Mattia Arioli

A (not so) Forgotten War

The Korean Conflict as a Turning Point in the History of the War Comics Genre

Abstract

The Korean War did not leave a long-lasting mark in cultural memory, and it is usually described as the "Forgotten War." This (partial) oblivion might be attributed to the fact that this war did not represent either a victory or a loss, but a 'tie.' The Korean War did not inspire as many novels or movies as the Second World War or the Vietnam War did (Rosso 2003). In sharp contrast to other media, in the 1950s, comic book publishers created a noticeable number of titles addressing the American military involvement in Korea (Rifas 2021). In this paper, I would like to address the cultural importance of these comics showing how they anticipated some of the themes (and fracture) that would emerge within America during the Vietnam War thanks to the Civil Rights Movement and the counterculture. Indeed, one can already observe the existence of two conflictual narratives.

On one hand, building up on the medium tradition (as a propaganda tool), war comics tried to reaffirm the values of patriotism and duty, embodied by white masculine men fighting the Red (racialized) menace overseas, recirculating the same anti-Asian stereotypes used against Japanese during World War II. At the same time, their casting of women in traditional gendered roles foreshadows an important theme of the 1980s revisionist narrations of the Vietnam War, the "remasculinization of America" (Jeffords 1989).

On the other hand, EC (War) comics started to question authority and official narratives, giving a more realistic portrayal of the war. They did not hesitate to describe its degrading aspects and moral contradiction. These comics were socially relevant as they provided the medium with models of dissent, which would be further developed during the Vietnam era.

Keywords: *comics studies, Korean War, war literature, propaganda, counter-narrative*

T he Second World War (1941-1945)—and the fight against the Axis powers—provided a legitimation for the military involvement overseas of the United States. In the immediate years after the Second World War, the development of nuclear technologies and the economic expansion of the United States appeared as an omen of a steady era of military supremacy. However, the faith in American (military) manifest destiny started to crumble during the

Vietnam War (1960-1975), a conflict that the United States could not win either militarily or politically, and that in turn produced a backlash of public opinion. The Vietnam War—also known as the Second Indochina War, the 'Dirty War' and the 'American War,' as victorious Vietnamese call it—was an extremely traumatic event for many Americans. This event (in conjunction with the Civil Rights Movement and the emerging counterculture) divided the nation, and ignited a questioning of American imperialism within and outside the country, sparking a climate of disillusionment that ended up transforming American culture forever.

In stark contrast, the Korean War (1950-1953)—also named the 6/25 War by Koreans—is usually remembered by many Americans with the epithet 'the Forgotten War,' because of the lack of attention it received compared to better-known conflicts. As Daniel Y. Kim and Viet Thanh Nguyen (2015, 60) remarked, "While the war proved to be unpopular, it did not galvanize a significant antiwar movement in the United States, occurring as it did with the advent of McCarthyism." This (partial) oblivion might be attributed also to the fact that this war did not represent either a victory or a loss, but a 'tie,' whose consequences are still visible today, as the peninsula continues to be partitioned in two halves. The war ended with the signing of an armistice (a cease-fire between military forces), rather a formal peace treaty (an agreement normalizing the relations between governments), that confirmed the partition of the country at the 38th parallel. The Korean War marked the first time America's superior technology did not guarantee a victorious conclusion, but a military stalemate. Yet, this conflict was a true turning point for post-Second World War military and political strategy: the US went to arms to halt the expansion of Communism. Korea was just the first step on a long road of such missions. A few months after the outbreak of the war, the US sent military aid to French troops in Indochina to stop an insurgency that would ultimately evolve into the Vietnam War. Hence, the Korean War marks the beginning of America's increasing commitment of national resources into overseas (military) missions. Indeed, during the Korean War the US military juggernaut consumed half of the federal budget (Goulden 2020).

Interestingly enough, the 'Forgotten War' moniker was coined in a 1951 article in *US News and World Report,* titled "Korea: The 'Forgotten' War." Yet, contrary to modern interpretation of the phrase, the article was not pointing at the lack of commemoration, but on how the war in Korea faded into the bigger picture of the Cold War. The article recited, "Korea, half forgotten, is receding in the minds of many to the status of an experimental war, one being fought back and forth for the purpose of testing men, weapons, materials and methods, on a continuing basis" (1951, 21). This quote testifies the emergence of a new type of war, needing a new kind of rhetoric to persuade and support: the Korean War was the first 'hot' conflict of the so-called Cold

War. Indeed, the Korean War somehow introduced the idea of a preemptive and continuous war (that manifested itself in the form of local/temporary conflicts and military operations) in the defense of humanity from illiberal politics and ideological degeneracies. As Joseph Darda (2019, 31) argued, the construction of the Korean War as a non-war (an act of defense and a discrete minor conflict on a remote peninsula) allowed the commitment of the nation to a permanent war while guaranteeing and often declaring conclusive victories. The ideological framing of the war as a(n imperial) defense had the effect of obscuring the materiality and historical origins of the conflict, which predates US intervention and whose effects extend beyond American imperium.[1] The roots of the Korean War can be traced back to 1945, when decades of unjust Japanese rule finally ended.[2] Yet, this event was not followed by peace. After World War II, it was up to the Americans and the Soviets to decide what should be done with their enemy's imperial possessions. In August 1945, they agreed on splitting the Korean peninsula in half along the 38th parallel. The Russians occupied the area north of the line and the United States took control of the area to its south. This partition triggered civil conflicts throughout the peninsula

