floor, then, becomes a gimmick emulated by other artists struggling to fit the picture of the avant-garde. Not only is this a telling indication of the stifling critical environment, but also indicative of the debates about where one could find meaningful content in abstraction.

Further complicating the tenuous relationship between genius, artist, and Abstract Expressionist artwork was the role played by skill. If a drip-painting by Jackson Pollock were a visual manifestation of his individuality, a result of a version of Surrealist “pure psychic automatism,” then how did artistic virtuosity—or even the supposed genius—factor in? The 1949 *Life* magazine article that posited Pollock as the potentially greatest American painter quoted him as follows: “When I am *in* my painting...I’m not aware of what I’m doing.”¹²³ This is a statement, it seems, which Pollock spent much of his time trying to qualify after the fact, or as Leja says, “the assertion of his control over his materials became the principal theme of his statements around 1950.”¹²⁴ He would vehemently insist: “I deny the accident,” and “I CAN control the flow of the paint. There IS no accident.”¹²⁵ When a *Time* art critic reviewing the 1950 Venice Biennale wrote of a drip painting, “Chaos. Absolute lack of harmony. Complete lack of

¹²² See again Whyte, *The Organization Man*; Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*. Also the more popularly oriented Attwood et al., *The Decline of the American Male*; Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window*. These latter texts construct the evocatively named characters “Gary Gray” and “John Drone” (respectively) to point to the dull existence of a postwar conformist American life.

¹²³ “Jackson Pollock: Is He the Greatest Living Painter in the United States?,” 42. The article quoted his artist statement, published in the one and only issue of *Possibilities*, from 1947.

¹²⁴ Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 277.

¹²⁵ Quotes from Wright interview of Pollock, summer 1950; narration to film by Hans Namuth of Pollock painting, as cited in *Ibid.*

Leja also posits other meanings of the denial of the accident, including the Freudian notion that there is a reason behind everything, or that “an accident is normalcy raised to the level of drama.” Here, Leja quotes Alexander Cockburn (*Nation*, 7 May 1990), 623, as cited in *Ibid.*, 365.

structural organization,” Pollock responded as follows: “No chaos, damn it.”¹²⁶ This concern over control with regards to automatism is also made obvious in Selz’s introduction to the *New Images* catalogue. Selz insists that the artists of the exhibition retain control: it is “important to remember that Dubuffet’s or Bacon’s forms never simply emerge from an undifferentiated id. These artists never abdicate their control of form.”¹²⁷

Pollock’s contradictions and this insistence on control point to the uncertainty of just what the “freedom” of action painting was *from* or *for*. The notion of freedom from a concept of meaning based on recognizable form held interest for formalists like Greenberg or critics interested in the direct transmission of experience like Rosenberg, but skeptics like Selz and Golub wondered if this freedom elided technique or, more importantly, meaning.

The invocation of the primitive and its recourse to direct and free expression of universal conditions or truths as described in *Possibilities*, perhaps the closest thing to a manifesto of the New York School, was invested in the possibility of reconstituting the human subject.¹²⁸ In this capacity, primitivism was seen in New York as a means of political escapism, of engaging with supposedly universal truths that were by and large disconnected from every day lived experience. Art historian Aruna D’Souza expresses this eloquently when she describes the appeal of Jean Dubuffet for New York critics and artists: “[t]he French artist and his New York counterparts shared a pseudo-anthropological fascination with primitive civilization that was at once a way to comment on the condition and future of embattled humanity at the same time as avoiding the

¹²⁶ Telegram to editor, *Time* 11 December 1950, as cited in Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 277.

¹²⁷ Selz, *New Images of Man*, 14. Emphasis mine.

¹²⁸ Guilbaut, “Early Golub: The Force of Powerlessness and the Power of Forcefulness,” 125.

D’Souza also writes that it was this possibility of reconstitution that gave Dubuffet a place in New York and made him popular in postwar France during the *épuration*, or public shaming and purge of perceived Nazi and Vichy collaborators. D’Souza, “I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet,” 64–66.

increasingly contested subject of history.”¹²⁹ In contrast, what appealed to artists like Golub in Dubuffet’s 1951 *Anticultural* lecture was the very insistence on the relation of the savage to the everyday. Dubuffet wrote in his notes, “this culture drifts further and further from daily life...I am for an art which would be in immediate connection with daily life, an art which would start from the daily life, and which would be a very direct and sincere expression of our real life and our real moods.”¹³⁰ For Golub, and many of his peers, an attention to daily life meant addressing not only their marginalization as artists, but often their recent experiences during the war, as well.¹³¹

Some of the first works Golub produced as an art student, having returned from his military service in the Army Corps of Engineers (where he served from 1942 to 1946), were explicitly connected to his personal experience of the war and the concentration camps. In his first year of art school he produced two works, *Charnel House* (1946) and *Evisceration Chamber* (1946), very much after Picasso’s *The Charnel House* of 1944-1945.¹³² (figs. 51, 52, and 53) While they do not share the same name, the composition of *Evisceration Chamber* is evocative of Picasso’s painting.¹³³ The splayed corpse recalls Picasso’s stacked bodies, while the mask-like face foreshadows the forms that would dominate Golub’s later canvases. The Cubist flattening of space is evident in the geometric forms that swirl above the figure, as well as the textual inclusion of #9. While the broken form at the base of the work offers a grim interpretation of recent events, the expressionist treatment of form and surface that would

¹²⁹ D’Souza, “I Think Your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet,” 66.

¹³⁰ Dubuffet, “Anticultural Positions: Lecture Given by Jean Dubuffet at the ‘Arts Club of Chicago,’” 3.

¹³¹ As I explored more thoroughly in chapter one, Westermann’s work is almost always read in terms of his traumatic war-time experience.

¹³² As of this date, both Picasso’s *The Charnel House* and *Guernica* is in the Museo Reina Sofia of Madrid’s collection – the same institution hosted Golub’s 2011 solo exhibition. Leon Golub and Jon Bird, *Leon Golub* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2011).

¹³³ Indeed, in an essay for Anselm Kiefer exhibition catalogue, Thomas McEvilley writes that Picasso’s and Golub’s are among the first works that openly address the “disastrous war” and the Holocaust. Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 25.

dominate his later work is more apparent in the lithograph *Charnel House*. A writhing mass of intertwined bodies, seemingly licked by flames, take the place of the clean-edged, discrete swirling forms, punctuated by hollow eyed skulls. During his service, Golub had toured across England, Belgium, and Germany and these works were a reaction to the traces of violence he witnessed first hand as well as the photographs of Auschwitz victims that had recently become visible.¹³⁴ These paintings, he later said, were rooted in rage, and his alienation as a Jew. On this theme, the summer before he started art school, he did a series of paintings and drawings based on Buchenwald, several now lost.¹³⁵ Eventually Golub would redirect his forms to a more totemic aesthetic, evoking the masks that populated the Oceanic collections of the Field Museum of Natural History, but his earlier works were often populated by skull-like heads, sometimes literally as in *Skull II* (1947) or simply in affinity of form, as in *Fallen Proletarian Hero* (1948).¹³⁶ (figs. 54 and 55)

During these early school days after the war, Golub was in Freudian analysis. Quite conscious of what psychic weight his images may have carried, he said, “[n]obody knew better than I that I was making monsters. I would reel back from them myself, you see. I would make these images like these skull-like heads and I’d say, ‘for Christ’s sake, why am I doing this. The

¹³⁴ Golub would become known for his archival approach to depicting form, keeping file cabinets full of images that he would consult as reference points for his own painting. Ibid., 57.

For a thoughtful consideration of his archives, see David Levi Strauss, “Inventory / Fallen Figures & Heads: Leon Golub’s Lists,” *Cabinet Futures*, no. 13 (Spring 2004), <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/13/strauss.php>.

¹³⁵ Strangely, Jo Anna Isaak claims there is nothing historically specific about these early works, “they are amorphous, monstrous revelations of deep-seated and ubiquitous social malevolence.” I would argue that as a product of recent events and social conditions they are necessarily historically specific, even if they point to a “monstrousness” that is temporally and geographically pervasive. Instead, I interpret her to mean that the figures pictures are ambiguous in their reference, a reasonable claim when considering Golub’s later works, which are linked to obviously contemporary bodies through props and dress like his *Vietnam* or *Mercenaries* series. Jo Anne Isaak, “It’s Leon Golub’s Time,” in *Leon Golub*, by Leon Golub and Jon Bird (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2011), 62.

Golub gives some of these work specific titles like *Oblong*, and *Inferno*, but categorically refers to them as Buchenwalds. Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, October 28, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 19, 23.

¹³⁶ Golub’s reference to the Marxist class structure is a point I return to later in this chapter.

world is so ugly anyway’.”¹³⁷ In this way, Golub finds himself subject to the images’ insistence on the ugliness of the world. For Golub, it was only figuration that could represent an encounter with mortality. The significance of the bodily content is especially obvious in anecdote in which Golub showed some of these early drawings, “ugly, monstrous, horrific skulls,” to some colleagues: “They said ‘Gee, they’re fine, they’re really okay; what nice line really, good black and white relationship.’ I said, ‘God damn it! God damn it! They’re skulls!’ Do you now what one of them said to me? ‘It doesn’t matter.’ But it does matter.”¹³⁸ He became distraught when they focused on the pleasing formal qualities of the work, when to Golub the figural content was absolutely the thing that “mattered.”¹³⁹ Or, as John Bird writes, “[f]or him, representing the world constituted the only justifiable critical and ethical commitment.”¹⁴⁰ The figural insistence of the work was rooted in current questions about the tenuous nature of existence and disposability of human life. In this way, the manner in which Golub’s colleagues turn towards the formal qualities and away from the content of the work might be viewed as a subtler manifestation of the critical rejection of work that explicitly addressed the war, such as Chicago painter Ivan Albright and critics C.J. Bulliet’s and Eleanor Jewett’s lambasting of veteran-artist and SAIC student Michael Siporin’s painting *End of an Era*, which won a medal in the 1947 Chicago & Vicinity Exhibition, discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁴¹ Bulliet in particular wished

¹³⁷ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 7.

There is an important parallel here between Golub’s own processing of the horrors made obvious by the war in psychoanalysis and the significance of Pollock’s Jungian analysis both to his artwork, and his art work as an integrated part of his therapy. For more on Pollock’s work and its relation to his analysis, see Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*; Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹³⁸ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 23.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 14.

¹⁴¹ That Siporin’s work both won a prize and was publically disparaged by three of the most notable voices in the Chicago scene speaks to the conflicts over what constituted appropriate subject matter for “successful” art works. As with the debates of abstraction and figuration, it is helpful to keep in mind that despite the often essentializing

that Siporin and his veteran classmates would move beyond the “withering and blighting influences of the war.”¹⁴²

Golub first started to explore the harrowing imagery of the death camps in early paintings like the *Charnel House* and *Evisceration Chamber*, but continued on this theme well into the mid-1950s with his first *Burnt Men* series (began in 1954) and his *Inferno* (1955). (figs. 8 and 48) Art historian Matthew Baigell locates Golub as among the first Jewish-American artists to treat the subject of the Holocaust with such “unmediated and openly expressed” rage.¹⁴³ The Holocaust was a silenced subject for much of the 1950s. While the Hollywood release of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in 1959 and the publication of Elie Wiesel’s memoir of his time in the camps *Night* in 1960 spoke to an increasing willingness to address the Holocaust, Baigell describes the 1950s as a period of “willed-amnesia” and “self-imposed silence” in the Jewish-American community.¹⁴⁴ Survivors were often plagued with a sense of guilt of having survived, and shame that the Jews had not responded more militantly as conditions became increasingly oppressive through the 1930s. Baigell writes, “in many instances survivors have learned to remain silent when, after being asked about their experiences, their answers are ignored by people who do not really want to hear them.”¹⁴⁵ In this context, then, Golub’s paintings offered an insistent and savage response to both the events of the Holocaust, and the silence about it in the following years.

rhetoric on either side and the limiting narratives of subsequent art histories, there were grey area that made room for art broadly understood as marginalized.

¹⁴² Bulliet, “Army Artist Wins in Chicago Show.” As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 62.

¹⁴³ Baigell, *Jewish-American Artists and the Holocaust*, 36.

¹⁴⁴ *The Diary of Anne Frank* was first published in the United States in 1953 and converted to a stage play in 1955, but the movie would have reached a larger audience. For a scathing critique of the mediation and corruption of Frank’s diary that made it more palatable for an American and German postwar (and contemporary) audiences, see Cynthia Ozick, “A Critic At Large: Who Owns Anne Frank?,” *The New Yorker*, October 6, 1997, 76–87.

Baigell, *Jewish-American Artists and the Holocaust*, 41.

¹⁴⁵ Baigell, *Jewish-American Artists and the Holocaust*, 42.

When asked by Sandler in 1968 if his insistence on form was linked to social and political events, particularly the Holocaust, Golub replied: “Yes. I don’t know that I really articulated these things then in this way. I knew what I was looking for. That is to say I knew where to find my sources if I wanted to. I was trying to get at – well, in a sense the most ultimate experience was that experienced by the Jews in Germany. The totality of it is still incomprehensible... There’s no way of reaching it.”¹⁴⁶ This question of how to represent the experience of mortality stayed with Golub throughout his career, though eventually his imagery shifted from this more personal iconography to a broader visual vocabulary as he attempted to find representation that was both evocative for a greater audience and that could bear the weight of its meaning.

The primitivism of the New York School served as an optimistic lens to discover inner, individual truths, as explored in *Possibilities*, but Golub and many of his peers in Chicago used figural elements, fragments even, as “totems” to build myths that were both timeless and apropos to the horrors of the postwar period.¹⁴⁷ While mythmaking was certainly part of the rhetoric of the New York School, the myth seemed to exist around the construct of the artist, rather than the work itself.¹⁴⁸ Golub, for example, turned to ancient Greek imagery, as is evident in his *Hellenistic Memories* (1948), but also evident is the influence of Hittite arts, in the severe profile,

¹⁴⁶ Golub’s description of the Holocaust as an “ultimate experience” approaches trauma theorist Dominic LaCapra’s notion of the limit event—a trauma so great that it absolutely disrupts the normative understanding of the political and moral “rules” that underpin a community. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁷ “Totemic” becomes something of a descriptive buzzword in histories of postwar Chicago art beginning in the 1950s and through to the present-day. See Malone and Selz, “Is There a New Chicago School?”; Kind, “Sphinx of the Plains”; Adrian, “The Artistic Presence of Jean Dubuffet in Chicago and the Midwest.” Jon Bird notes that the cultural theorizing of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* were a significant aspect of Golub and many Monster Roster artists’ milieu. Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 19.

¹⁴⁸ This is, ironically, exactly what Rosenberg lodges attacks against when he writes about the danger of conflating the artist with the artwork in his 1952 “The American Action Painters.” It is rumored that he oriented these warnings against Pollock, his rival Greenberg’s darling, even while Pollock’s drip mode of painting most closely seemed to resemble his idealization of the action painting as a record of the artist’s authentic, immediate confrontation with himself. Kalina, “Guardians of the Avant-Garde,” 50.

geometric patterned facial hair, and hybrid-feline forms of *The Prince Sphinx* (1955).¹⁴⁹ (figs. 56 and 57) As per his “Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” Golub’s use of ancient imagery was in service of creating a visual program that carried a discernable statement about the vulnerability of being a human in the world filled with conflict and strife. Like Pollock, he also made use of archetypal figures, like prophets, kings, shamans, priests, and philosophers.¹⁵⁰ In a 1968 interview with art historian Irving Sandler, Golub describes the significance of the *Priests*, (1951-1952):

What the Priests represent is pre-rationality through exorcism, through mysticism he controls. Therefore the big eyes, the big mouth, the big nose and so on. The very thing that Hitler found as being particularly Semitic came to me as a symbol, in a sense, of their control over the inner destiny of their kind of inner mythical, mystical being.¹⁵¹

This quote reveals Golub’s invocation of the primitive through mysticism, but this also points to how the events of the war impacted the subject matter and rationale behind his work. (fig. 58) One could argue that his mythic construction of the Priest in Semitic terms was a manifestation of Golub’s own sense of alienation, and perhaps also a kind of wish-fulfillment in which the marginalized Jew is empowered as a primitive subject.¹⁵² However, the deteriorated surface speaks to the vulnerability of the subject. This internal conflict between apparent power rendered

¹⁴⁹ References to African nail fetishes (as discussed in Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*) and Kwakiutl masks can be found in *Bird Man* (1953) and *Anchovy Man I* (1953), which was a canvas of the *In-Self* series, described by Golub as an exploration of man as a “schizophrenic” subject. Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 26.

In addition to the Field Museum, as alums of the university, Golub and Cohen would also certainly have been familiar with the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute (founded in 1919), which has significant holdings in ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian art.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵¹ In contrast, he describes the philosophers: “What the Philosophers represent is man in control of his environment through rationality, through means, through mediation he controls.” Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 2, Side 1, 9. This exploration of both the rational and the irrational reveal Golub’s engagement with the same Modern Man discourse that Leja thoroughly outlines as a source in Pollock’s work. See “Jackson Pollock and the Unconscious” in Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 121–202.

¹⁵² Bird writes that the *Priests* are some of Golub’s first images that are oriented around historical witnessing, calling them “a Hebraic theme uniting the victim as a symbol of tragic resistance with the role of testimony.” This simultaneity of resistance and resilience and vulnerability is a life-long theme of Golub’s work. Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 25.

impotent by the underlying vulnerability is intrinsic to much of Golub's work of the 1950s, including *Hamlet*, discussed above.