---

[1] From the 1970s, when previously classified US documents became accessible, historians and political scientists have long debated whether this conflict was "international" or "civil." Some left-leaning scholars interpreted the conflict as a (internationalized) civil war, rather than the consequence of Soviet inspired expansionism. This group of scholars blamed the Americans and the Japanese for all the ills of Korean politics, often not recognizing the legitimacy of the anticommunist leadership in South Korea (for an indictment of US government and UN conduct during the war, see Jon Halliday and Bruce Cummings' *The Unknown War: Korea,* 1988). Yet, in the 1990s, right-revisionists used undisclosed Soviet documents to emphasize the international factors that triggered the war, assigning the responsibility of the war to North Koreans' invasion and the Soviets' aggressive expansion. For example, William Stueck (1995) focused on the background of the conflict, suggesting a coordination among Communist States as Mao and Stalin supplied North Korea with heavy equipment. He also argued that US military intervention in Korea encouraged the stability of the World because it functioned as a determent towards future Soviet military adventures. Joseph C. Goulden (2020 [1982]) gave a closer look at the military developments of the conflict, and the British historian Max Hastings provided a more detached narrative of the conflict. By linking together the US wars in Korea and Vietnam, Hastings (1987, 420) was able to observe how "Americans revealed all the arrogance, the paternalism, the insensitivity in handling of local people—and the local army—which later revealed themselves in Vietnam." However, even though he criticized the American side, his portrayal of the conflict is very different from the one offered by Cummings. In his opinion, America's arrogance is understandable in the context of the period and he does not condone North Korea's "unprovoked act of raw aggression" (1987, 421). For a survey of the literature on the Korean War, see Millet (2001) and Matray (2011).

[2] As Millet (2001, 189) argued, "From the Japanese suppression of the mass protests and popular revolt of 1 March 1919 (the Sam-il Mov[e]ment) until August 1945, the Korean liberation movement divided into two loose coalitions of revolutionary modernizers." Neither group had a firm base in Korea due to Japanese police work. The Marxists found allies in China, Manchuria, and the Soviet Union. Whereas the nationalist and Christian reformers sought support from Nationalist China and the United States.

between those who aligned themselves with the communist project of a postcolonial Korea and those who associated themselves with capitalist values. Two new states had *de facto* formed on the peninsula. In the south, Americans supported the anti-communist dictator Syngman Rhee; in the north, the Soviets supported the communist dictator Kim II-Sung. Neither of them had any intention of remaining on their own side of the 38th parallel, as they regarded the partition of the country intolerable; North and South had been a single nation for more than thousands of years, united by language, culture, history, ethnicity, and government. Consequently, border skirmishes were not rare.

Things precipitated on June 25, 1950, when soldiers from the North Korean People's Army poured across the 38th parallel border. North Korean invasion came as a surprise to American officials who interpreted the event as the first step in the communist campaign to rule over the world. This prompted the US to support South Korea militarily. The war lasted three years, after it reached a stalemate that would lead to the signing of an armistice that reinstated the 38th parallel as the border separating North and South Korea. Even though the Korean War was brief, its causalities rank with those of the Vietnam War. It caused the death of more than fifty-four thousand American soldiers; eight thousand soldiers became Missing in Action; three million civilians perished (that is 20 percent of the prewar civilian population); and much of the country was reduced to a wasteland (Kim and Nguyen 2015; Goldstein and Maihafer 2000).

Despite its devastating effects, the Korean War did not inspire as many novels or movies as the Second World War or the Vietnam War did (Rosso 2003). Whereas (white, male) American writers recorded their experience in the Korean War already in the 1950s and early 1960s; this war did not gain (literary) traction until the 1980s and 1990s, that is when a sizable number of novels written by second-generation Korean Americans started to appear (Belletto 2015; Kim 1997).[3] These works had the merit of drawing attention to the enduring aftereffects of the Korean War, and making visible what was left out of hegemonic Westerner historiography. As Elaine Kim (2004, 13) highlighted, the war is a defining feature of Korean Americanness as it has "shaped the most intimate aspects of material and psychic life for tens of millions of Koreans, including millions of Korean Americans, touching even those born long after the armistice or living on distant continents." Because of this war, many Koreans migrated to the very imperial center that had disrupted their lives. Whereas the Cold War is remembered in Western countries as the ideological rivalry among two superpowers, the fear for a(n unrealized)

---

[3] Some of the earliest writing about the Korean War include James A. Michener's *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1953) and Pat Frank's *Hold Back the Night* (1951), both adapted into movies in the 1950s.

nuclear annihilation, and remote fights, Koreans (as well as Vietnamese) bear the material burden of those conflicts.

In sharp contrast to other media, in the 1950s, comic book publishers created a noticeable number of titles addressing the American military involvement in Korea while the conflict was still happening (Rifas 2021). However, most of these comics did not challenge or question preexisting heroic narratives, and the majority of "war comics in the early 50s were still typically jingoistic saber-rattlers, with blue-eyed blond-haired US farm boys fighting racist caricature of North Korean and Chinese soldiers" (Conroy 2009, 130). Indeed, war representations are usually "premediated" (Erll 2009, 111) through the images of conflicts that occurred before. This tendency is exemplified by Star Publications' story "The Spirit of War" featured in *Horrors of War #11* (1953). The tale begins at the end of the Second World War, when a man violently dies in Germany and his ghost floats out of his body, and visits various cities, including Haifa. At the end of the story, the evil spirit possesses North Koreans planting "the seeds of aggression in their minds" (*Horrors of War #11* 1953, 2). Whereas this narrative about the origins of the conflict might seem simplistic (if not kitsch) to contemporary readers, in reality, it echoed Harry Truman's presidential rhetoric,

> I recalled some earlier instances: Manchuria, Ethiopia, Austria. I remembered how each time that the democracies failed to act it had encouraged the aggressors to go ahead. Communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier. (Truman 1956, 332-333)

By comparing the Korean invasion to the aggressive actions of Hitler, Truman argued that in order to avoid Munich and the 'appeasement' of the 1930s, America had to protect lesser powerful allies from aggression. In his opinion, history demonstrated that the refusal to prevent belligerent actions against allies would ultimately lead to war anyway. Ironically, Truman would be accused of appeasement by the supporters of General McArthur for having limited his objectives to the restoration of the status quo in Korea (Herz 1964, 296).

1. 'Somewhere in Korea': narrating the first hot war of the Cold War

As hitherto discussed, in order to justify its intervention in Korea, the United States articulated itself as the defender of all humanity (and not just its borders). This rhetoric gradually percolated into popular media of entertainment, including comic books. For example, Marvel's *War Comics #1* (1950) story "Peril in Korea" explained to a young audience why it was important for US troops to be involved in Korea, despite not having been directly attacked. This narrative proactively supported Truman's doctrine, helping the readers to overcome isolationist positions.

Indeed, while many Americans were prone to return to isolationism after World War II, Truman urged them, instead, to support a new foreign policy (from abstention to participation) that—for good and for ill—would lead the United States to assume a different commitment to World issues.

"Peril in Korea" symbolically begins on an American military base situated in Japan, creating an immediate connection between the current conflicts and World War II, showing how 1950s US foreign policy had been in the making since 1945, as the former enemy was now a major asset against communist expansion in Asia. While still in Japan, a US squad received orders to ship to the 38th parallel. Yet, the news was not met with enthusiasm by all the members of the squad. Sergeant Greg Baker remarked, "Take it from me Mitch---We're making one big mistake, Korea is none of our business. Since when does Civil War become **our** affair" (*War Comics #1* 1950, 1, emphasis in the original). However, when in Korea, he would change his mind as he witnessed the killing of an English plantation owner at the hand of the communists and overheard their plans for conquest (conveniently uttered in English), "The Americans are fools. We shall win here. It will only be the first step. Next will be Formosa, Japan, the Philippines, Hawaii -- stepping stone to America itself" (*War Comics #1* 1950, 5). After defeating the enemy, Sgt. Baker confesses, "Now I really know […] We are not just fighting for Korea but for Main St., U.S.A. and a free world. We've got to stop them -- before it's too late!" (*War Comics #1* 1950, 6).

Hence, the moral of the comic echoes Truman's (1947) "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," where he argued that it was "the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." In order to prove its case, the comics argues that if Korea fell under the influence of communism, then the surrounding countries would have followed, somehow anticipating Eisenhower's (1954) "falling domino principle."[4]

With the exception of the government sponsored propaganda comic book *Korea My Home* (1953), Korean War comics seldom addressed the reasons that triggered the conflict or Japanese colonial occupation, and generally focused on single operations and battles (Rifas 2021). They usually assumed that the enemy started it by attacking South Korea unprovoked. Even the Korean setting is often an undefined anonymous exotic wasteland, not anchored to any real

---

[4] Even though less articulated, the roots of this concept can be already observed in Harry S. Truman's "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine" (March 12, 1947).

place or battle.[5] Hence, the Korea depicted in these comics inhabits the symbolic realm, becoming a test case for the success or failure of America's attempt to export its democracy and way of life abroad. Indeed, in these comics Americans fight a menacing Communist bloc unified from East Berlin to Beijing.

In the 1950s war comic books' accounts of the war usually showed no real knowledge of Korea or its history, and they hardly got past two or three Korean names. They usually paid attention exclusively to the American experience, highlighting the prowess and shrewdness of a particular soldier. They reaffirmed the values of patriotism and duty, embodied by white masculine men fighting the Red (racialized) menace overseas, recirculating the same anti-Asian stereotypes used against the Japanese during World War II. In these comics, Koreans were depicted as infamous, cowards, not masculine, speaking broken English, and having buckteeth. Korean War comics usually failed to question existing racial stereotypes and go beyond the 'good guys versus bad guys' trope. The persistence of certain racial caricature would cement the stereotyped image of the 'gook' (an image that will be recuperated during the Vietnam War to describe the new enemy).