The Political Implications of Abstraction and Representation

As I have discussed, there were many underlying commonalities between the abstraction of New York and the figuration of Chicago. However, by the mid-century Abstract Expressionism was firmly entrenched as the dominant, privileged mode of artistic expression. Clement Greenberg published his "'American-Type' Painting" in 1955, which created a lineage for the American avant-garde (located in the New York School) through "heroes of modernity."¹⁵³ While Greenberg was re-affirming the eminence of New York's place in the art history of modernism, critic B.H. Friedman profiled Jackson Pollock in *Art in America*, re-asserting claims about the artist's freedom and individuality and their significance to the vitality of American art in the Cold War—a long established element of the discourse of masculinity¹⁵⁴. Both articles are constituent parts of the discourse that aimed to establish New York as the home to the vanguard of western art as well as establish this American painting a signifier of the nation's constructed postwar position as liberator and enemy to Fascism and Communism.

While these two overlapping (and often mutually constitutive) agendas were promoted in New York, and more broadly through their publication in nationally distributed magazines, institutional support of abstraction was also in practice in Chicago. While the early twentieth-century collecting and exhibiting practices of the Art Institute proved to be relatively conservative, the exhibitions of the late 1940s through the 1950s mirrored those of the Museum

¹⁵³ Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting."

This is Guilbaut's phrasing, in Guilbaut, "Early Golub: The Force of Powerlessness and the Power of Forcefulness," 124.

¹⁵⁴ B.H. Friedman, "Profile: Jackson Pollock," *Art in America* 58 (December 1955): 49, 58–59.

of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Art historian Barbara Jaffee writes that in the 1950s, the Art Institute would “stand unwaveringly behind only the most formally advanced, experimental, and abstract art, insisting that any compromise was a capitulation to isolationists and anti-Communists.”¹⁵⁵ This politicized understanding of abstraction, however, was a product of very specific challenges to the political integrity of the AIC.

The 1947 Annual American Exhibition at the AIC, *American Abstract and Surrealist Art*, discussed in the previous chapter received critical praise for its progressive approach, but did incite some more conservative critics displeased with the European influence of Surrealism and abstraction.¹⁵⁶ In order to clarify its orientation, Director Daniel Catton Rich published an essay in *Atlantic Monthly* entitled “The Freedom of the Brush” in February 1948.¹⁵⁷ He wrote, “Today, men and women throughout America are working vigorously with abstract means, attempting to convey their personal emotion through lines, colors, effects of light and texture rather than through transcriptions of nature.”¹⁵⁸ Ultimately, this did not serve Rich nor the Art Institute. The next year, Republican Michigan Congressman George A. Dondero would specifically name Rich in his speech “Modern Art Shackled to Communism” given in the House of Representative on August 19, 1949. During his speech, Dondero read extensively from Rich’s “Freedom of the Brush,” labeling him as a member of Harvard University’s “effeminate tribe” and accused him of eroding American art and principles by catering to and encouraging “international art thugs.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Jaffee, “Pride of Place,” 58.

¹⁵⁶ I explore these conservative viewpoints in chapter two.

¹⁵⁷ Daniel Catton Rich, “Freedom of the Brush,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, February 1948, 47–51.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁵⁹ The personal and political implications of the accusation of “effeminacy” have been explored in chapter one. George A. Dondero, “Modern Art Shackled to Communism” in Congressional Record House 81st Congress, 1st session, August 16, 1949. As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 53; Barbara Jaffee, “‘Gardner’ Variety Formalism: Helen Gardner and ‘Art through the Ages,’” in *Partisan Canons*, ed. Anna Brzyski (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 218.

Earlier that year, in February 1949, *Life* magazine had published a story on Boston's Museum of Modern Art that reported the Director James Plaut's and the Museum's Board of Trustees' decision to change its name to the Institute of Contemporary Art, declaring that it no longer wanted to be associated with "Modernism." In the article, Plaut argued that the MoMA in New York was too focused on the promotion of abstract art whose "anti-humanist" qualities were alienating to the general public, foreshadowing the tenor of Dondero's speech.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, in his bid for recognition for the Art Institute, Rich eagerly allied himself with MoMA and their visual program—Alfred Barr even made a laudatory statement for the museum's publicity releases for the 1947 exhibition. Likely, this association was an additional reason behind Dondero's accusations. In response to the Boston museum's statement, Barr and his colleague and ally Lloyd Goodrich of the Whitney Museum of Modern Art responded with a deluge of letters to both *Life* and Plaut, arguing, in Serge Guilbaut's words, that the artist's freedom to experiment with abstraction as in "opposition to totalitarianism," and that cultural leaders "had to reject isolationism and Americanism for a liberal international language."¹⁶¹ Both in the wake of the Boston Museum's rejection of "Modern" art and Dondero's accusations, art historian Paul Wood asserts there was a concerted effort of major art institutions to "convince Americans that...modern art was *not* a Communist plot to undermine Western values and democracy."¹⁶²

This building anti-Communist art discourse likely worked against the Chicago student artists in the early 1950s. When the Momentum Group published their *1950 Exhibition Momentum* catalogue with the manifesto-like *9 Viewpoints* insert, the Chicago art establishment

¹⁶⁰ "Revolt in Boston," *Life* 26 (February 21, 1949): 84–89.

¹⁶¹ Serge Guilbaut, "The Frightening Freedom of the Brush: The Boston Institute of Contemporary Art and Modern Art," *Dissent: The Issue of Modern Art in Boston*, 1994, 55.

¹⁶² Francis Frascina, "The Politics of Representation," in *Modernism in Dispute: Art Since the Forties* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 141. Also see Francis Frascina, "Institutions, Culture, and America's 'Cold War Years': The Making of Greenberg's 'Modernist Painting,'" *Oxford Art Journal* 26, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 71–97.

was enraged not only because it critiqued the Art Institute and its board, but it made use of inflammatory, suspiciously Communist rhetoric. Franz Schulze's essay "On Painting in America, 1950," argued that the Museum trustees who dictated the ultimately repressive conditions of the city's art scene earned their position by "virtue of capital," and averred the Momentum artists "refused to bow and scrape before the rich makers of rubber and steel." Instead they would serve as "counterforces to challenge the rich man whose dominion resulted in the corruption of art and society."¹⁶³ Similarly, artist Robert Kuennen laid fault with those who defined "societal well-being" in terms of production, distribution, and consumption of material goods, in his statement "To the Public." He argues that the function of contemporary art is "one of devastating social criticism, of *revolution in every sense*."¹⁶⁴ While Golub does not critique the conditions of capital as Schulze and Kuennen do, his sympathies are evident in art work contribution to the exhibition: *Fallen Proletarian Hero*. John Laska is even more specific in his attack, railing that the "Donderian midgets" who had linked the avant-garde with Communism, were incapable of judging art, while "the ivory-tower giants of wit and intellect" were too far removed from their communities to have an impact. The answer lay with the artist and the people: "[t]he new artist must redefine Art and Artist to society, discard the exclusivist forum field of today and seek new audience at street and public school levels."¹⁶⁵ This absolutely would not have sat well with the institutional efforts to assuage suspicions that modern art was a "Communist plot."

While the Momentum students were deploying rhetoric much more common to the 1930s Popular Front intellectual and artist community, British art historian Francis Francina suggests that figures like Alfred Barr and *ARTNews* director Thomas Hess were trying to equate modern

¹⁶³ Schulze, Franz, "On Painting in America, 1950."

¹⁶⁴ Emphasis mine. Robert C. Kuennen, "To the Public: 1950," in *9 Viewpoints: A Forum*, by Exhibition Momentum (Chicago: Momentum, 1950).

¹⁶⁵ John Laska, "An Open Letter to the Artist," in *9 Viewpoints: A Forum*, by Exhibition Momentum (Chicago: Momentum, 1950).

art with freedom in the late 1940s and early 1950s—well before the 1959 international exhibitions of government agencies would promulgate American culture in the form of American Abstraction.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, such defensive behavior is evident in Greenberg's actions. During a 1951 controversy over the paranoid rumors of the Communist infiltration of political news magazines, Greenberg made the first public charges against the editors of *The Nation*, a publication to which he had regularly contributed in the 1930s. Congressman Dondero was “delighted” with the accusations and had them published in the *Congressional Record*. Although Greenberg was more closely associated with socialist political thought in the 1930s, often categorized as one of the “Popular Front” intellectuals, this adopted anti-communist vigilance persisted from the late 1940s throughout much of his life, even as late as 1981 when he described Pollock as “a Goddam Stalinist” to T.J. Clark.¹⁶⁷ As an editor for widely read journals such as *Commentary* and member of groups including the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, Greenberg strongly influenced the anti-Soviet views of fellow intellectuals.¹⁶⁸

As art historian Jonathan Katz argues in his 1996 article “Passive Resistance,” the rhetoric of alienation so central to the Abstract Expressionist mythos of the artist eventually gave

¹⁶⁶ He discusses this particularly in relation to the controversy surrounding Picasso's 1951 *Massacre en Corée* and the problems this political work posed for Barr's formal narrative of modernism. An exchange between Barr and Hess revealed Hess' concern over publishing a story on the work that might raise political controversy as the painting depicts ostensibly American soldiers massacring Korean women and children. Barr wrote, as warning or advice, “This big picture was shown publicly this spring... and was generally considered as an anti-American propaganda pic.” As cited in Frascina, “The Politics of Representation,” 141–142.

¹⁶⁷ Timothy J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 400.

¹⁶⁸ See Annette Cox on this affinity between Greenberg and Dondero in *Art-as-Politics*. Annette Cox, *Art-As-Politics: The Abstract Expressionist Avant-Garde and Society* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 142. Greenberg was editor of *Commentary* from 1945 to 1957. Benjamin Balint notes that Greenberg was among the ranks of Jewish intellectuals who laid the foundation for the neo-Conservative movement. Cultural critics like Leslie Fielder were regular contributors to *Commentary*. Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary: The Contentious Magazine That Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010). See also George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945* (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998).

way to the culture of consensus, or the “embourgeoisement of the American intelligentsia.”¹⁶⁹ Katz suggests the “passivity” that discursively characterized post-Abstract Expressionist art is a function of a closeted mode of cultural negotiation practiced during the Cold War by the “intellectual Organization Man.” Katz applies the characteristics of William Whyte’s 1956 *The Organization Man*’s group-oriented businessman to describe the shifted tenor of the postwar intellectual community.¹⁷⁰ This accommodating intellectualism saw numerous attempts at the rewriting of intellectual history to erase dissent in favor of the affirmation of American capitalist success in the postwar years.¹⁷¹ As such, while the Art Institute posited its embrace of the avant-garde abstraction as anti-Communist, a celebration of American freedoms, from the perspective of Leon Golub and his “Critique,” this turn towards abstraction and a focus on “Form” over “Content” would be considered *evasive* in its turn away from any discernable statement about recent historical events. When Selz’s 1959 *New Images of Man* exhibition at MoMA was all but universally dismissed, the vast majority of critical responses were rooted in formalist interpretation.¹⁷² The privileging of art that might be valued through “eyesight alone,” in Greenberg’s famous words, rather than through referential, or even narrative, content is arguably a way to retreat from the overtly regionalist or populist works of the 1930s, like that of Pollock’s early mentor Thomas Hart Benton.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Eric Goldman, *The Crucial Decade and After: America 1945-60*, 301, as cited in Jonathan D. Katz, “Passive Resistance: On the Success of Queer Artists in Cold War America,” *Image 3* (December 1996): 128.

¹⁷⁰ Whyte, *The Organization Man*.

¹⁷¹ In particular, Katz looks to *Partisan Review*’s 1952 symposium “Our Country, Our Culture” as evidence of the intellectuals “abandonment” of his historically alienated position. He also points to the understanding that intellectuals had achieved a “rough consensus” as described in Daniel Bell’s 1960 *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. Bell’s text further argued that the concerns of “ideology” discussed by the Popular Front intellectuals of the 1930s had been obviated by the postwar capitalist success. Katz, “Passive Resistance: On the Success of Queer Artists in Cold War America,” 126–129.

¹⁷² Raverty, “Critical Perspectives on New Images of Man,” 63.

¹⁷³ Revisiting an essay on “The New Sculpture” from 1949, Greenberg revised in 1958, “The human body is no longer postulated as the agent of space in either pictorial or sculptural art; now it is eyesight alone, and eyesight has

In Jaffee's retrospective estimation, figuration was perceived as a capitulation to McCarthyist anti-Communism, but in actuality it the situation was not nearly so clear-cut. The Depression-era Works Progress Administration funded regionalist art of the kind produced by Benton through the Federal Arts Project; the arts patronage of the New Deal was, in part, to create a nation-wide visual program in order to promote a sense of patriotism and unity. Benton eventually took credit for the apparent renaissance of American art, claiming that the New Deal arts projects were inspired by regionalist painters like himself, Grant Wood, and John Steuart Curry.¹⁷⁴ Ironically, Benton never actually completed a mural for the New Deal agency; though he supported the government's investment in the nation's collective culture, Benton did not want to give up his aesthetic control.¹⁷⁵ The younger generation of American artists, which included iconic members of the New York School such as Pollock, de Kooning, and Rothko, had been employees of the WPA, and had come into contact with poverty and radical politics through their work in the government program.¹⁷⁶ However, the rise of American abstraction coincided with the rising fear of Communism and the establishment of the postwar discourse of masculinity, as discussed in chapter one. One of the dominant discourses, an axiomatic interpretation even, of Abstract Expressionism is that the formal qualities of the work reveal the inner nature of the artist, usually in terms of his virility and originality—politicized qualities in postwar America, as we have seen in the previous chapters. Indeed, Serge Guilbaut argues, in his widely influential 1985 book *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, that the implication

more freedom of movement and invention within three dimensions than within two." Clement Greenberg, "The New Sculpture," (1958) reprinted in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 143.

¹⁷⁴ Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism*, 136.

¹⁷⁵ As art historian Erika Doss points out, during the New Deal "[h]e was given a postal commission in 1935 and made a few pencil studies. While he was initially enthusiastic about being 'in on something which I believe has genuinely significant cultural prospects for the country,' he soon turned the project down, claiming the 'subject matter... was just a bore.'" Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ For more on the shift from the populism of Regionalist artists and the WPA programs (and the New York artists' employment in them) to the individualism of Abstract Expressionism, see Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism*.

of these qualities is what made Abstract Expressionism such a popular propagandistic tool for the promulgation of American ideology overseas.¹⁷⁷

While there was still lingering political suspicion surrounding this new American Modernism, by the mid-1950s the alignment between the American values of individuality and freedom and the Abstract Expressionists had been established.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, in his 1956 article “A New Imagery in Painting,” Selz laments the disturbing implied accusations that anyone not “raising the banner” for Abstract Expressionism has Marxist sympathies—the tables had apparently turned.¹⁷⁹ Selz’s point about the political allegiances associated with artists deploying abstraction is not just frustrated posturing about critical disinterest in representational work. In addition to his *New Images of Man* show, 1959 also saw two major travelling exhibitions of American Art: MoMA’s *The New American Painting* and *American Painting and Sculpture*, in

¹⁷⁷ Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*. Francis Francina notes in his revised introduction to *Pollock and After* that the 1970s were a moment of relative openness that enabled the questions raised by Max Kozloff and Eva Cockcroft about the relationship between art and culture and the State and its agencies, and that it was due in part to the shifting political and cultural environment brought about by the anti-Vietnam War and civil rights movements. Francis Francina, *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (Psychology Press, 2000), 2.

¹⁷⁸ This suspicion was made evident in the controversy over the United States Information Agency’s decision to cancel the international tour of *Sport in Art*. The exhibition was organized by the non-profit American Federation of Art and was financially supported by *Sports Illustrated* of Time, Inc., and the show’s purpose was to represent the United States at the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Australia. However, as it toured the United States before its voyage overseas, it encountered strong resistance in Dallas, Texas. Texan businessman, and supporter of Senator Joseph McCarthy, Haroldson Lafayette Hunt discovered that the annual report of the House Un-American Activities Committee listed ten artists included in the *Sport* exhibition, including Max Weber and Ben Shahn, significantly a *figural* artist who would run into more trouble in 1959, as discussed below. Hunt and his supporters demanded that the offending artists be removed from the show or that the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts cancel its offer to host the exhibition. While the Dallas museum refused to cooperate, the USIA was distressed by the controversy and canceled the exhibition’s appearance in Australia. This outraged the national art community; *Arts* magazine reprinted “A Statement of Artistic Freedom” first drafted by the AFA in 1954 that exclaimed:

We believe that in this period of international tension and threats to democracy from both without and within our country, it is essential that our nation should champion these fundamental rights in all its cultural activities...our nation should demonstrate the artistic freedom and diversity which are inherent in a democratic society. We believe that such freedom and diversity are the most effective answers to totalitarian thought and control and uniformity, and the most effective proof of the strength of democracy.

J.M., “Spectrum: Dondero, Dallas, and Defeatism,” *Arts* 30 (July 1956): 9.

Such conflicts about how to enact democracy in the face of totalitarianism reveal the tenuous constructions of “freedom.” See Jane De Hart Mathews, “Art and Politics in Cold War America,” *American Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (October 1976): 762–87.