Even though, Koreans and Chinese were much more numerous, in the comics, they were just nameless stock characters. Korean leaders were generally absent from the narrative. This is particularly remarkable, if one considers the important narrative role that Hitler, Mussolini, Tōjō, and Hirohito played in World War II comics. Perhaps, one most iconic example is the cover of *Captain America Comics #1* (1941), which marked the title hero's debut, where Steve Rogers punched Hitler in the face. Similarly, *Bomber Comics #4* (1944) cover showed a kid striking three bowling pins featuring the portrait of Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito. World War II comics often presented parodies of the Axis leaders; they ridiculed Hitler's mustache and small stature, Mussolini's chin and arrogant postures, and draw Hirohito and Tōjō as animal-like monsters. They also frequently debunked Axis propaganda. For instance, *The Spirit* (1941) story, "The tale of the Dictator's Reform" featured Hitler coming to America to learn why they resisted his 'superior race' theory. By entering in contact with peace loving Americans, he started appreciating their love for freedom, and changed his ideas and wanted to reform Germany with a promise to dismantle dictatorship. Yet, to impede these changes the lieutenants kill him and

---

[5] This characteristic is particularly evident if contrasted to the more realistic depiction of Europe during World War II, and the later portrait of Saigon, Vietnamese jungle and rice paddies. The more accurate rendition of Europe might be attributed to the fact that in the 1940s many European immigrants (and their descendants) were employed in the comic book industry. Similarly, the accentuated realism in Vietnam's portrait might be due to the extensive war's coverage in the news, which made the conflict earn the name "living-room war" (Hallin 1986).

replace him with a double. Similarly, Simon and Kirby's *Young Allies* exposed Fascist misdeeds, "People of Italy! […] your leader robs you and your country of every cent against the day he can escape to enjoy his pillaged fortune! Italians! What are you going to do about it???" (*Young Allies* #9 1943, 26). These examples show how real war enemies were much more compelling characters than any previous generic villain. Their faces had already entered the public imaginary thanks to the circulation of their pictures on newspapers. Hence, the lack of caricature of North Korean leaders testifies that the majority of the readers ignored the specificities of the conflict. Korea was just a faraway place where the US and the USSR were testing their power, as they could not openly attack each other without risking the explosion of a new world conflict.

World War II narratives presented a straightforward problem-solution paradigm: it had clear enemies (Hitler, Mussolini, Tōjō, Hirohito, and their armies), a goal (the defeat of Nazis, fascists, and Imperial Japan) and it was followed (according to the official rhetoric) by the restauration of peace. In contrast, Korean War comics described a smaller scope: the containment of Communism through local military operations, often mixing the war and spy genres. The soldiers were often involved in sabotage missions against the enemies' plans of (nuclear) destruction.

The fear about the possible consequences of an escalation of the Cold War is well-captured by the apocalyptic scenarios envisioned by Ace Magazines' comic book series *World War III* (1952), which speculated about what would have happen if America did not remain strong and alert. The comic imagined a near future (the 1960s) where the communists attacked the US with nuclear weapons, and America had to organize a counter-offensive. In order to create a sense of urgency the comic evoked the recent attack on Pearl Harbor, underlining the seriousness of the threat, but also America's determination and ability to prevail. The propagandistic intention of the editors is made explicit in the second issue, which warned the reader, "The only way to prevent such mass destruction is to prepare NOW. Nothing less than a super-strong, fully alerted America can halt this fantastic horror of the future!" (*World War III #2* 1952, 1, emphasis in the original).

Stories imagining an impending nuclear war were so common that one might consider them a subgenre within Korean War comics. This theme was explored, among other titles, by St. John's *Atom-Age Combat* (1952-1958), Youthful Magazine's *Atomic Attack* (1953), and Ace Magazine's *Atomic War* (1952). Even though science fiction and comics already imagined the use of atomic weapons during World War II, after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear bombs became associated with the end of the world. Atomic mushrooms, images about the annihilation of urban centers

and the obliteration of civilization gradually substituted the more playful portrait of (nuclear) bombs of the 1940s.[6] Whereas during the Second World War many superheroes were portrayed riding bombs (a blatant phallic imagery that linked together sexual conquest and military strength); in the 1950s, the 'bomb that won the war,' causing the surrender of Japan, became a source of anxiety. This apprehension about the weapons of tomorrow was not limited to nuclear armaments, but it included biological weapons capable of spreading plagues and epidemics. For instance, *Atomic Attacks #5* story "Tomorrow's War" features a group of masked doctors sanitizing the body of infected soldiers with vapor and then provide them with immunization pills.

2. 'The tough as Narcissus': war as a rite of passage into manhood

Despite some Korean War comics appropriating elements from science fiction and spy stories, the majority were simply adventure stories (often featuring a coming-of-age narrative where the rookie matures into manhood). Probably, Ziff-Davis' *G.I. Joe* series[7] (1951-1957) can be used as an archetypal example to show how war was narratively constructed as a rite of passage. For instance, *G.I. Joe #13* (1951, 43) showed the transformative experience of a group of rookies who became self-conscious thanks to their combat experience, "war makes men hard. The baptism of fire under grueling battle conditions toughens even the gentlest soldiers. Sometimes hardened veterans forget that only a little while ago, they, too were green and unsure of themselves." Similarly, issue *#17* told the story of a soldier dying while turning twenty-one-years-old. His death did not convey a tragic sense of history, but a rewarding sense of fulfillment, echoing the old phrase *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. By making the ultimate sacrifice, the young soldier finally turned into a man. Death was here given a purpose, a means to achieve personal and national goals: entering manhood while making the Communist threat roll back. Therefore, this comic embraces and propagates forms of public euphemisms.[8]

Moreover, war did not only make the privates virile, but it also fostered the process of Americanization. Korean children were often nurtured or even adopted by members of the

---

[6] Fawcett Publications' *Special Edition Comics #1* (1941) portrayed Captain Marvel riding a giant bomb. The image of the main hero riding a missile was also be adopted by *Superman #18* (1942), *National Comics #30* (1943), and *Captain Marvel Jr. #19* (1944).

[7] Ziff-Davis Publishing Company used to number its first issues "10." When the series became popular, it reset the numbering system starting from 6, so there are two issues for each number from 10 to 14, and no issues numbered 1 through 5.

[8] In his book *Wartime*, Paul Fussell (1989, 22) described public euphemism as an "optimistic and wholesome view of catastrophic occurrences—a fine way to encourage a moralistic, nationalistic, and bellicose politics."

Army, and even though they initially manifest diffidence towards the US troops, they are later shown smiling and playing baseball (the quintessence of Americanness).[9] Similarly, the story "Get one for Anzio!" featured in *G.I. Joe 15#* narrates the life of the fictional character Anzio Baker, an Italian kid adopted by an American soldier during World War II.[10] Anzio grows up in America and when the Korean War breaks out, he decides to serve as a GI, even though he is not a US citizen. The story shows Anzio longing to become American. This wish will be (ironically) granted only at the moment of his death. The official documents about Anzio's naturalization arrives too late. Yet, this episode is not told using tragic tones. Even in this case, death is given a purpose: Anzio's sacrifice is described as a payback for what he received. This story makes also evident how World War II provided schemata through which interpret what was happening in Korea.

Thus, war is here presented as an agent of assimilation. This narrative did not originate within the comic, but it mirrored the rhetoric adopted in official commemorations. Indeed, in "1954, the first year Armistice Day was formally commemorated as Veterans Day, the federal government organized an unprecedented series of mass naturalization ceremonies" (Piehler 1995, 138). However, 1950s comics do not mention the contribution of racial minorities to the war effort. They only feature the South Korean people, whose presence serves to justify US intervention overseas, as they are usually depicted as powerless and in need of American guidance and tutelage.

Even though, the examples hitherto provided described the death of a soldier, such depictions were rare. The main cast of characters were never killed off, and gory images were seldom shown to the reader. These comics never built up a sense of fear or suspense as the reader knew that "good soldiers always win" (*G.I. Joe #12* 1951, 42). This sense of security is also reinforced by the gamification of the conflict, "the game's the same, whether it's war, poker or baseball: the object is to win" (*G.I. Joe #21* 1953, 1). The game metaphor was also emphasized by the presence of precise goals to achieve (and even prizes), "Every man in the army wants to better himself, and the only way this can be done is by the addition of chevrons" (*G.I. Joe #17* 1952, 35). In general, Korean War comics visualized the fights as athletic gesture. In these comics a soldier's survival depended on his skill in knifing, bayoneting, hitting, punching, or otherwise overpowering the Korean soldiers in close-quarters, hand-to-hand combat.

---

[9] In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the war also produced thousands of Amerasians orphans, abandoned by their Korean mothers and the American soldiers who fathered them.

[10] The name Anzio is highly symbolic because it is reminiscent of the battle of Battle of Anzio in Italy, which took place from January 22nd, 1944 to June 5, 1944.

In the same vein, aviation themed comics (e.g. *Jet Aces, Jet Fighters, U.S. Fighting Air Force, War Birds*) exalted individual prowess and gave the illusion of war as a gallant fight, where the airplane substituted the steed. The focus on the aerial maneuvers of the pilots often effaced the consequences of the bombing on civilians as the actions mainly involved planes shooting at each other. The mass scale horror that war produced was often edulcorated as the conflict was depicted as being limited to a small group of people and factions. As Linda Robertson discussed in *The Dream of Civilized Warfare* (2003), the image of the flying ace offered the opportunity to imagine the war as a man-to-man combat, rather than the mechanized slaughter it really was. Interestingly, both *Fighting Fronts #2* tale "Warpath!" and *War Stories #1* tale "War Front Hatchet Man" featured a Native American soldier as a protagonist. This choice had the effect to make the war narrative close to the western, thus linking the current war to the myth of the Frontier. This is particularly relevant because it anticipates the rhetoric that will be used during the Vietnam War, when the myth of the frontier was revitalized to make sense of the current event. As technology was not able to provide a significant advantage in a guerrilla, the American GI has to (re)turn to the wilderness often appropriating features of Native American culture[11] (such as the stereotypical feathers). Korean War comics also introduced the figure of the war reporter (who has not assumed yet an antagonistic role) and the POW (who in conjunction with the MIA would help mythologize Vietnam narratives).[12]

Korean War comics also highlighted America's technological superiority, "America is the land of **machinery**! We know how to invent, and we know how to produce" (*Battle Cry* #3 1952, 21, emphasis in the original). The importance of weapons is also highlighted in *Our Army at War* tale "I, the Gun"[13] where the US colt 45 automatic pistol is personified. In this story the gun is both the protagonist and the narrator, "I am the US colt 45 automatic pistol. I am made for one purpose—face the enemy. This is the story of my lifespan. A span of 8 bullets" (*Our Army at War #7* 1953, 18).