¹⁷⁹ See Cockcroft, “Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War.”
Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting,” 292.

part curated by then-Whitney Museum Director Lloyd Goodrich. *The New American Painting* traveled across Europe and served, in critic Hilton Kramer's estimation, to present another facet of a quintessential American identity to the world.¹⁸⁰ *American Painting and Sculpture* was a United States Information Agency (USIA) show that was included in the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow which featured aspects American life and culture. Attacks on the USIA show resulted in what was popularly termed the "Moscow controversy" and a special hearing of the House Un-American Activities Committee on July 1, 1959 in which allegations of communist sympathies were made against one-third of the artists in the show. The only two subpoenaed to appear before the committee out of the twenty-two artists accused were Ben Shahn and Philip Evergood, both artists working with figural subject matter.¹⁸¹

This alignment with figuration and communism is echoed in curator and art historian William Rubin's highly critical review of the 1959 *New Images* show, in which he dismisses the politicized content of many of the works.¹⁸² To better understand the ideological roots of his dismissal, it helps to look to another work of criticism published that same year. In November of 1959, he wrote a response to a book review by Lionel Abel in *Arts*, edited by Hilton Kramer. Abel reviewed Arnold Hauser's book *The Philosophy of Art History* in the prior issue. Rubin clearly had Hauser's 1951 *The Social History of Art* in mind when he responded to Abel's book review, as he attributes different political qualities to abstraction and "realism." While abstraction has a "sense of freedom...individuality and imaginativeness," realism "can be used

¹⁸⁰ Frascina quotes Hilton Kramer's review of MoMA's *The New American Painting*: "American painting of the Abstract Expressionist school has recently joined the curious company of jazz, blue jeans, Coca-Cola, Marilyn Monroe, and the plays of Tennessee Williams as one of the more arresting symbols of American life." Kramer as cited in Frascina, "Revision, Revisionism and Rehabilitation, 1959/1999," 106.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² William Rubin, "New Images of Man," *Art International* 3, no. 9 (1959): 1–5.

to advantage in a totalitarian situation as a propaganda arm of the state.”¹⁸³ Perhaps unsurprisingly, his point, if not his language, closely follows that of Clement Greenberg’s 1939 “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” wherein the critic argues that kitsch’s broad appeal and accessible content can be more easily co-opted for propagandistic use.¹⁸⁴ According to this point of view, the avant-garde, conversely, requires a level of thoughtful engagement that resists such political manipulation; Greenberg published this article just one year after the Soviet Union banned modern art and declared social realism its officially sanctioned style of art.¹⁸⁵ In his 1959 letter to *Arts*, Rubin transposes this politicizing binary neatly on to abstraction and realism, clearly the same as Greenberg’s argument of twenty years prior. This affiliation of the figural and social realism with communism was established in France in a way that may very well have influenced Greenberg and other critics to read this parallel in the United States. Further affirming its instability as in the postwar United States, the French Communist Party declared its official support of socialist realism as of September 1947.¹⁸⁶

Despite the distance between his work and socialist realism, Leon Golub recounted that his even his figures prompted accusations of Fascism. In his 1968 interview with Irving Sandler, he said:

LG: Yes. Did I tell you that somebody came up here once and said that this was Nazi art?

IS: Why? How did they get that?

LG: Well, I had a book once - you know I go snooping everywhere – of [Arno Breker’s] work. He was one of the Nazi artists. These heroes with their great chests and pure faces and flowing hair, and so on.

IS: Your [work] doesn't look like that.

¹⁸³ William Rubin, “Letter,” *Arts Magazine* 34, no. 2 (November 1959): 7.

¹⁸⁴ Clement Greenberg, “The Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” *Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (1939): 34–49.

¹⁸⁵ Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism*, 278.

¹⁸⁶ Frascina, “Revision, Revisionism and Rehabilitation, 1959/1999,” 101.

LG: No, that's what I say. But this man said it's Nazi art. I know what he means. I'm not unsympathetic to what he's saying. We had a great discussion on the subject.¹⁸⁷

Breker was an artist lauded in Germany's Third Reich as the antithesis of so-called "degenerate" modernism, and was best known for his Classically formed nudes—particularly ideal male nudes, like his *Prometheus* of 1934.¹⁸⁸ (fig. 59) Prior to the war, such academic nudes were constructed as the embodiments of the ideals of truth and beauty. Indeed, in the previous chapter I touched upon the conservative ideological investment in the academically rendered body, as in early twentieth century popularity of Beaux-Arts educated Chicago sculptor Loredto Taft.¹⁸⁹ However, in the wake of fascism's spread across Europe and the establishment of social realism as the official styles of the Stalinist regime in the USSR and the Communist Party in France, such heroic images of the ideal male body were perceived as possibly possessing a more sinister undercurrent, in which the depicted subject is a tool to be used by the totalitarian state. As we have seen, this runs counter to the crucial construction of postwar American masculinity as a liberated and individualistic figure, in spite of *Prometheus*' ideal musculature and aggressive posture.

Golub points out that the fascist heroic subject imaged in works like Breker's could also be vulnerable, as long as this vulnerability was in service of the state. He writes:

When the body becomes full and man makes these gestures and the hero appears on the stage of history, even when his hero is vulnerable - even the Nazis would have felt the hero at some point could be vulnerable because

¹⁸⁷ The transcription reads "Arnold Bruckner," but I am fairly certain Arno Breker is the artist discussed. Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 26.

¹⁸⁸ Arno Breker and Charles Despiau, *Arno Breker* (Paris: Flammarion, 1942).

¹⁸⁹ As discussed in my introduction, some key texts which underpin my understanding of the male body as a signifier for state and phallic power include Dyer, "Don't Look Now"; Solomon-Godeau, *Male Trouble*. Dyer especially talks about the significance of the muscled-body as an extension of the state's maintenance of power. Also especially useful in understanding Breker's hard, muscle-bound bodies in the context of fascist Germany is Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*; Theweleit, *Male Fantasies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*.

they could die for the state, you see. That's a beautiful death, you know. So they're vulnerable.¹⁹⁰

This construction of the vulnerable hero runs parallel to one of the primary reasons I have pointed to for the marginalization of the veteran in postwar American society: the construction of military violence, committed and endured, as a “normal ill” of the soldier-cum-veteran subject. Of course, in a work like Breker’s *Kameradschaft (Comradeship)* (undated), dying in service is not only rendered “normal,” it is heroized. (fig. 60) The sculptural frieze depicts two brothers in arms, the younger figure is dead, hanging limp in his comrade’s massive and supportive arms. The older, bearded comrade looks off to his left with intensity, perhaps signaling the need for vengeance. And yet, it is indeed a “beautiful” death—his classical form remains intact and on view. His pronounced musculature marks him both as an ideal constitutive product of the state, while his death signifies his devotion to the state through sacrifice.¹⁹¹

As discussed in the first chapter, this heroized vulnerability was also an element of media produced about and in service of the Second World War effort in the United States.¹⁹² Golub, too, depicts his subjects as vulnerable, but in a vastly different capacity. While Breker’s figures are inviolate, even in death, the physical integrity of Golub’s figures is nearly always compromised. Indeed, art historian Donald Kuspit writes, “[t]here is not one Golub figure, not one Golub object, that is not somatically disturbed...”¹⁹³ Art historian Jon Bird writes of the “classical trace” in Golub’s works, but rather than embodying classical ideals, his works reference the decay and

¹⁹⁰ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 26.

¹⁹¹ Indeed, if the fallen subject were *not* classically rendered then his death would not be such a sacrifice, as it would not be an ideal subject lost.

¹⁹² Karen Hall’s example of the “last stand” narrative in combat entertainment is a particularly apt example. Hall, “False Witness: Combat Entertainment and Citizen Training in the United States.”

¹⁹³ Donald Kuspit, *The Existential/Activist Painter: The Example of Leon Golub* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

erosion of works subject to the passage of time.¹⁹⁴ *Thwarted* (1953) recalls the Hellenistic *Belvedere Torso* (1st century BCE), but emphasizes its truncated, broken state, rather than its pronounced musculature.¹⁹⁵ (fig. 61 and 62) The vulnerability suggested by truncation of form is escalated in his paintings *The Skin (Crawling Man II)* of 1954 and *Damaged Man* (1955). (figs. 63 and 64) The central figure of *The Skin* has been flayed and pinned open, apparently upside down; its wide-eyed mask like face staring out at the viewer from the bottom of the canvas. *Damaged Man* has been flayed right-side up and its inside revealed as rough and scarred—this would be one of the five works Golub contributed to Selz’s *New Images of Man* exhibition. The flayed body is also evident in Cohen’s *Flight* (1952). (fig. 44) Despite its aspirational title, the image recalls a pinned butterfly, or skin peeled back from flesh. The overlapping figural signs, which include multiple sets of eyes, ears, and nostrils, evoke his earlier *Avenger*, but in *Flight* the features become even more disparate, no longer rooted in a wholly discernable body. This disassembling of form is also evident in his assemblage works, such as *Anybody’s Self-Portrait* (1953). (fig. 6)

Throughout the decade the surfaces of Golub’s figures, their skin, seems to deteriorate more and more, a product of his experimentation with the repeated process of the application and

¹⁹⁴ Bird points out, Golub was not as interested in the Classical period of Ancient Greece. Describing his nine month fellowship in Italy from 1956-1957, Bird writes, “Golub recollected in particular the lasting effect of encountering late Roman (‘gross, vulgar, barbaric’) and Etruscan (‘ferociously humane’) art in the Naples museum – experiences that served to reinforce his earlier art-historical and aesthetic interests.” Bird also writes of the “awkwardness” (Golub’s own term) that characterizes his figures, a feature that sets them decidedly apart from their often ancient sources, and points to the existential unsettledness or alienation often at issue in Golub’s early work. Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 28, 16–17.

Donald Kuspit’s 1985 monograph on Golub also deals extensively with the classicism of Golub’s work. He argues that Golub dehumanizes the classical ideal of heroic masculinity by fusing it with the primitive, and “paradoxically, Golub reveals that ideal classical man is the most monstrous self imaginable in the modern world, just because he is so unrealistically human.” Kuspit, *The Existential/Activist Painter*, 22.

¹⁹⁵ This truncation of form is also evident in works like *Crucifix* (1956).

scraping away of lacquer on canvas.¹⁹⁶ He completed his first series of *Burnt Men* paintings in 1954, which recall the earlier works of George Cohen. Common to both *Burnt Man I* (1954) and Cohen's *Avenger* (1950) is the hieratic frontal pose, mask-like face, and gap at the apex of the legs, a conspicuous absence of the phallus (given Golub's gendered title), and significant counter-form to the rhetoric of virility surrounding the action painting of Jackson Pollock. (figs. 8 and 43) While his second series of *Burnt Men*, produced in 1960, are not peeled apart in the manner of *The Skin* or *Burnt Man I*, the scabrous surfaces of the figures allude to the same sense of vulnerability or penetrability. His *Colossal Heads I* and *Reclining Youth* (both of 1959) both feature the Hellenistic influence visible in *Thwarted*; the *Colossal Heads* can be linked to "Constantinian gigantism" while the reference for *Youth* is the *Dying Gaul*.¹⁹⁷ Both works, furthermore, are monumental in scale: the *Heads* are nearly ten feet in length, and the *Youth* thirteen. (figs. 66-69) The figures, however, are cracked and abraded. While the power of the *Gaul* comes in large part from the figure's emotive posture, elegant in his vulnerability and defeat, Selz describes the youth as "brutalized and reduced to more simple and primitive articulation."¹⁹⁸ Golub's *Youth*, conversely, is stoic, removed from a similar heroizing narrative. While the figure is relatively whole compared to earlier works like *Hamlet* or *The Skin*, the red lacquer glows like open wounds.

Golub's artist statement for the *New Images of Man* catalogue description offers four possible interpretations of his recent paintings, including their heroic capacities. Their heroism, however, is to *endure*, rather than in service of the state. Indeed, the first of his statements read:

¹⁹⁶ This process-heavy technique is manner in which Golub is often linked with the Abstract Expressionists and Rosenberg's 1952 notion of "action painting." See especially the compared portraits of Golub at work in his studio and Hans Namuth's iconic photographs of Jackson Pollock in Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 16.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 33.

Golub's admiration for the *Dying Gaul* predated his time in Italy. In his interview with Irving Sandler, he notes that when he was a child his father gave him a book on the "Wonders of the World" and the only thing he remembers of it was the *Dying Gaul*. Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 4, 1968, Tape 1, Side 2, 14.

¹⁹⁸ Selz, *New Images of Man*, 79.

“[m]an is seen as having undergone a holocaust or facing annihilation or mutation. The ambiguities of these huge forms indicate the stress of their vulnerability versus their capacities for endurance.”¹⁹⁹ This conflict is precisely what Selz focuses on in his essay for the exhibition: “[t]he apparent contradiction between man’s impotence achieved through mutilation and his courage to survive is the key to Golub’s imagery.”²⁰⁰ It is a far cry from what Selz describes as the monumental quality of Golub’s later work, which he reads as a testament to the artist’s faith in human endurance; indeed, Golub is quoted in *Time* magazine’s 1959 profile of Chicago artists “Here Come the Monsters,” as saying “Other painters are tearing man apart, but not me. I’m giving him a monumental image. I want man to survive.”²⁰¹ The monumentality or “heroism” of Golub’s images, then, are not about an infallible subject of the state, but nor can they bear the weight of the idealized construction of the nation’s postwar identity, as Abstract Expressionism was made to in the overseas exhibits organized by the CIA and USIA. In an ironic turn from Clement Greenberg’s 1939 “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” and subsequent constructs of the avant-garde, such as William Rubin’s critique of figuration twenty years later, the discourse surrounding Abstract Expressionism overlapped with and became a constitutive element of the postwar discourses of masculinity and the construction of the national identity as liberating force, which enabled it to serve as propagandistic carriers for the state.²⁰² As illustrated, both of the discourses of masculinity and nation identity orbited around the construct of the ideal male citizen as virile and individualistic. As Jon Bird writes, the “[c]lassical referenes and a primitivizing reduction of the figure to its most minimal expressive signifiers reconfigure the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 76.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ “Art: Here Come the Monsters,” 62.

²⁰² Greenberg, “The Avant-Garde and Kitsch”; Rubin, “Letter.”

body as irrevocably ‘other’.”²⁰³ Ultimately Golub’s figures, even in their “heroic” monumentality, were untenable bearers of these discourses because of their insistence on vulnerability.

New Images of Man

The *New Images of Man* exhibition, with which this project opened, can be interpreted as a sort of climax of several narratives. It was, as art historian Franz Schulze writes in his 1972 survey of Chicago art *Fantastic Images*, in the moments before the exhibition that “the notion began to circulate locally that the figurative, ‘humanistic,’ story-telling art lately associated with Chicago was about to make a serious challenge to the New York School, possibly for eventual national leadership.”²⁰⁴ Indeed, just a few months prior to the show Thomas Folds reported that Chicago School “will have secured at least a beachhead in New York” though admitted whether or not it “constitutes a major threat to the pervasive influence of Abstract-Expressionism” remains to be seen.²⁰⁵ As detailed in the introduction to this project, the Chicagoans and their supporters did not receive a warm welcome, nor was the exhibition especially well received. Schulze recalled that in the 1960s, “the idea of the Chicago School became gradually abhorrent in many quarters here. It was no longer taken as a sign of a vigorous and potentially important

²⁰³ Bird, *Echoes of the Real*, 25.

Bird later writes “Whereas Golub’s classically inspired works bear the imprint of time and history as eternal conflict, the *Napalm* and *Vietnam* paintings render palpable in pigment and canvas the body under duress—its vulnerability and otherness.” Of course while Golub’s paintings become more contemporary in subject matter, I would argue their underlying structure is the same as his early works; his figures are *always* under duress. Ibid., 49.

²⁰⁴ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 26.

²⁰⁵ Folds cites Cohen’s solo exhibition at the Alan gallery, Golub’s solo show at Chicago art dealer Alan Frumkin’s newly opened gallery in New York, as well as the *New Images* show which included works by Golub, Cosmo Campoli, and H.C. Westermann. Folds, “The New Images of the Chicago Group,” 52.

communal viewpoint, but as a reflection of provincialism—not only in practice but in the very postulation of such an idea.”²⁰⁶

The exhibition, however, was not just an attempt to earn greater recognition for the Chicago School and its recently dubbed “Monster Roster,” though this certainly was an objective of former-Chicagoan Selz. Selz offered *New Images* as a challenge to Abstract Expressionism, both in terms of the privileging of abstraction through the dominance of formalist readings of art, but also the supposedly direct expression attributed to the movement. While he does not articulate this as such in his catalogue essay, he writes in a letter to New York critic Emily Genauer that the exhibition was planned “as a presentation of work generally outside the Abstract Expressionist movement and partially in reaction against it.”²⁰⁷ He groups the artists of show as taking “the human predicament rather than formal structure... as their starting point. Existence rather than essence is of the greatest concern to them.”²⁰⁸ Selz’s introduction to the exhibition takes it as a given that the dominant mode of interpretation of postwar works has taken form as its point of departure.²⁰⁹ He rejects this blanket reading of the motivations of contemporary abstract painters, claiming “their response to [the revelations and complexities of mid-twentieth-century life] is often deeply human without making use of recognizable human imagery,” specifically citing Rothko and Pollock.²¹⁰ Indeed, Selz makes a concerted effort here to be inclusive of the abstraction of New York as addressing mid-century

²⁰⁶ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 27.

²⁰⁷ Letter to Emily Genauer, May 1960, Museum of Modern Art Archives, Alfred H. Barr Papers, as cited in Frascina, “Revision, Revisionism and Rehabilitation, 1959/1999,” 111.

²⁰⁸ Selz, *New Images of Man*, 11.

²⁰⁹ While certainly the idea that abstract and most famously Abstract Expressionist work is solely concerned with the optical has long been complicated, contemporaneously by those like Harold Rosenberg, who invested existential meaning in Action Painting, and by “revisionist” art historians like Eva Cockcroft and Serge Guilbaut who recognized the political implication of the formal turn.

²¹⁰ “It is found, for instance, in Mark Rothko’s expansive ominous surfaces of silent contemplation, or in Jackson Pollock’s wildly intensive act of vociferous affirmation with its total commitment by the artist.” Selz, *New Images of Man*, 11.

angst, even though his descriptions of Abstract Expressionism and its supporters in his earlier “New Imagery” article are much harsher. Most likely this is an attempt at diplomacy, given his new position as a curator of painting and sculpture exhibitions at the New York MoMA, a well-established champion of action painting.

Furthermore, the critics who reviewed the show were speaking from a formalist mode of critique; art historian Dennis Raverty notes that Dore Ashton’s review for *Arts and Architecture* was the only major review of the exhibition that did not take a formalist approach, and even this comparatively generous response to the figural nature of the works on view seemed to reject its “content-laden” nature.²¹¹ The show included the works of twenty-three painters and sculptors, ten European and thirteen American. Included among the Europeans were Alberto Giacometti, Karel Appel, Francis Bacon, and Jean Dubuffet. The Americans included Richard Diebenkorn, Jan Müller, as well as three Chicagoans: Cosmo Campoli, Leon Golub, and H.C. Westermann. Chicago was better represented than any other single location. Selz did, however, also include two of the best-known Abstract Expressionists, Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning.²¹²

Selz’s inclusion of such heavy-weight abstractionists was intended to undermine the near hegemonic formalist reading of contemporary artwork. Selz acknowledges the Cubist lineage of contemporary art, as outlined by Greenberg in his 1955 article “‘American-Type’ Painting,” and acquiesces that the works in the exhibit “would be impossible without the cubist revolution in body image and in pictorial space.”²¹³ However, he asserts that while Picasso and Braque were “playing with reality for larger formal reasons,” the *New Images* artists were more concerned with psychological presentation.²¹⁴ Indeed, he suggests these artists “are inheritors of the

²¹¹ Raverty, “Critical Perspectives on New Images of Man,” 63.

²¹² Selz, *New Images of Man*.

²¹³ Ibid., 12.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 13.

romantic tradition” and suggests they owe a great deal to the “emotional urgen[cy]” of the Expressionists.²¹⁵ Of course this rhetoric was also deeply embedded in the rhetoric of Abstract Expressionism, particularly in the existential interpretation of Harold Rosenberg, but Selz’s perspective, as previously iterated in his 1956 “A New Imagery in American Painting,” is that figural artworks offer a more compelling interpretation of the “human situation, indeed the human predicament” because of their discernable and therefore more comprehensible imagery.²¹⁶

Including Pollock and de Kooning added to the prestige of Selz’s first curated exhibition, although he chose works that had been contested in critical coverage. Selz chose a selection of Pollock’s black and white paintings and de Kooning’s *Woman* series, both from the early 1950s. The black and white paintings were among those harshly rejected by Greenberg, champion of Pollock’s late 1940s abstraction, precisely because they marked a return to representational painting. The shift in tenor of Greenberg’s coverage of Pollock’s work is a testament to the stringent limitations of Greenberg’s formalism and this same shift can be seen in the critical responses that followed his lead. While his 1948 review posited Pollock as a competitor for “recognition as the greatest American painter of the twentieth century,” Greenberg was decidedly cold in his reviews when the artist reintroduced figuration into his painting. In a review of the 1954 exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery he called some of his pictures “forced, pumped, dressed up.”²¹⁷ Such a description cuts against Greenberg’s earlier assessment of the

²¹⁵ Ibid., 12–13.

²¹⁶ Selz, “A New Imagery in American Painting”; Selz, *New Images of Man*, 11.

²¹⁷ Clement Greenberg, “Review of Exhibitions of Worden Day, Carl Holty, and Jackson Pollock,” (1948) reprinted in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2: *Arrogant Purpose, 1945–49*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 203; Greenberg, “‘American-Type’ Painting,” 226.

virility of Pollock's emotion as "not having to be castrated," implying a lack that needed to be obscured through window-dressing.²¹⁸

So, if Abstract Expressionism allowed for a new artistic freedom, it seems that, as far as formalist critical models legislated, Pollock was really only free to be himself if he was Greenberg's idea of Pollock, which made him a crucial figure in the evolutionary narrative of modernist painting towards pictorial flatness and optical space. In his "'American-Type' Painting," Greenberg traces Pollock's most exciting work to the late 1940s with his "all-over" painting, that built off the legacy of Picasso and Braque's Analytical Cubism, indeed taking it to the "utter abstractness for which [it] seemed headed." But in Greenberg's estimation, like Picasso and Braque thirty years prior, Pollock turned back from this "stylistic evolution" in 1951, "[w]hen he found himself halfway between easel painting and an uncertain kind of mural." Greenberg continues, "[a]nd it was in the next year that, for the first time since arriving at artistic maturity, he became profoundly unsure of himself."²¹⁹ Invoking the terms of maturity and confidence, Greenberg's dismantling of Pollock's work also undermines his stability as strong, masculine subject.

Greenberg was similarly unimpressed by de Kooning's figural shift. While he describes the artist as "a mature artist long before his first show [in 1948]" and lauds his ambition, he also notes that he has "won quicker and wider acceptance in this country than any of the other original 'abstract expressionists'; his need to include the past as well as to forestall the future seems to reassure a lot of people who still find Pollock incomprehensible."²²⁰ This quip suggests that de Kooning's figurative work is stunted and regressive and ultimately a roadblock in

²¹⁸ As explored in chapter one, Lacan's concept of the masculine masquerade is helpful in understanding the way that such phrasing implies a gendered rhetoric.

²¹⁹ Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting," 218.

²²⁰ Ibid., 213–214.

Greenberg's described "evolution" towards a purely optical work. Furthermore, the notion that de Kooning's work is "reassuring" in comparison with Pollock does nothing to affirm his positing in the avant-garde—such a comforting quality would render his work "kitsch" in the binary terms of Greenberg's 1939 "Avant-garde and Kitsch."²²¹

Greenberg's criticism of Pollock's "regression" is aggressive and rather overblown. Even in extolling the accomplishments of *One* and *Lavendar Mist* of 1950, Greenberg is quick to add a parenthetical: "(But in 1951 Pollock had turned to the other extreme, as if in violent repentance, and had done a series of paintings, in linear black alone, that took back almost everything he had said in the three previous years.)"²²² Greenberg's criticism notwithstanding, the black and white paintings remain entrenched in the abstract. (fig. 69) Though biomorphic forms can be picked out—some wispy drips that might look like eyelashes, for instance—they remain far distanced from the figure, especially when compared to the paintings of de Kooning, let alone those of Golub. Frank O'Hara wrote the essay for Pollock's catalogue chapter, given the artist's death three years prior. It serves as an important reminder on the laden meanings and political significance of abstraction and figuration. He writes:

their compulsive figurative elements call forth associations which are totally false: we mistake the artist's subconscious for our own. Each work is a unique statement, simultaneously in terms of imagery and of esthetic stance....As images they are counter to the theory of the collective unconscious; they are private and mysterious....Pollock did not 'take up' the figure as a means of clearer communication. He employed it as one of the elements in an elaborate defense of his psyche."²²³

²²¹ Greenberg, "The Avant-Garde and Kitsch."

Greenberg continues to diminish de Kooning by aligning him with a movement that ended forty years earlier. While Pollock managed to move Picasso's and Braque's explorations into uncharted territory, de Kooning was in arrested development in Greenberg's eyes. Ostensibly in reference to de Kooning's *Woman* paintings, he writes, [h]e does remain a Late Cubist...[t]he method of his savagery continued to be almost old-fashionedly, and anxiously, Cubist underneath the flung and tortured color, when he left abstract for a while to attack the female figure...." Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting," 214.

²²² Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting," 228.

²²³ Selz, *New Images of Man*, 123.

Although the critics of the *New Images* exhibit followed suit with Greenberg's interpretive model, seemingly uninterested in the "content" or "meaning" of the works, O'Hara marks Pollock's "figural" works as inextricably linked with psychic experience. While some argued that abstraction allowed direct expression of the inner mind of the artist, O'Hara's reading of Pollock's paintings suggests that this figurative work both invites a universalizing engagement but also is a uniquely personal mode of expression. This nod to the collective unconscious evokes Pollock's pre-drip practice of painting Jungian archetypes, but perhaps after the painter's downward spiral and tragic death, which Amelia Jones describes as his "hysterical fall into immanence," O'Hara is compelled to read this fraught personal experience into his paintings.²²⁴

This inward turn, as we have seen, was one of the possibilities of Abstract Expressionism that positioned it as a liberating work.²²⁵ In the same year as Greenberg's "'American-Type' Painting" Adolph Gottlieb published an article entitled "Artist and Society: A Brief Case History." Gottlieb begins his statement with his expectations of the isolated and alienated status of the artist: "I had been brought up to accept the idea that it was the destiny of the artist, in our time, to be quietly dedicated to the values of art, and to be equally dedicated to a resistance to the stony ignorance of aesthetic illiterates."²²⁶ This alienated state, Gottlieb argues, means that "[t]he modern artist does not paint in relation to public needs or social needs—he paints only in relation to his own needs. And *then he finds that there are isolated individuals, who respond to his work.*"²²⁷ This is precisely the sentiment that Golub pushes against so adamantly in his

²²⁴ Jones cites Andrew Perchuk, who writes that Pollock, "became self-conscious that the tremendous strain was not directed toward producing authenticity but a masquerade." Jones, "The 'Pollockian Performative' and the Revision of the Modernist Subject," 80; Perchuk, "Pollock and Postwar Masculinity," 42. This personal scale of expression (which remains anonymous in its inaccessibility) is indeed part of what Golub finds fault with in his critique of Abstract Expressionism.

²²⁵ Rosenberg's 1952 "The American Action Painters" was among the most influential texts in establishing this interpretation of Abstract Expressionism.

²²⁶ Adolph Gottlieb, "Artist and Society: A Brief Case History," *College Art Journal* 14, no. 2 (1955): 96–97.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

“Critique of Abstract Expressionism,” published in the same year. While he, too, recognizes the artist as an alienated subject, in both his “Critique” and his contribution to the 1950 Exhibition Momentum catalogue, “A Law Unto Himself,” Golub argues that the artist’s position in society *should* fill a social need. Golub understands the artist’s role as exploring existential concerns, or as Selz might have it, the “human predicament.” In the context of *New Images of Man*, these concerns are explicitly related to the terrors of the Second World War and the pervasive dread of the Cold War. While Selz writes that the exhibit is concerned with birth and death, the thematic focus of both his and Paul Tillich’s essays is on death: Hiroshima, Buchenwald, and the potential for even worse in the nuclear age.²²⁸

Protestant theologian Paul Tillich authored the prefatory note for the *New Images* catalogue, in which he posed the question that many of the critics unsympathetic to the abstract avant-garde were asking: what has happened to man? Rather than simply lamenting the shift away from an academic representational sort of work, Tillich posits the relatively recent move towards abstraction as an existential metaphor. In the language of the Cold War, he asks, “[w]hat has happened to the reality of our lives? If we listen to the more profound observers of our period, we hear them speak of the danger in which modern man lives: the danger of losing his humanity and of being a thing amongst the things he produces.”²²⁹ Tillich points out the two

²²⁸ Indeed, Selz’s parabolic metaphor for the value and insight in the exhibition’s artwork that is illuminated by their often grotesque forms is the myth of satyr Marsyas’s mastery of the flute: “Apollo’s victory was almost complete, and his divine proportions, conforming to the measure of mathematics, were exalted in fifth-century Athens and have set the standard for the tradition of Western art. But always there was the undercurrent of Marsyas’ beauty struggling past the twisted grimaces of a satyr. These strains have their measure not in the rational world of geometry but in the depth of man’s emotion.” Of course, though Marsyas may be capable of such beautiful flute playing, the consequences of his failure to win the contest against Apollo is being flayed alive. Selz, *New Images of Man*, 11. This quote points to two key points of interest: the “geometric” beauty of Apollo can certainly be read as a reference to the formalism of Greenbergian constructs of abstraction, which Selz aims (in part) to dismantle in his exhibit. Additionally, the tragically fated Marsyas posits the artists of *New Images* as something akin to martyrs. This reinforces the construct of the artist as alienated, but it almost seems to guard against the possibility of the exhibition’s dismissal. Who wouldn’t choose Apollo over Marsyas?

²²⁹ Ibid., 9.

poles in which the individualism of humanity is threatened: totalitarianism and technical mass civilization—in effect: communism *and* capitalism. He also grimly suggests that humanity may very well face its own annihilation in the conflict between the two.²³⁰ Tillich posits dehumanization as a recurrent crisis, and divides humanity into two groups, one which protests this predicament and the other which “resigns itself to becoming a thing amongst things, giving up its individual self.”²³¹ Like Golub in his 1955 “Critique” and Selz in his 1956 “New Imagery,” Tillich questions the presence of individual self that supposedly inhabits Abstract Expressionist works.²³²

Tillich sets up the binary comparison between the seemingly inevitable escapism of abstraction and the capacity for confrontation of figuration. In articulating this against the backdrop of the conditions of the postwar world, Tillich suggests that in dealing with the figure and bodily representation of man, the artists of *New Images* are politically and socially aware and engaging with the existential questions prompted by the world-destroying violence of the Second World War and stultifying climate of the Cold War. By comparison, artists working in an abstract mode are concerned only with “things”—a pejorative statement in the context of the consumerist age of the postwar world.²³³

²³⁰ Perhaps not intentionally, but in pointing to the dehumanization present in the critiques of both communism and capitalism, Tillich makes clear the way that abstraction and figuration could be (and were) instrumentalized by any number of political positions.

²³¹ Selz, *New Images of Man*, 9.

²³² Tillich was intimately familiar with the horrors of war; he served as a chaplain for the German army during World War I and later left Germany after his theological viewpoints brought him into conflict with the Nazi regime which resulted in his dismissal from his professorship the University of Frankfurt in 1933. Selz, too, fled Nazi Germany, arriving with his parents in New York in 1936. Raverty, “Critical Perspectives on New Images of Man,” 63–64.

²³³ This is a false dichotomy. Especially relevant to my own interest is Leja’s interrogation of the theory behind the Mythmaker artists, in particular Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman, and their work immediately following the war. These artists, “portrayed brutality, terror, and danger principally as facts of the natural world or the cosmic order....their primitive origins verified their inevitability.” Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 75. In the years of the Cold War and with the dominance of the formalist mode of interpretation, the politicized strains of these works has been obscured. This occurred in part because of inward turn and aggressive alienation from clear

Selz argued that the new kind of imagery presented in his 1959 exhibition offered clearer, more communicable meaning about the social, political, and existential conditions to which man was subject. This said, while some of the works were explicitly related to the events of the past two decades, they did not necessarily take political stances. For instance, while Golub did not include his earlier works explicitly relating to the Holocaust (though he does invoke a general holocaust or annihilation endured by all subjects in his artist statement), Rico Lebrun's contributions included *Study for Dachau Chamber* (1958) and *Buchenwald Pit* (1955). (fig. 70) Lebrun employs the deeply problematic rhetoric of the "grandness" of such epic suffering: "[i]n the painting of Buchenwald and Dachau I wanted to express the belief that the human image, even when disfigured by the executioner, is grand in meaning. No brutality will ever cancel that meaning. Painting may increase it by changing what is disfigured into what is transfigured."²³⁴ Unfortunately, such framing of suffering transforms the unimaginable horrors endured by living human beings into a stage play, in which victims become actors in tragic narrative about human resilience—ultimately (although likely unintentionally) obviating the need for political action.

Golub also struggles with this elevation of victims in his *Burnt Men* series at the end of the decade, very different from the *Burnt Men* of the mid-1950s. (fig. 71) While those were more "totemic," the more recent works had the appearance of actual burnt flesh, a product of Golub's shifting painting technique, as exhibited in the cracked surfaces of paintings like *Reclining Youth*. In his interview with Irving Sandler, he says, "there's a burnt quality to these kind of heroes, giants, and so on. They've been called humanoid; they're heroes, they're monsters, they're anti-heroes, they represent power; but they also represent savage things." Later in the same interview,

communication of "content" described and promoted by Gottlieb himself. The works remain in the realm of existential lamentation, not social critique.

²³⁴ Selz, *New Images of Man*, 97.

he returns to the *Burnt Men*, “[s]o the burnt men became paradoxically less totemic, more organic and in a certain way more terrible because they were actually like burnt figures. That’s what they were. They weren’t totems. They were burnt men.” This insistence on the physical suffering of human bodies is part of the dynamic of power and violence that becomes literalized in much of Golub’s later work, like the *Mercenaries* and *Interrogation* series of the 1980s. (fig. 72) In 1968, however, Golub is still caught between the tension of heroism and suffering:

I used to understand them as being in a certain sense – what shall I say? They weren’t monsters, I thought of them as men – but as kind of brutalized, which they are. I thought of them as raw, savage, and brutalized. But lately they look to me – and it’s a funny thing to come in contact with – they look to me to be heroic. That’s a funny situation, you know. Now it’ll be even harder to accept them if they’re heroes. There are no heroes. I know this as well as anybody else. There are no heroes today certainly. So in a sense I think there’s a certain amplitude to them even if they’re burnt. There’s a certain resonance about them....I can’t pretend that they’re just brutalized. They’re brutalized but there’s this other thing.²³⁵

Indeed, as discussed earlier, the “heroic” endurance of man underpins Golub’s contributions to *New Images*, but as Golub moved in the 1960s and his rage was increasingly distilled towards the government’s actions in Vietnam, much of the implicit heroism of his primitivist and classically informed figures evaporated.²³⁶ However, the cracked and wounded surfaces of the figures developed in his works of the 1940s and 1950s would persist as signifiers of the penetrable and vulnerable male body.

H.C. Westermann’s *New Images of Man* sculptures, or “objects,” as Selz calls them, are more direct in their depiction of the subject at risk. Selz locates Westermann as part of the Dada revival of the 1950s, and his sculptures carry much of the same sardonic wit and anti-war

²³⁵ Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, October 28, 1968, Tape 1, Side 1, 9.

²³⁶ While Golub’s works always have been about the human subject at the mercy of external forces, his later work makes explicit the powers at play. As touched upon in chapter one, the *Boxers* are a significant moment in which Golub’s figures shift from the general primitive types to the highly specific bodies of his *Napalm* and *Vietnam* paintings.

sentiment.²³⁷ The title of *Evil New War God (S.O.B.)* of 1958 is quite direct in its invocation of the terror of the new capacities for global violence; and he situates this power in the totem of a stout, nasty creature with one hanging hook for an arm and a jutting, phallic spout. (fig. 73) While nearly a decade prior, Arthur Schlesinger described the “evil” and totalitarianism of communism in his 1949 *The Vital Center*, Westermann suggests this locus has shifted; the totem’s chest is stamped with the American motto “In God We Trust.”²³⁸ As demonstrated in the sociological and popular literature of the postwar period, as well as rhetoric around the Abstract Expressionist avant-garde, the postwar American discourse of masculinity both implicitly and explicitly warned that the state’s future was dependent upon the state of the male citizen’s body and psyche. Westermann’s *Evil New War God (S.O.B.)* is a manifestation of this notion, but offers a corrupted state body: implacable and aggressively virile, but clearly not to the liberating ends posited by Schlesinger.²³⁹

While Selz offers more generalized interpretations of the works in the *New Images* catalogue, Westermann’s *Memorial to the Idea of Man If He Was an Idea* (1958) invites a closer reading, perhaps because of its assemblage construction and use of eminently familiar objects.