Despite the importance located to weaponry, these comics reminded the reader that equipment does not make the soldier, but camaraderie, "A man must have friends. He cannot live by himself… especially in the **army**! There they become more than friends… they become comrades… they become someone you might lay down your life for… they become **buddies**!" (*Battle Cry* #4 1952, 23, emphasis in the original). This concept was reiterated also in the story

---

[11] This form of cultural appropriation is visible also in some popular movies like *Rambo*.

[12] For an in-depth analysis of this public myth and national cult of grievance and how it influenced America's memory and understanding of the Vietnam War, see Bruce H. Franklin's *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America* (1993).

[13] This story was written by David Kahn and illustrated by Mort Drucker.

"Enemy Breakthrough," which stressed the importance of cooperation,

> when the chips were down, and a communist breakthrough threatened a vital united nation position, every man forgot his personal problems and worked together as part of the greatest fighting unit the world has ever seem… the **United States Marines**! (*Fightin' Marines #3* 1951, 1, emphasis in the original)

Whereas camaraderie is praised as a fundamental skill and it narratively functions as a way to humanize soldiers, individual qualities are also celebrated. For example, *Our Army at War #18* (1953) story "One Man Army" recurs to the homonymous trope, portraying a heavily armed and well-trained combatant able to face numerous enemies alone. *Battle Cry* also foreshadows some themes that would be prominent in anti-war comics, but never expands on them. Some of the GIs are morally ambiguous (e.g. suckers). However, these characters are usually killed off by the end of the story. Hence, vices are acknowledged, but limited to the individual. Then, this comic seems to rhetorically anticipate some of the critical aspects about war to either edulcorate or counter them. The bad guy always dies. Thus, war assumes a moralizing function. As Rocco Versaci (2008) discussed, comics produced during the Korean War were subversive mainly in the fact that they existed in a time when other media did not engage with the conflict. In order to understand the reactionary and foggy nature of these comics, one should keep in mind that the 1950s were an age of great conservativism, and probably publishers feared to be blacklisted because of the potential subversive content in anti-war comic stories. Yet, the jingoistic elements of these comics should not be overlooked as they would serve as blueprints for conservative comics produced during the Vietnam War (e.g. Robin Moore and Joe Kubert's *Tales of the Green Beret*, 1966), but also revisionist comics about the Vietnam War produced in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Doug Murray and Heath Russ' *Hearts and Minds—A Vietnam Love Story,* 1990).

3. 'It's a man's world': male bonding and the restoration of traditional gender roles

The gamification of the conflict allowed the army to be represented as a team, focusing on men's bonding. Soldiers are often depicted as lighthearted, cheerfully optimistic and hopeful toward the future and the result of their mission. They usually have a Pollyannish attitude towards adversities, as hardship frequently provides opportunities for jokes. Despite their mature and sexualized bodies, the stories set in the military camps remind the reader that the soldiers are simply boys (often recurring to gender stereotypes): the privates are frequently involved in pranks and fights in order to prove their masculinity. Jokes are here used to generate laughter

and are not described as means to humiliate the weak by making their life miserable. The pranks featured in these comics are innocent and never turn into petty harassment or forms of sadism. In contrast, (anti)war literature often features episodes of hazing where the weak are targeted by the strong. In these comics the presence of pranks does not seek to denounce an abuse, but to remind us that "All wars are boyish, and are fought by boys," as Herman Melville wrote in "The March into Virginia" (1861). However, *G.I. Joe* comics do not denounce the sacrifice of many young soldiers but exalt the enthusiasm of their youth. After all, war needs innocence and stamina, as frightened, cynical, debilitated, mature soldier cannot perform their duty. Therefore, it is no wonder that these characters are boys pretending to be grown-ups.

The 'boys will be boys' attitude is also supported by the paratext of these comics, which often features self-defense and bodybuilding advertisements. These images stressed the necessity of knowing how to fight in order to prove one's manhood, but they also reflected the young reader's fear of being beaten up by bullies. This parallelism is illuminated also by a *G.I. Joe #24* (1953) wordless tale titled "You're Never Alone." In this story, the reader sees the juxtaposition of the images of a North Korean sniper with the pictures of an (American) bully. In this tale, the representation of a hand-to-hand fight between an American GI and a Korean soldier is interspersed with flashbacks of the former's past. The American private recalls his fight against a bully while battling the Communist enemy. Like in World War II comics, these oversimplifications of politics aim to moralize the conflict by drawing a clear-cut division between 'good and bad guys.' However, one can also see a small variation in the pattern, whereas Nazis (and 'Japs') were the ultimate source of all evil, North Koreans are here depicted as dangerous and destructive bullies. This distinction might be due to the fact that South Koreans were allies, and their defense legitimized US intervention. It might also betray America's ambition of unifying the country and paving the way to reconciliation. Indeed, World War II comics adopted a similar rhetoric by distinguishing Nazis and fascists from Germans and Italians respectively. This treatment was not granted to the Japanese, as America wanted an unconditioned surrendering in retaliation for Pearl Harbor.