²³⁷ That Selz refers to them as “objects” is ironically prescient, given Michael Fried’s 1967 critique of Minimalism in “Art and Objecthood,” which reasserts a Greenbergian abstractionist narrative of modernism. Fried claims that “literalist” art, like minimalism, theatricalizes the relationship between object and viewer, a quality often understood to be one of the more affective elements of Westermann’s sculptures, especially those which necessitate an embodied viewer (or even better, handler), such as his house sculptures that include peep holes or death ships whose embedded narrative is enhanced by their physical removal from their constructed cases. See, for instance, his 1958 *Mad House* and 1969 *Abandoned and Listing Death Ship*.

²³⁸ Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center*.

The motto was already an established element on American currency, but Congress chose “In God We Trust” as the new official motto in 1956. Just two years earlier, the Pledge of Allegiance was officially modified to include the phrasing “one nation under God,” as a result of President Eisenhower’s reasoning that it was a belief in God that distinguished the United States from the Soviet Union. McCarthy, *H.C. Westermann at War*, 89.

²³⁹ Preparatory sketches show that Westermann may have intended to include tattoo markers on the sculpture that reflected his own, like the star on his left arm. As McCarthy points out, the sketch also features trace of erased date ranges: “1942-1946” and “Korea 1950-1952.” These are the dates of Westermann’s service in the military: “The work of art is both confession and self-condemnation.” Such guilt was not an acceptable part of the construction of the World War II soldier subject, even while the veteran was rendered a threat to the dominant fiction. McCarthy, *H.C. Westermann at War*, 90.

(fig. 74) Behind the anthropomorphized cabinet's door is a "garish ocean of battle caps." Selz informs the reader, "[t]he helpless Koreans are said to have built themselves houses out of empty beer cans left by the American soldiers."²⁴⁰ Against this background rest what at first glance could be children's toys, but their physical states are compromised: a headless baseball player, an armless trapeze artist, and a sinking ship. While the baseball player, enactor of the American pastime, could stand in as a symbol for the state rendered thoughtless and without reason, the trapeze artist is likely a self-portrait—Westermann was an acrobat in the USO while serving in Korea and frequently pictured himself as a circus performer.²⁴¹ Sculpted without arms, and hanging upside down with a ghoulish grin on his face—the embodiment of the "mad cabinet maker," Westermann's descriptor of himself, stamped on the shelf. The two figures are a player who cannot think, and an acrobat who cannot act. On the shelf below is a small ship. Though integrated into a sculpture, this is one of Westermann's earliest "death ships," an element of personal iconography he would repeatedly return to as a symbol of man's struggle not just against fate, but against the political forces of war and systemic injustice.²⁴² Hidden underneath the shelf, looking down on the sinking ship, is an image of the devil, reiterating the evil nature of militarism articulated the *Evil New War God*.

His third contribution to the exhibition is also explicit in its insistence on the human cost of war. The interior of *Mysterious Yellow Mausoleum* (1958) takes the shape of an austere watchtower; its yellow and black diagonal-striped base reads as a warning. (fig. 75) Peering inside, the viewer is confronted with images of death and defeat, including a crucified figure (possibly a self-portrait, which would be consistent with the *Evil New War God* and *Memorial*),

²⁴⁰ Selz, *New Images of Man*, 145.

²⁴¹ One of his earliest instances of this is his Surrealist influenced *The Reluctant Acrobat* (1949), painted while a student at the SAIC.

²⁴² See, for example, his use of the death ship as pertains to the Civil Rights movement in the early 1960s. "The Ship of the State" and "Slavery and Sacrificed Youth" in McCarthy, *H.C. Westermann at War*, 115–126.

and a woodblock illustration of Corporal John W. January, a veteran of the Civil War. His emaciated body and amputated legs are ironically juxtaposed with graffiti that claims “HE RESTORITH,” as if pointing to the necessary sacrifice, the “normal ills” expected of soldiers. Other elements of the interior of the house are intensely personal, as the *Catalogue Raisonné* describes them, including references to Westermann’s grandfather’s taboo suicide and his mother’s death. McCarthy notes, however, that the inscription of “MAMA 1900-1942” resonates with Westermann’s life as a soldier as well: “[i]t is a reminder that the year of Florita Westermann’s death was also that of her son’s birth as a marine, that she wanted him to become a career naval officer, and that the family home—otherwise a domestic haven from the surrounding world—was the space in which Westermann first envisioned a life of service to his country.”²⁴³ The work conflates the domestic space with the mausoleum, as if stating that it is in daily lived experience that male citizens are trained to sacrifice themselves for the state. Scratched rather discreetly on the lower-right corner of the front “entrance” to the mausoleum is the simple directive: “STOP WAR.”

While the *New Images of Man* show was a professional break for Westermann (although his works did not enjoy a warm reception), he had been working with these themes for years, particularly after his return to the SAIC after serving in the Korean War. Works like *Cross Section of a Man Buried Alive* (1955), *The Dead Burying the Dead* (1956), *My Own Executioner* (1957), and *Monument for a Dead Marine* (1957) are acts of mourning, each quite modest in scale. All but *Monument* have a horizontal orientation and are no longer than 20 inches. While *Monument* recalls a more traditional form of memorialization, in its phallic shape, it does not reach two feet in height, and is topped by a grimacing, upturned horse head, a reference to

²⁴³ Ibid., 83.

Picasso's *Guernica*, exhibited as part of the major Picasso retrospective at the AIC in 1957.²⁴⁴ In addition to the Picasso's anti-war painting, the AIC exhibited *Callot and Goya on War: The Miseries of War by Callot, Contrasted with the Disasters of War by Goya* in the summer of 1958.²⁴⁵ Much like Jean Dubuffet's lecture on the Anticulture, the exhibits may have been influential on Westermann and his Chicago peers; however, they already had been working with images of the body in distress. Perhaps none was quite as literal in anti-war sentiment as Westermann.

While Golub focused his attention on the primitive and grotesque as a way to give form to the horrors of war and the Holocaust, Westermann referenced "low culture" through comic and cartoonish forms—a different sort of "primitivism"—that nonetheless also addressed such atrocities. His first anti-war work, *A Soldier's Dream* (1955), features a small brass body strung up in a wooden box, surrounded by a lustrous red stained glass. (fig. 11) On top of the sculpture, brass flames lick up towards the sky. Art historian David McCarthy describes the figure as "porcine" in shape, which brings to mind the slaughterhouses of Chicago. Just one year later, Peter Selz and Patrick Malone would write their article "Is There a New Chicago School?," opening with a description of the city as "hogbutcher," and this figure, too, seems prepared for slaughter. Like Golub's *The Skin* or *Damaged Man*, *A Soldier's Dream* presents a figure splayed out. Incised in the brass form are the lines of ribs, a distended belly, and genitalia. His arms and legs have been cleanly amputated—affixed to the bottom below the figure is the remainder of just one of the soldier's legs. Invoking dream space in his title, Westermann suggests this is a

²⁴⁴ This horse head also appears in works from earlier in the 1950s, include the painting *The Storm* (1953-54) and the box/sculpture *Untitled (for Caroline Lee)* (1956). Recall that the controversy over Picasso's 1951 *Massacre en Corée* and its negative depictions of American soldiers resulted in controversy about the artist's political allegiances and "anti-American" sentiment, causing some distress to Alfred Barr and Thomas Hess, who had been working to assure Americans that modern art was "not a Communist plot to undermine Western values and democracy." Frascina, "The Politics of Representation," 141.

²⁴⁵ McCarthy, *H.C. Westermann at War*, 52.

visualization of either traumatic experience or intense fear. While the piece does not evince the pathos of Golub's intensely reworked surfaces, or the diffused and fractured qualities of George Cohen's treatment of space, for example, the haunted and pared-down forms of Westermann's sculptures from the mid-to-late 1950s certainly allow for the communicability so urgently desired by Peter Selz and Paul Tillich in their essays for the *New Images of Man* catalogue.

New York critic Hilton Kramer made his dislike for Selz's first exhibition abundantly clear in his review "In the Name of Agony," complaining of the catalogue that "[r]eading through this motley anthology is a little like taking one of those courses in Modern Anxiety at the New School for Social Research."²⁴⁶ He pointed to Westermann's inclusion in the exhibition as evidence of its overblown claim. Given Westermann's utter legibility, I find critic Hilton Kramer's critique rather ironic: "[t]o look to a tricky little neo-Dadaist for a key to the meaning of twentieth century dread is an intellectual frivolity."²⁴⁷ While Kramer may have been unimpressed with Westermann's technique and form, his circumvention of the explicitly political *content* of the work is curious. The "key" Westermann offers is not tricky at all; for him, twentieth century dread is rooted in the tragedies of war, both past and imminent, made possible by the sacrifice of human bodies to an "evil war god." However, this force of terror is not abstract or timeless, a broad existential concern; it is highly specific and terribly present. Arguably, the "intellectual frivolity" is to fret over a formless dread, while talking *around* the material impact and bodily cost of the last several decades.

New Images of Man was, in terms of its critical reception, a flop. Thirteen years after the exhibition, Franz Schulze writes:

Some New York writers dismissed it as a fustian display, and most were agreed it was incoherent in the expression of its idea. Manhattan was either

²⁴⁶ Hilton Kramer, "In the Name of Agony," *The Reporter*, November 19, 1959, 36.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

not yet willing to give up the formalist sympathies it had held so dear in the 1950s, or else New Images simply did not present its particular case convincingly.²⁴⁸

While Schulze is correct in his portrayal of both the dismissal of the exhibition and that there was not sufficient clout in Chicago willing to defend it, I would argue that there is a gray area between the two reasons for rejection he outlines.²⁴⁹ Certainly, as we have seen, there was a strong push in the name of formalist critique in the postwar years. However, it is also clear that this push correlated with the privileging of abstraction that was not entirely apolitical. The intersecting discourses of masculinity and the avant-garde, as well as the postwar project of establishing the nation's identity as the military, economic, and cultural leader of the Western world were colored by the pervasive fear of totalitarianism. As such, the discourse of abstraction adopted the rhetoric of individuality and freedom—in both formalist and existentialist interpretations—that underpinned the ideal American masculine subject, (on whom the security and success of the state depended). The rhetoric of avant-garde art increasingly focused on the expression of the internal experience of the artist, and as fraught as that concept may have been, it dampened the suspicion of the artist as a politically marginal figure. As abstraction was established as the dominant trend in American art by the 1950s, and social realism was adopted as the official mode of art making in the Soviet Union, figuration was increasingly perceived as not only provincial, but potentially dangerous. While I would argue that there was a political

²⁴⁸ Schulze, *Fantastic Images*, 27. Schulze continues, “[n]or was there any effectual or respected critical voice back in Chicago that could have argued that case to the New Yorkers anyway,” pointing out the marginalized position of Chicago in relation to New York.

²⁴⁹ While Katharine Kuh, well-respected curator of the AIC, did not support the “exaggerated single-mindedness” of Selz’s objectives, she specifically points to Francis Bacon, Alberto Giacometti, and H.C. Westermann as offering “valid images of modern man.” Katharine Kuh, “The Fine Arts: Disturbing Are These ‘New Images of Man,’” *Saturday Review*, October 24, 1959, 49.

Leon Golub and George Cohen of the Monster Roster gave it another go in 1962, when MoMA organized *Recent Painting USA – The Figure*. This exhibition, too, was considered a failure. Schulze considered many of the non-Chicagoans weak artists and writes that some critics “wondered darkly if it hadn’t been organized to defeat rather than document any ascendant figure movement.” He goes on to say, “[w]e appeared retrograde in the face of Clement Greenberg’s promotion of formalism and abstraction.” Franz Schulze, “Graven Imagism,” *New Art Examiner*, December 1992, 24, 26.

“danger” operative in the Monster Roster works, particular those by Golub, Westermann, and Cohen, it was not of the possibility of Communist infiltration, but rather of the incommensurability of the power of the state—or the phallus, as Kaja Silverman explains—and the physical.

While New York critic Dore Ashton was not particularly swayed by the *New Images* exhibition, she offers a description that I believe is at the heart of the unsettling Monster Roster works. Of the works in *New Images*, she writes, “[t]hey show us not man inviolate, but man as he exists in a situation, most often buffeted by unfriendly outer forces.”²⁵⁰ The subjectivity constructed through the discourse of Abstract Expressionism may have been fraught but ultimately stood apart, independent and whole. When Greenberg wrote that Pollock’s artworks were superior because “[h]is emotion starts out pictorially; it does not have to be castrated and translated in order to be put into a picture,” he implies there exists a whole, “un-castrated” subject waiting to be tapped into. By contrast, the fragmented bodies of the Monster Roster, described by critics as “flayed,” “scabrous,” and “grotesque,” insist on the vulnerability of the body, that it is always in relation to and acted upon by other subjects. By imaging man as subject to external forces, especially by imaging the human body as physically vulnerable, such works could not be easily absorbed into the dominant postwar discourses of masculinity and freedom that were deployed in the identity-building project of the nation.

²⁵⁰ Dore Ashton, “New Images of Man,” *Arts and Architecture* 76 (November 1959): 14.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this project, I asked that my reader consider this as an effort to make visible the manner in which socio-political and cultural climates and the needs and wants of audible voices almost inevitably dictate the terms of discourse and scholarship. Regarding the case of “Chicago Art,” Barbara Jaffee notes:

It is undeniable that the powerful identity forged between Chicago’s veteran figure painters of the 1950s and the irreverent Imagists of the 1970s created an attractive and marketable image. For many artists, it made a career in Chicago a reality. Yet in exchange for its new notoriety, art in Chicago would no longer be figured as an actor within or upon the larger stage of world art production. Art in Chicago was isolated—reconfigured—into “Chicago Art,” an idiosyncratic and insular tradition.¹

Focusing specifically on the marginalization of the myriad of art practices in Chicago in favor of the more marketable “Chicago Style” of the Imagists, including Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, and Roger Brown, she continues, “what is known as ‘Chicago Art’ remains less than the sum of art in Chicago.”² The writing of any art history is a potentially limiting project. Much in the way that the crystallization of a dominant story of the New York School has led to simplified readings of postwar art both in New York and on its margins, my own research has been based in a narrative about the veteran-artists of postwar Chicago (those who would lay a path for the “irreverent Imagists” two decades later). Consequently, voices have been obscured in this process. This conclusion, then, aims to draw attention to the windows for inquiry opened during my research.

In 1958, artist Nancy Spero painted perhaps the only artwork that directly represented the tension and resentment felt by many of the Chicago artists towards the New York School. (fig.

¹ Jaffee, “Pride of Place,” 62.

² Ibid., 64.

78) *Homage to New York (I Do Not Challenge)* features a phallic gravestone that juts through the center of the canvas. The initials of many of the best-known artists of that time are inscribed on the stone—Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko. Above the stone, the text reads “I do not challenge,” and below, “homage to New York.” On either side of the gravestone are clownish, demonic-looking busts with their tongues sticking out, positioned above NANCY and SPERO, her name written out in full—a strong contrast with the initials of the entombed artists.³ In a 1996 interview with Jo Anna Isaak, Nancy Spero recalls the context of this work:

[*ARTNews*] was the big art magazine at the time and it primarily features New York Artists and Abstract Expressionists. I did this painting with a tombstone right in the middle and then on each side are two heads with dunce caps and rabbit-like ears and their tongues are sticking out....New York was the centre of the art world and Abstract Expressionism was so powerful then. In Chicago we were always aware of New York...if you were in Chicago, you knew you were in the Second City....Also I was very resistant to New York because I was a figurative artist. At the Art Institute I really found my milieu. I was a very unhappy girl before that but I loved it there with the other alienated beings, so to speak, the other misfits in society.⁴

This painting and Spero’s recollection of its significance sum up many of the salient points of this project. The painting acknowledges the primacy of the New York artists by placing their initials in the center of the image. These artists are symbolically entombed, perhaps an indication of the decline of Abstract Expressionism, but more realistically representative of Spero’s desire for a shift in the art world’s critical focus. The nature of the marker, however, establishes the artists as recognized by the art world—worthy of memorialization. This sense of domination is manifest in the phallic shape of the tombstone, which cuts through the painting. While it was

³ While familiar with the New York School and its key players, some of the initials elude me—Spero ensures this will not be an issue for *her* identification by spelling out her name.

⁴ Nancy Spero and Jo Anna Isaak, “Interview: Jo Anna Isaak in Conversation with Nancy Spero,” in *Nancy Spero*, by Jon Bird et al., Contemporary Artists (London: Phaidon, 1996), 9.

certainly a male-dominated scene, Spero also includes her women peers—Helen Frankenthaler, Elaine de Kooning, Lee Krasner—in her list of the moribund (or so she hopes) New York artists.

Spero also employs the language of the alienated avant-garde in her recollection—it was among a community of misfits that she found her milieu. The Chicago artists were misfits twice over, alienated not only as artists, but also because of the prevalence of figuration and their location in the so-called second city. *I Do Not Challenge* evokes the oppositional tension between Chicago and New York through its sardonic entombment of New York artists and its reference to representational content in the painted figures, and the written word—both features of Spero’s later work. While the New York artists are known only through their initials, Spero spells out her own name in capital letters, as if insisting on her artistic presence and voice. In both her painting and her recollection, she articulates the condition of Chicago artists as necessarily attuned to New York, always aware of their second-class status, not only because of the city’s marginalized position, but also because of the domination of abstraction in the critical realm. Of course, Spero’s very active feminism adds an additional dimension to the work.⁵ When she remarked “If you were in Chicago, you knew were in the Second City,” her interviewer, Jo Anna Isaak, responded “Oh right. Second city, second class, second sex – it adds up.”⁶ Indeed, as I explored in chapter two, the structures of marginalization are crucially helpful in understanding the dynamic in between Chicago and New York—so too are they key to understanding the gender dynamic.