In Korean War comics, women are rarely featured, and when they do, they usually occupy traditional gender roles (nurses, love interests, troublemakers, eye candy, damsels in distress or spies). The limited presence of women in a male dominated world (the military camps and the battlefield) might be understood as an attempt to eliminate any homoerotic interpretation of the male bonding that occurs within the army. It is worth remembering that in the 1950s comics crusaders (e.g. Wertham) showed their concern about the presumed homoerotic

undertones of Batman and Robin's relationship, as the two man (who have no blood relation) lived under the same roof.

It is also interesting to notice how in certain comics women were portrayed as having the potential ability of preventing the construction of male bonding and even hindering the success of the mission. This is particularly evident in the two issue comics *Buddies of the U.S. Army* (1952), which followed the story of two soldiers fighting over the affection of women while reconciling and buddying up when the situation demanded that they fight commies. War becomes a bonding experience, but also a way to grow up and become more mature as soldiers learn how to work out their differences in order to achieve common goals (survival and victory). Whereas, during the Second World War, superheroines had their first opportunity to shine while fighting the enemies of democracy. In Korean War comics, they were no longer fighting on foreign battlefields. Female characters were merely involved in romantic relationships with handsome GIs, as in *True War Romances* (1952-1955) or *G.I. Sweethearts* (1953-1955). These comics often presented vain and spoiled protagonists falling in love with American soldiers. Their relationship with the GI made them grow, as they usually learn important life lessons and become less self-centered and volatile. In these comics, even women who occupy position within the army (e.g. WACS) act as dainty creatures needing protection from their men.

These romance comics usually recurred to two types of formulae. In the first one, the female protagonist is torn about her feelings towards two pursuers (one or both are usually GIs). She is usually confused about who she should date. All her doubts are cleared when her perfect match saves her from a dangerous situation. The second narrative trope revolves around a stubborn woman torn between her love for a GI and her pride. She often feels resentment towards her lover because of a misunderstanding. Yet, when the situation untangles she learns about her mistakes and prejudices, and finally repent. In both narratives, the female protagonist resolves to marry the GI who has been pursuing her throughout the story.

These stories do not only portray the patriarchal values and gender normativity of the 1950s, but also the willingness to return to traditional and comforting patterns after World War II. Indeed, in the 1940s, with so many men overseas, women had to step into many of the roles formerly occupied by men. Comics were no exception, and this "influx of talent led to the arrival of a passel of newly empowered female superheroes who assumed their rightful places in the pages of comic books" (Fertig 2017, 16). This emancipation was also visible in comics' stories as female characters started to become more complex. For instance, Jane Martin 'The modern Florence Nightingale' was a compassionate healer, but she did not hesitate to contribute to the war effort, fighting the enemy and delivering supplies, weapons, and medical knowledge to those

in need. This comic is particularly enthralling because it shows a progressive emancipation of the main heroine. Whereas in early stories Jane Martin's aviator fiancé Tom arrives at the last minute to rescue her, he would later disappear, leaving Jane completely in charge of her story and destiny. Yet, it is important to remark that the portrayal of strong female women did not seek to defy traditional gender roles. Even though, these superheroines were busy battling the Axis, they did not give up their femininity, symbolized by their manicured nails, shaped eyebrows, and makeup (Jarvis 2004). Whereas male characters were defined by their strength, gallantry, and bravery, female characters were also defined by their beauty.

Therefore, the 1950s restoration of traditional gender roles betrays a reactionary desire to resist those inevitable societal changes that World War II had triggered. This hypothesis seems confirmed by the fact that in Vietnam War comics women are scarcely represented. For instance, *The 'Nam issues #49-51* present a classical love story between a soldier and a nurse; however, the comic makes clear that in Vietnam there is no place for romantic love. Thinking Dove died, the nurse leaves the camp. Hence, women as bearers of love are placed outside the war. This exclusion of a gendered alternative to war has the effect of reinforcing the centrality of male bonding. As Susan Jeffords discussed,

> At a time when other arenas for masculine bonding in the American culture are being 'invaded' (by the integration of professional sports, the enactment of the title IX, requiring all-male school to become co-educational, all-male clubs to accept women as members, the racial and gendered integration of traditionally male professions, and so on) war can be seen as the last 'pure' theater for the masculine bond. (Jeffords 1989, 72-73)

Once again, Korean War comics seem to anticipate some of the themes that would characterize the 1980s narratives about the Vietnam War.