While accompanying text names the work as an homage and suggests that Spero “does not challenge,” the sarcasm of the work is made obvious through contextual knowledge, and

⁵ Spero’s *War Series*, done largely in protest of the Vietnam War, addressed military power through images of sexually predatory aggressors. She was a member of the feminist arts movement Women Artists in Revolution (WAR) and a founding member of the all-women cooperative A.I.R. gallery. Holland Cotter, “Nancy Spero, Artist of Feminism, Is Dead at 83,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2009.

⁶ Spero and Isaak, “Interview: Jo Anna Isaak in Conversation with Nancy Spero,” 9.

especially by the figures on either side who stick out their tongues at the viewer—this would become a motif in Spero’s later work. In conversation with Jo Anna Isaak, Spero says that *I Do Not Challenge* was the first use of the tongue as a motif. It would appear again in the following decades in a series of “angry” works, including the *Fuck You* series, which feature snake-like creatures with mouths open and screaming, and the *Artaud* series. (fig. 77) The anger in those works “came from feeling that I didn’t have a voice, an arena in which to conduct a dialogue; that I didn’t have an identity. I felt like a non-artist, a non-person. I was furious, furious that my voice as an artist wasn’t recognized.”⁷ Her description echoes the tenor of Exhibition Momentum’s efforts to find a place for themselves in Chicago, and following that, the Chicago School’s efforts to position themselves in relation to New York abstraction. Spero’s language also closely echoes Harold Rosenberg’s 1952 declaration that painting had become “an arena in which to act.”⁸ However, much like the restrictions placed upon the embodied subjectivity of the painter who could enact genius on the canvas—specifically a perceptibly heterosexual, white, male body, as described in the introduction to this project—there were limitations on who could participate in a dialogue. As a figurative artist in Chicago *and* as a woman, Spero was silenced several times over. Spero specifies that this rage and frustration led to her invocation of the French writer Antonin Artaud in her *Codex Artaud* of the early 1970s: “[t]hat’s exactly why I chose to use Artaud’s writings because he screams and yells and rants and raves about his tongue being cut off, castrated. He has no voice, he’s silenced in a bourgeois society.”⁹ Spero, then, locates the phallus, the source of power, in the tongue rather than in a feature of an anatomical

⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁸ Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters.”

⁹ Spero and Isaak, “Interview: Jo Anna Isaak in Conversation with Nancy Spero,” 10.

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago contingent of Exhibition Momentum argued that they had been “castrated” by their Institute of Design colleagues when ID student Roy Gussow surreptitiously edited their vituperative essays in the 9 *Viewpoints* for the 1950 Momentum catalogue. See chapter two.

male subject—an element of the feminism that would more explicitly drive her later work. What follows are the gaps I have witnessed but have not been able to address in this project. This is an act of pointing to those silences in the discourse.

Looking Forward

As I alluded to in the second chapter, the major demographic of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago was young men attending school on the GI Bill in the mid-to-late 1940s, but before this influx of male students, it had been largely dominated by women pursuing art as a field of study. In 1897 the Chicago Herald Times stated, “[n]ot every girl with a taste for drawing can go to Paris to study, and we think ourselves very lucky to have such a splendid school, and a jolly one too, right in our own city.”¹⁰ The formation of the industrial art department in the 1920s, however, attracted more male students, and the administration began to market its program as preparation for a viable career—a notion that would drive the veteran students in their protests of the late 1940s and early 1950s. While the female population of the school regained the majority during the Second World War, the return of the veterans and their role in launching Exhibition Momentum have become critical in the narrative of Chicago art history.

In his 1950 MA thesis, “Career and Social Protest: An Analysis of a Chicago Art Group,” Daniel Joseph suggests that the “younger students,” that is the female students, had accepted “being kicked out” of the Chicago & Vicinity show—the ban that incited protests by the veteran

¹⁰ As cited in Simpson, “The Modern Momentum,” 38. See Gilmore, *Over a Century a History of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1866-1981*.

students.¹¹ This phrasing silences the voices of the women artists who had pivotal roles in organizing Momentum—a dynamic exemplified by the decision to select Leon Golub to deliver the petition against the student ban to Art Institute Director Daniel Catton Rich, rather than Ellen Lanyon. While Lanyon had received critical recognition and won awards for her work in the previous C&V exhibition, the group felt that Golub would better represent the interests of the students who were veterans. The intentional focus on the veteran students rather than the women students impacted the internal dynamics of the group, their discourse in the press, and subsequent art histories. While this project has focused on the potential threat to the construction of the ideal male subject represented by the veteran, there is a gap here, waiting for interrogation, on the gender dynamics of the early development of the Chicago School. While Ellen Lanyon, June Leaf, Nancy Spero, and Evelyn Statsinger were all members of Exhibition Momentum and were active and celebrated members of the Chicago art scene throughout the 1950s (and beyond, in the case of Leaf and Statsinger), the relative focus on the narrative of the veteran students has rendered them marginal.

This postwar blindness is a rather expected product of its time; it is reflected in the nature of Peter Selz's 1959 exhibition *New Images of Man*. While the exhibit purported to offer considerations of views of humanity writ large, much of the work is gendered masculine, and only a single woman artist—Germaine Richier—was invited to participate.¹² Furthermore, the included representations of women, especially Willem de Kooning's *Women*, have proved to be fruitful objects of study when considering the objectified position of women in postwar

¹¹ Joseph, "Career and Social Protest," 118–119.

¹² It would seem that Selz sought to remedy this issue with his 2009 exhibition *New Images of Man and Woman* at the Alphonse Berber Gallery in Berkeley, CA, organized for the fiftieth anniversary of his 1959 show. In a parallel act of revisiting the 1959 exhibition, the Tate Modern includes a "New Images of Man" exhibit in its "Transformed Visions" wing. It includes many of the artists of the original exhibition, such as Francis Bacon, Jean Dubuffet, Alberto Giacometti, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and Germaine Richier. It has included women artists, notably New Yorkers Lee Krasner and Hedda Sterne, but has left out the original Chicago contingency. While this inclusion of women artists is to be applauded, the erasure of the Chicago presence is telling.

society.¹³ George Cohen's work of the late 1950s and 1960s often was compared to that of de Kooning, as Cohen's paintings showed a similar occupation with the female form, as in his *Incubus* (1959) or *The Woman* (1959). While sifting through his papers, kept at the Northwestern University Archives, I found a particularly telling document: a photocopied notice from a May 1964 newspaper that alerted the reader of Cohen's work on display: "Flesh paintings, a group of reliefs, resembling papier-mâché masks, are comments on the 'Woman' myth." Below the copy, an unknown woman writes the query, "Are we 'Women' all a myth?"¹⁴ I was surprised and touched to find this note in Cohen's papers—it would have been so simple to toss it away. It is a question that haunts feminist scholarship and points to the problem of the invisibility of women as subjects, and by extension, as artists. Feminist scholars such as Ann Gibson and Anne Wagner have conducted studies of the women artists obscured in the narratives of the mythologized postwar New York art scene, but Chicago could serve as a particularly compelling site of study because of the manner in which the anxiety around gender roles following the shifted economic landscape of the Second World War is imbricated in the formation of the Chicago postwar artist subject.¹⁵

Similarly, the focus on the formation of the SAIC Chicago School according to the rebellious traditions of the avant-garde and the possibility that they might have been able to compete with the New York scene has rendered the other sites of cultural production within Chicago as even *more* marginal. While the New York School also notoriously excluded people of color, Chicago's current state of hypersegregation is a direct result of the meticulous

¹³ See Griselda Pollock, "Killing Men and Dying Women: A Woman's Touch in the Cold Zone of American Painting in the 1950s," in *Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed. Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 219–94; Barber, "Politics of Feminist Spectatorship and the Disruptive Body: De Kooning's 'Woman I' Reconsidered."

¹⁴ "Pictures on Display/Are We 'Women' All a Myth?," May 1964, George Cohen Papers, Northwestern University Archives.

¹⁵ See in particular Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism*; Wagner, "Lee Krasner as L.K."

engineering of the public housing projects that took place from 1940 until 1960, detailed in historian Arnold Hirsch's excellent book, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago*.¹⁶ Hypersegregation refers to the multi-layer discrimination that results in distinct, disadvantaged populations within a city, a condition that actually continued to decline between initial studies in the late 1980s and following studies a decade later.¹⁷ As Hirsch points out, the racial tensions that erupted following the Great Migration resulted not only in violence, but a concerted juridical effort to restrict the movement of black populations in the city of Chicago, resulting in the stark divide between the South Side, predominantly populated by black subjects, and the North Side, populated by a variety of communities newly classified as white in the postwar years.¹⁸

Such a defining quality of Chicago is little addressed in art histories of the period, although Lynne Warren and Staci Boris attempt to address this gap between "official" Chicago artists and "community-based" artists in their text "Chicago: City of Neighborhoods" in the volume *Art in Chicago, 1945-1995*. They offer only two paragraphs on the efforts of Margaret Burroughs' (School of the Art Institute of Chicago graduate) and Marion Perkins' work at the South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC) and founding of the DuSable Museum of African American History. The SSCAC was founded under the New Deal in 1941 and offered "a moment of promise in which black and white artists worked together towards improving their

¹⁶ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹⁷ See Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, "Hypersegregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas: Black and Hispanic Segregation along Five Dimensions," *Demography* 26, no. 3 (August 1, 1989): 373-91; Rima Wilkes and John Iceland, "Hypersegregation in the Twenty-First Century," *Demography* 41, no. 1 (February 1, 2004): 23-36.

¹⁸ A small sample of texts that address this issue include David R. Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History* (New York: Verso, 1994); Russell A. Kazal, "Revisting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History," *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (April 1995): 437-71; James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no. 3 (April 1, 1997): 3-44; Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

situation.” This goal, however, was “[destroyed] by McCarthyism and the Communist witch hunts of the 1950s. Artists with interracial friendships were branded as Communist, putting an end to black and white solidarity.”¹⁹ Burroughs’ philosophy of art as a social tool promulgated through her work at the SSCAC and the DuSable resonates with the artists’ statements in the Exhibition Momentum 1950 catalogue insert *9 Viewpoints*, particularly Leon Golub’s “A Law Unto Himself.”²⁰ Furthermore, Perkins’ emphasis on the importance of reconnecting with Africa and the creation of a black aesthetic that eschewed Western standards as an act of social empowerment for black subjects serves as an important contrast to the universalizing rhetoric of the primitive invoked by both the Chicago and the New York Schools.²¹ (fig. 78) The narratives of Chicago art history are not so entrenched as those of the New York School; in Chicago, as Leon Golub put it, there is the possibility of “runn[ing] free.”²² Perhaps, following the important “recovery” of neglected artists conducted by Ann Gibson and scholars with similar projects, there is the possibility of a more critical conversation about how intersectional issues of race and gender inform the discourse of the subject-position of the artist.

Finally, this project has explored the veteran subject as constructed after the Second World War, but has done so from a perspective of assumed whiteness. This is in part because of the national discourse on the veteran—like the discourse of masculinity—assumed a normative white subject and in part because the artists I have examined most closely have also been categorized as white, the Jewishness of some of them often subsumed in this category. However,

¹⁹ Warren and Boris, “Chicago: City of Neighborhoods,” 85.

This, in itself is *deeply* interesting—I do not know of any studies on the impact of McCarthyism on race relations in artist communities, and it could be a compelling course of inquiry.

²⁰ Ibid.

Golub, “A Law Unto Himself.”

²¹ Warren, *Art in Chicago: 1945-1995*, 274.

²² As quoted in the introduction to this project, Leon Golub commented on being an artist in Chicago: “I think that in Chicago it was like you could run free, because there was no place to run to, so to speak.” Golub, Tape-recorded Interview with Leon Golub, November 5, 1994, 17.

the veteran is a social position that crosses race, gender, and class boundaries—though in differing degrees. As a conscripted army, the military of the Second World War saw a range of classed subjects, but intense segregation meant that the experience of soldiers of color differed dramatically from that of their white counterparts.²³ The silencing of a soldier's specific experience—often subsumed in the heroic narrative of serving one's country, as described in the introduction to and first chapter of this project—is then doubly reinforced when it comes to subjects who are perceived as “other” than white, heterosexual, middle-class, and male.²⁴

In this project, I have demonstrated that the insistence on the human body subject to external forces was a unifying feature of the Monster Roster artworks. It was in large part this insistence on intersubjective experience that made them incompatible with the rhetoric of the autonomous male subject promulgated in the discourse of masculinity as well as the national political discourse. It is, however, a feature that is sympathetic, if not necessary, to feminist and anti-racist inquiry. While this project has not been able to address the myriad gaps still at play in Chicago's art history or present a comprehensive study on the raced experience of World War II veterans, it is my hope that it may serve to elevate the significance of subjects previously neglected in the art history of the American postwar period.

²³ There is unfortunately little scholarship on the segregation of the US military during World War II. For a recent attempt to address this issue and add nuance to the relationship between black experience of serving in the military and the Civil Rights Movement, see the anthology Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck, eds., *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁴ This continues to be a pressing issue: although the United States no longer relies on conscripted forces, there is higher representation of people of color among recruits to the military. Tim Kane, “Who Are the Recruits? The Demographic Characteristics of U.S. Military Enlistment, 2003-2005,” *Heritage Foundation Center for Data Analysis Report*, No. 06-09, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2006/10/who-are-the-recruits-the-demographic-characteristics-of-us-military-enlistment-2003-2005>.

Illustrations



Figure 1. Hans Namuth, *Jackson Pollock*, 1950.



Figure 2. *Life Magazine*, "Jackson Pollock," 1949.



Figure 3. Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, film still, 1953.



Figure 4. George Cohen, *Queenie*, 1955.



Figure 5. Cohen, *Emblem for an Unknown Nation I*, 1954.

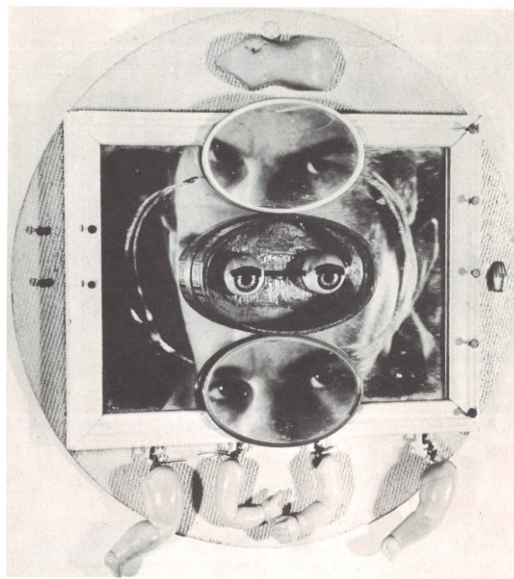


Figure 6. Cohen, *Anybody's Self-Portrait*, 1953.



Figure 7. Hans Bellmer, *The Games of the Doll*, 1949.



Figure 8. Leon Golub, *Burnt Man I*, 1954.



Figure 9. Golub, *The Bug (War Machine)*, 1953.



Figure 10. Golub, *Orestes*, 1956.



Figure 10. H.C. Westermann *A Soldier's Dream*, 1955.



Figure 11. Westermann, *Sailors Grave*, 1959.

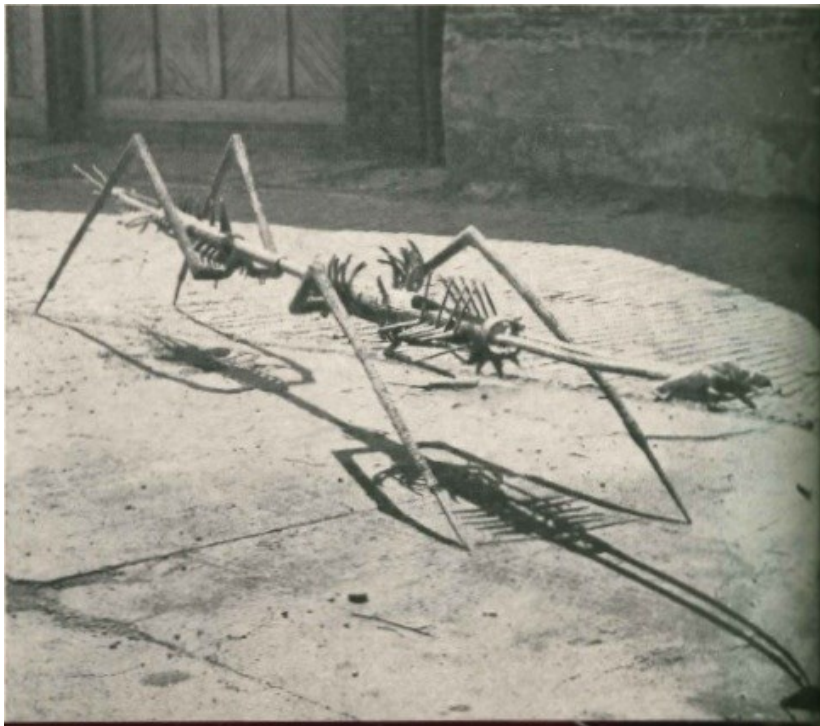


Figure 13. Joseph Goto, *Emanak*, c. 1955.



Figure 14. Nina Leen, *The Irascibles*, 1952.



Figure 15. *Best Years of Our Lives*, Film still, 1947.



Figure 16. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn x 100*, 1962.

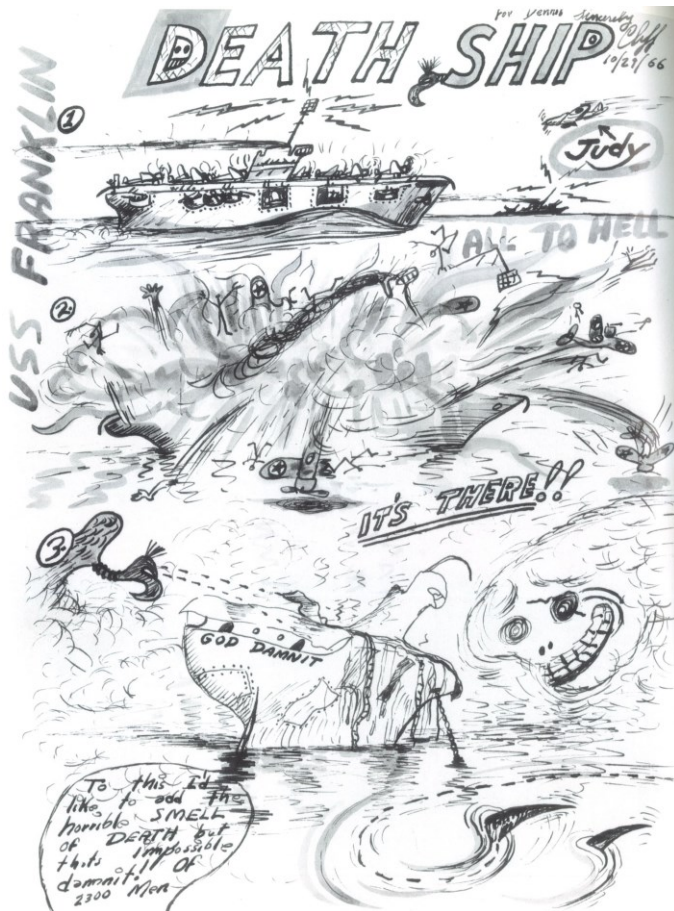


Figure 17. Westermann, *U.S.S. Franklin*, 1966.



Figure 18. Thomas Lea, *Over the Side*, 1942.



Figure 19. Westermann *A Tribute to the Men of the Infantry*, 1964.

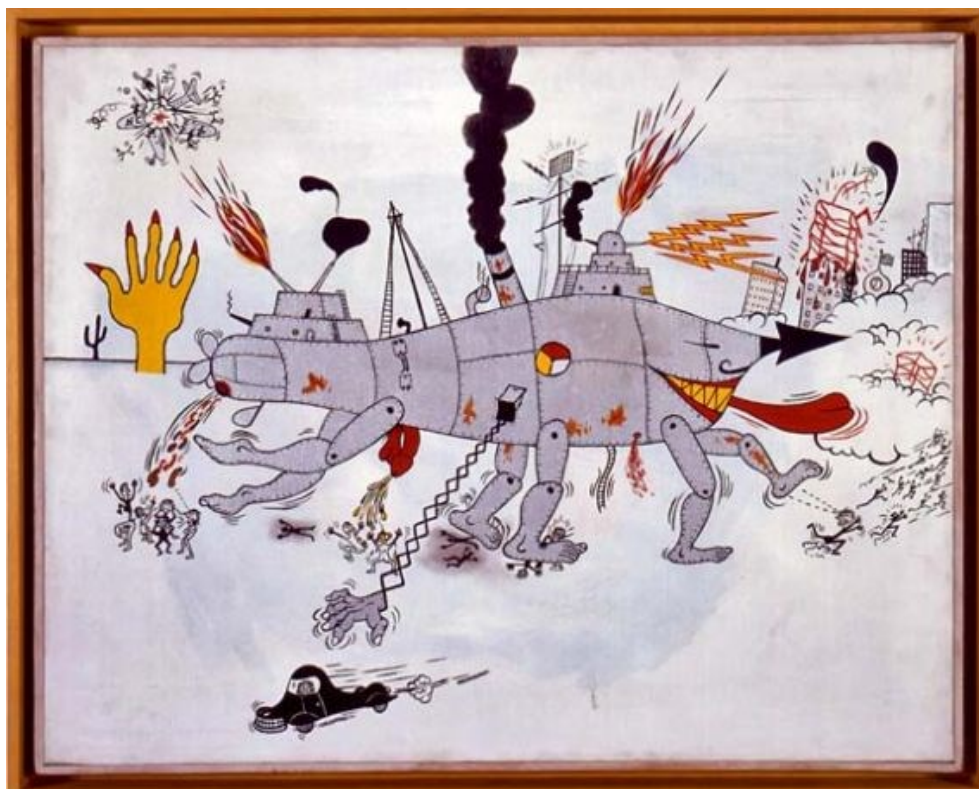


Figure 20. Westermann, *Destructive Machine From Under the Sea*, 1959.



Figure 21. Westermann, *Brinkmanship*, 1959.

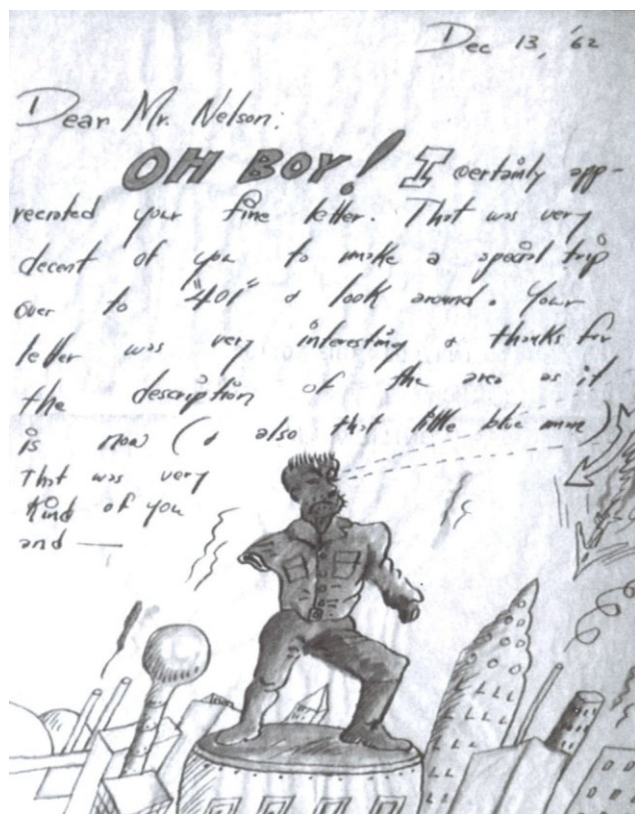


Figure 22. Westermann, *Self Portrait*, 13 December 1962.

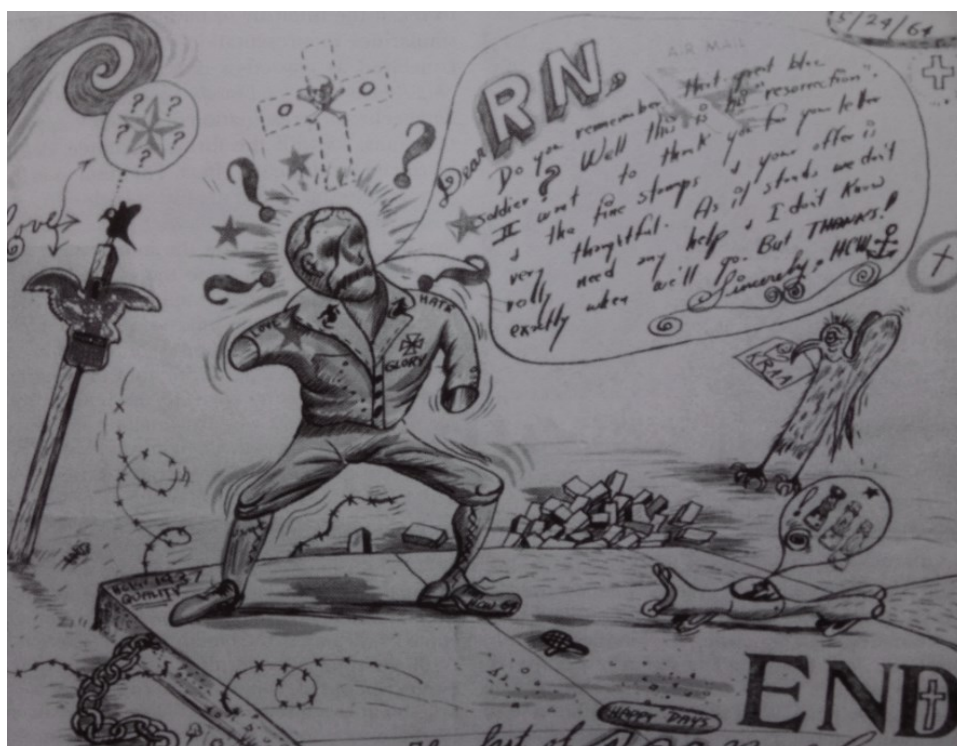


Figure 23. Westermann, *Self Portrait*, 24 May 1964.

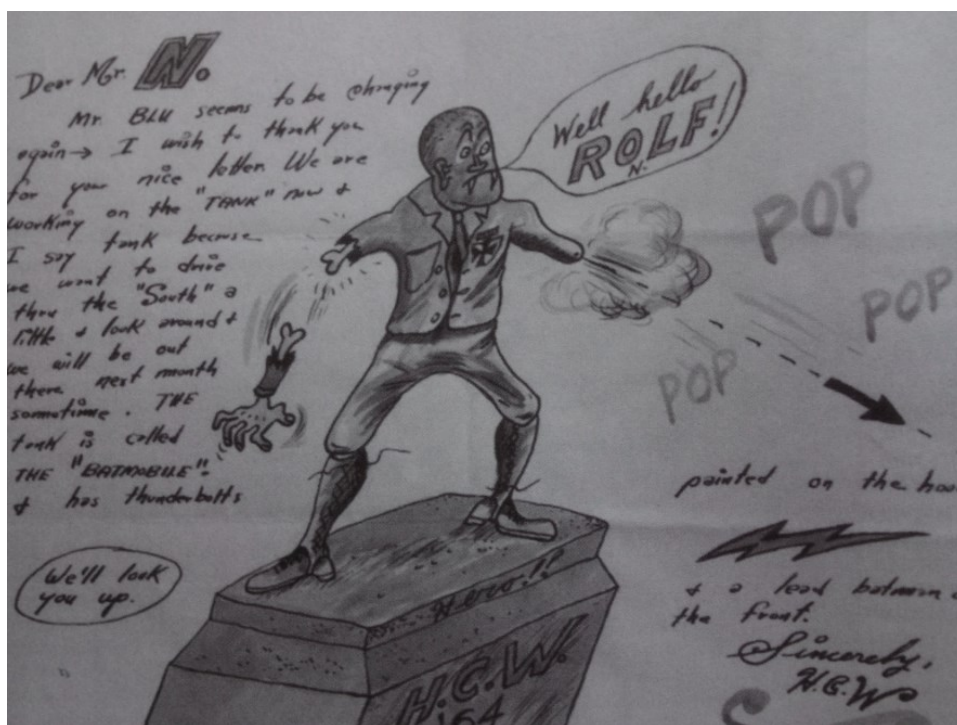


Figure 24. Westermann, *Self Portrait*, 24 December 1964.



Figure 25. Roger Brown, *Giotto and his Friends (Getting Even)*, 1981.



Fig. 26. Charles Graham, *Dream City*, 1893.

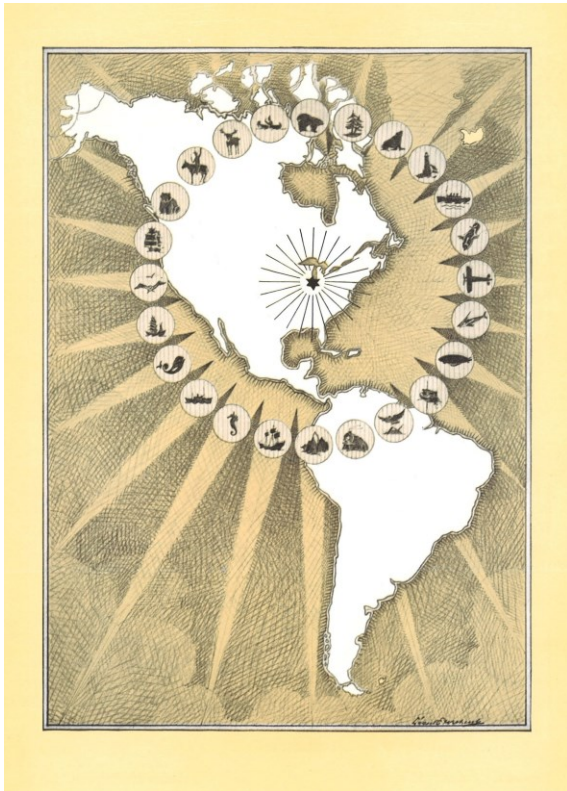


Figure 27. “The Natural Capital of the Continent,” Illustration from *Chicago: The World’s Youngest Great City*, 1929.



Figure 28. Lorado Taft at work on *Fountain of the Great Lakes*, 1913.



Figure 29. Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude*, 1907.



Figure 30. Paul Chabras, *September Morn*, 1912.

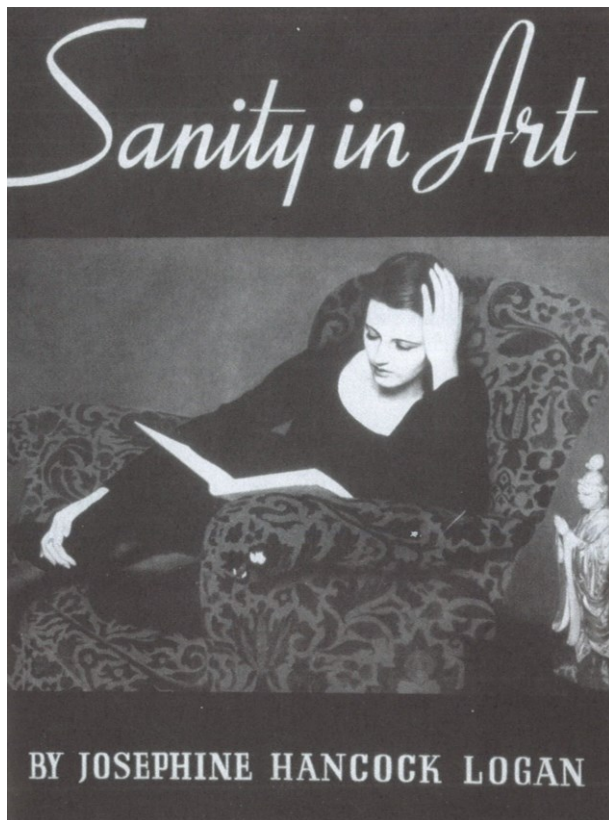


Figure. 31 Cover illustration of Josephine Hancock Logan's *Sanity in Art*, 1937.

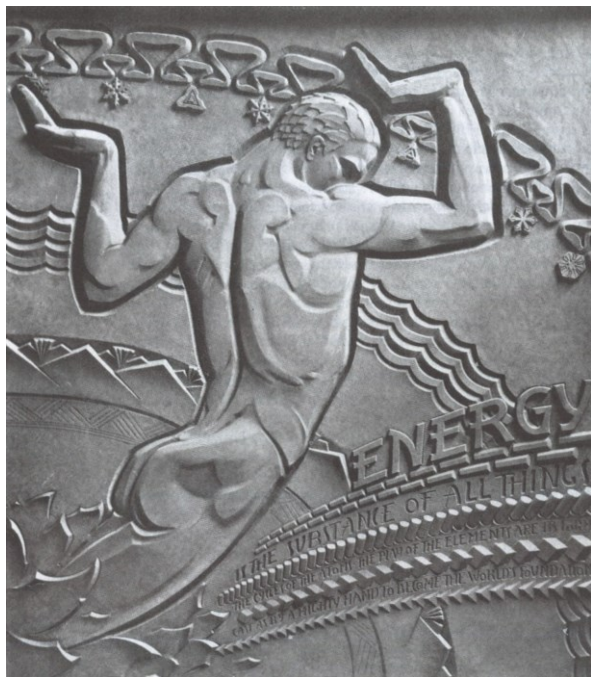


Figure 32. Ulrich Ellerhusen, *Atomic Energy*, Century of Progress Electric Building relief, 1933.



Figure 33. Lee Atwood, *The Kuh Gallery*, 1938.



Figure 34. Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937.



Figure 35. Jacob Lawrence, *Victory*, 1947.



Figure 36. 1950 *Exhibition Momentum*, view of open catalogue, *9 Viewpoints: a forum* insert, and leaf picturing jurors, 1950.



Figure 37. Jean Dubuffet, *Metafisix*, 1950.



Figure 38. Willem de Kooning, *Woman I*, 1951.



Figure 39. Cosmo Campoli, *Jonah and the Whale*, 1954.



Figure 40. Campoli, *Birth of Death*, 1950.



Figure 41. Campoli, *Birth*, 1958.



Figure 42. Joseph Goto, *Organic Form I*, 1951.

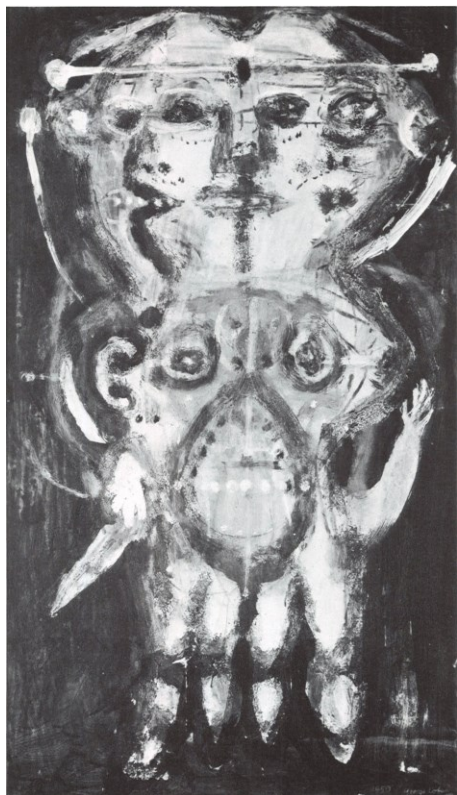


Figure 43. Cohen, *The Avenger*, 1950.

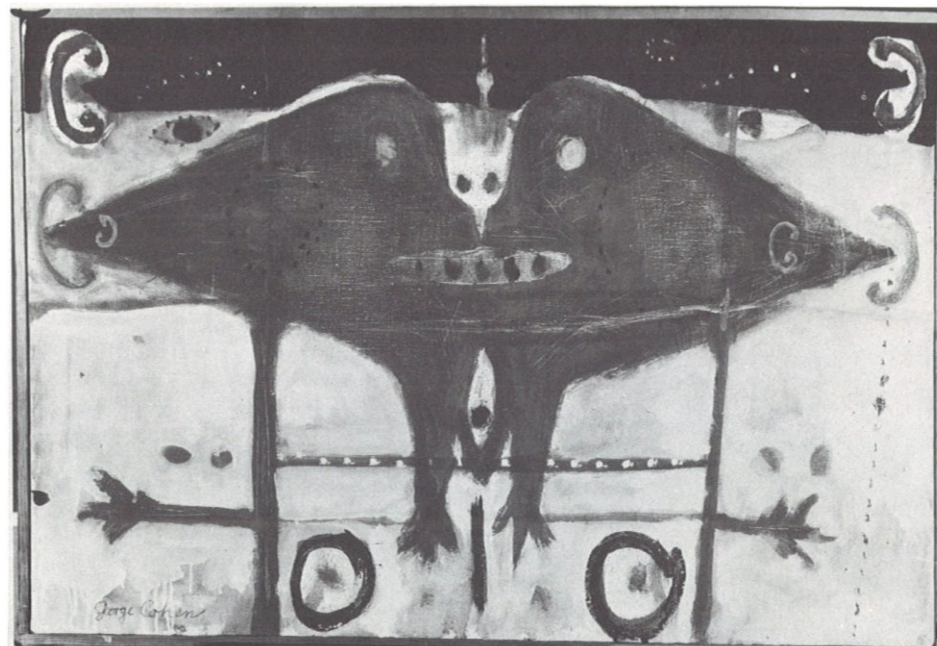


Figure 44. Cohen, *Flight*, 1952.



Figure 45. Cohen, *Hermes*, 1955.

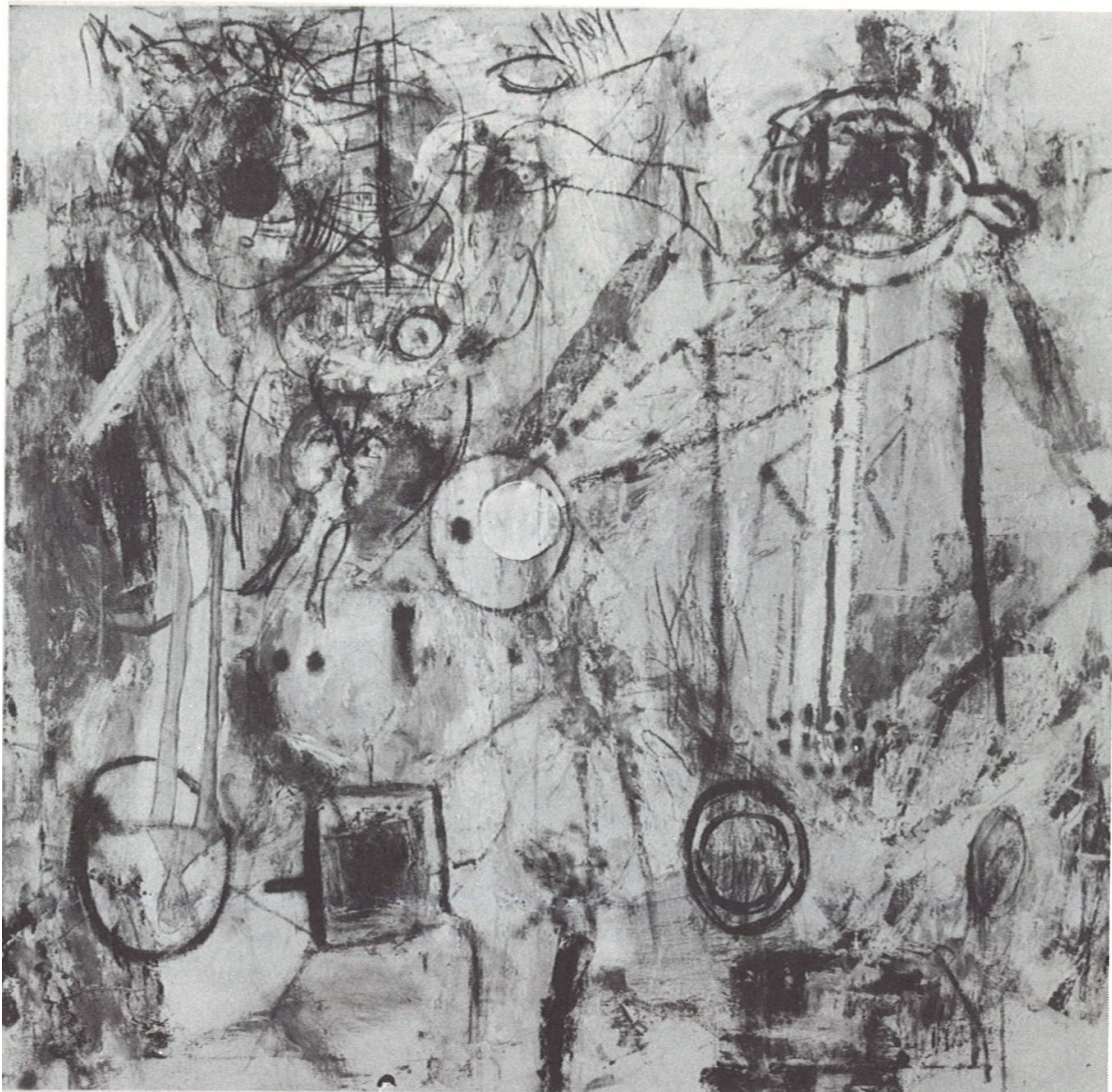


Figure 46. Cohen, *White Figures*, 1956.



Figure 47. Golub, *Hamlet*, 1952.



Figure 48. Golub, *Inferno*, 1954.



Figure 49. Golub, *Oceanic*, 1947.

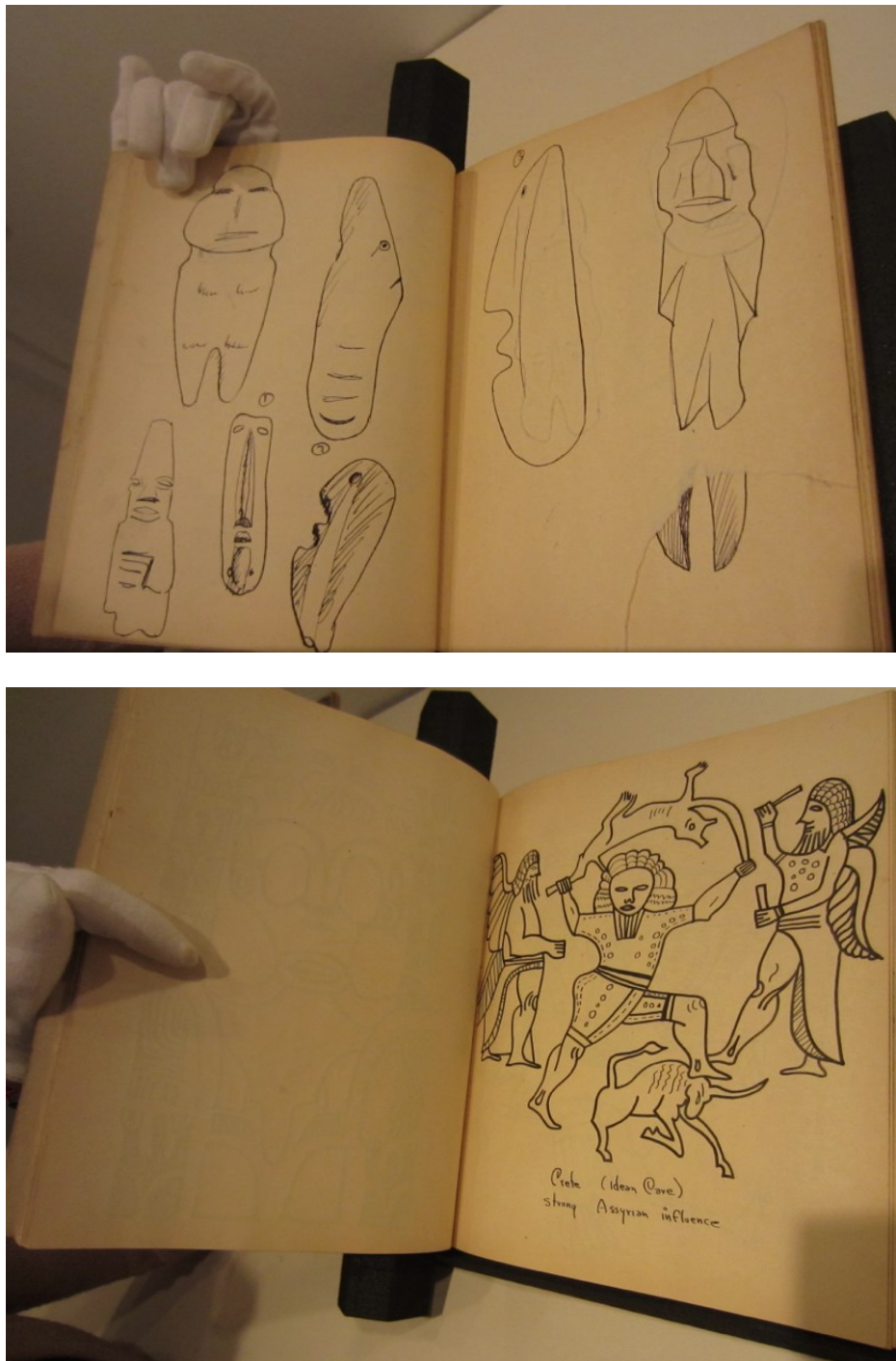


Figure 50. Westermann, School of the Art Institute of Chicago notebooks showing drawings of sculptures from the Field and Greek art with strong Assyrian influence, c. 1947-1950.



Figure 51. Golub, *Charnel House*, 1946.



Figure 52. Golub, *Evisceration Chamber*, 1946.



Figure 53. Picasso, *The Charnel House*, 1946.



Figure 54. Golub, *Skull II*, 1947.



Figure 55. Golub, *Fallen Proletarian Hero*, 1947.



Figure 56. Golub, *Hellenistic Memories*, 1948.



Figure 57. Golub, *Prince Sphinx*, 1955.



Figure 58. Golub, *Priests*, 1951-1952.

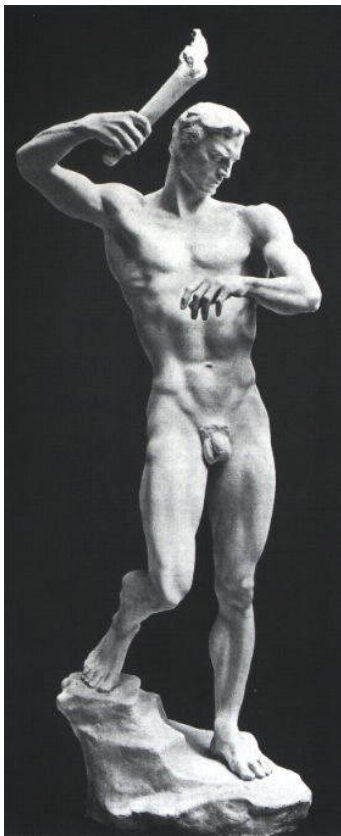


Figure 59. Arno Breker, *Prometheus*, 1934.



Figure 60. Breker, *Kameradschaft (Comradeship)*, undated.



Figure 61. Golub, *Thwarted*, 1953.



Figure 62. Apollonius of Athens, *Belvedere Torso*, first century BCE.



Figure 63. Golub, *The Skin (Crawling Man)*, 1953.



Figure 64. Golub, *Damaged Man*, 1955.



Figure 65. Golub, *Colossal Heads I*, 1959.

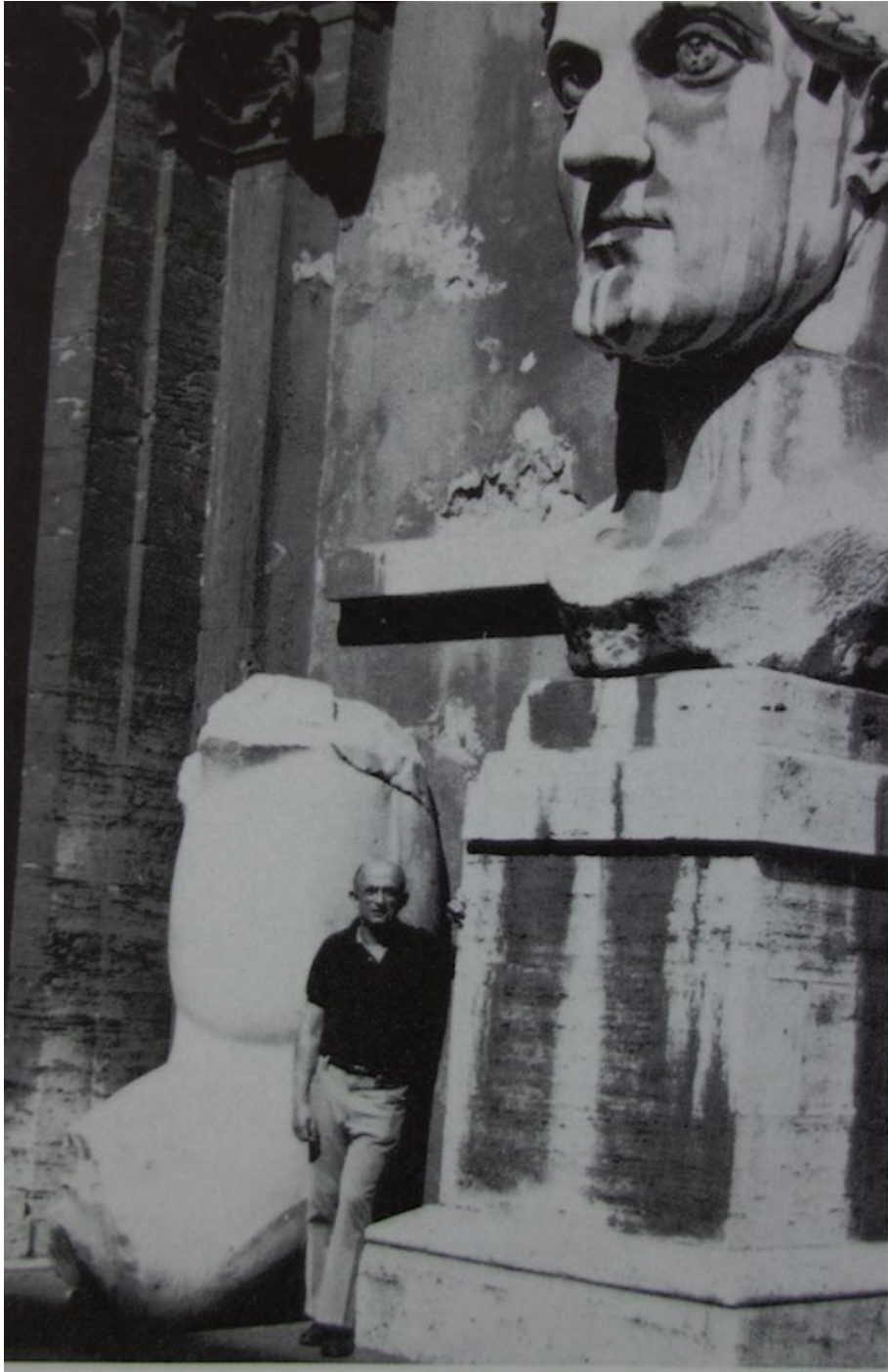


Figure 66. Golub in Rome, 1970.



Figure 67. Golub, *Reclining Youth*, 1959.



Figure 68. Roman Copy of a Hellenistic sculpture, *Dying Gaul*, late 3rd century BCE.



Figure 69. Jackson Pollock, *No. 3*, 1953.



Figure 70. Rico LeBrun, *Study for Dachau Chamber*, 1958.



Figure 71. Golub, *Fallen Soldier (Burnt Man)*, 1960.



Figure 72. Golub, *Mercenaries I*, 1972.



Figure 73. Westermann, *Evil New War God (S.O.B.)*, 1958.



Figure 74. Westermann, *Memorial to the Idea of Man if He Were an Idea*, 1958.

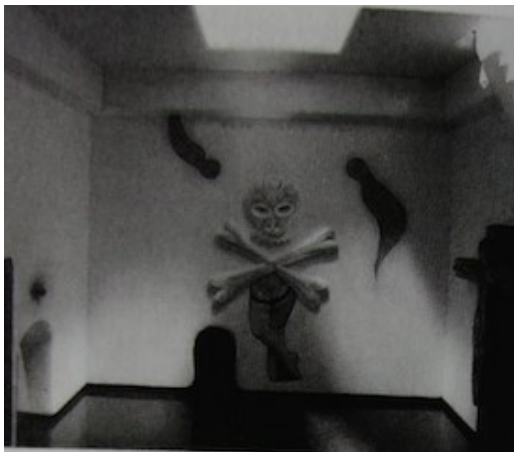


Figure 75. Westermann, *Mysterious Yellow Mausoleum*, 1958.



Figure 76. Nancy Spero, *Homage to New York (I Do Not Challenge)*, 1958.



Figure 77. Spero, *Codex Artuad XVII* (detail), 1972.



Figure 78. Marion Perkins, *Man of Sorrow*, 1950.

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