Finally, this remasculinization attempts of Korean War comics did not go under the radar of satire. On April 1954, *MAD #10* featured a parody of the jingoistic comic series *G.I. Joe* titled "G.I. Shmoe!" As hitherto discussed, the Ziff-Davis' *G.I. Joe* series (1951-1957) portrayed a group of average soldiers fighting in Korea. In these comics, privates were eroticized as muscular hunks and women usually fell for them, as they were fascinated with uniforms. In MAD's parody, the scenario is reversed as men are blinded by their infatuations and love incapacitates soldiers from recognizing a series of women, trying to seduce them to infiltrate the base, as enemies. They fail to identify the foes in disguise, even though their treacherous nature is hinted by their outfit: they all wear a hat with a red star. At the end of the story the privates are saved by the WACS (Women Army Corps). Therefore, this parody emasculated the image of the American soldier through irony.

4. 'Thou shalt not kill': casting shadows over the US engagement overseas

In the 1950s, (war) comics matured in EC pages as they gave artists and writers the opportunity to extend the limits of the medium in multiple directions. EC addressed adult readers providing both a form of entertainment and a thought-provoking medium, capable of commenting on society and trigger indignation. War Comics produced by EC were particularly innovative as they offered a first counter-narrative of the Korean War while American troops were still fighting. EC war comics were poised on the boundary between the realistic and ironic modes of representation in order to capture the personal and cultural consequences of the conflict. Irony in these stories was used to show the futility of war. After all, the war against the (inhuman) enemy ends up being a transforming and dehumanizing experience for the American GI, as well. Perhaps, one of their most famous stories is "Enemy Assault," featured in *Frontline Combat #1* (1951). This tale showed an American soldier searching refuge in a trench; here he ended up trapped with a Korean. They both point their weapons at each other and start having a conversation. The small talk between these two characters makes the reader aware that the two had common experiences. The presence of children's photographs (falling out of the enemy's pocket) creates the opportunity to build up familiar associations of normality and domesticity, casting doubts about (and adding nuances to) the antithetical construction of the enemy as a stock character. Oppositions are no longer absolute, and the Other is now brought closer to the Self. It is worth noticing that the epiphanic encounter with the Other (who is no longer the enemy, but a human being) is a leitmotiv of antiwar literature and movies. For instance, a similar scene can be observed, among other works, in Dos Passos's novel *Three Soldiers* (1921), Erich Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), King Vidor's movie *The Big Parade* (1925), and Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). However, in "Enemy Assault," this epiphany does not lead the American soldiers to take either a pacifist or ethical stance. The American soldier never forgets the existence of 'the two sides' and their endless and necessary state of war (as they both legitimize each other through the construction of essentialist confrontations), "**I had to choose sides! I had to! You can't fight a war by comparing baby shots!**" (Kurtzman, *Frontline Combat #1* 1951, 15, emphasis in the original). As the Korean soldier lays dead with his children's photograph on his belly the reader is left to question the actions of the American soldiers. This narrative solution is a clear point of departure from antiwar literature, where the discovery of the enemy's humanity leads the main

character towards an ethical choice (usually desertion). Indeed, even though the lies narrated by public euphemism are revealed, the soldier's logic (to kill or be killed)[14] prevails.

The tale "Contact!" featured in *Frontline Combat* #2 (Kurtzman 1951) deconstructed another national myth, the 'American way,' while presenting the dark side of American military superiority. Whereas war has been often motivated as a way to defend the national lifestyle and values, here the 'American way' is hinted as being responsible for the war. The war machine is an extension of the capitalist system of production. The tale undermines American righteousness by playing with the polysemy of the word "good." Indeed, at the end of the narrative, the reader is left to wonder whether America is defending its virtue or its production. EC did not only indict war by displacing the image and myth of the chivalrous American knights, who trooped through most war comics of the 1950s, by showing edgy and ambivalent GIs, he also portrayed devastating (human and material) loss, meaningless (and almost Pyrrhic) victory, and sympathetic enemies who felt pain when hurt. Remarkably, his criticism of war did not appear exclusively in the text, but also in the paratext. For example, *Frontline Combat #12* featured a parody of a recruitment poster. Moreover, stories like "'Bunker!" (Kurtzman, *Two-Fisted Tales #34* 1953), "Perimeter!" (Kurtzman, *Frontline Combat #11* 1953) and "In Gratitude…" (Gains & Feldstein, *Shock Suspenstory #11* 1953) also discussed the racial tensions existing in the US Army (and American society) and how bigotry impeded the acknowledgement of the heroic actions accomplished by African American soldiers, anticipating themes that would be explored in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, these stories seemed to ask the reader why African Americans should serve in the Army if their sacrifice and Civil Rights are not recognized at home, foreshadowing a rhetoric similar to the one used by Martin Luther King in his famous speech, "Beyond Vietnam" (1967).

The second issue of *Shock SuspenStories* (1952) also criticized war in a tale (ironically) titled "Patriots!".[15] This story indicts the patriotic rhetoric behind military parades, where the attention is always placed on the repetition of conventional gestures, rather than the suffering of the soldiers it supposedly celebrates. Parades are presented as a commodity to be consumed by an audience rather than a way to honor the real men who fought risking (and sacrificing) their lives on the battleground. Indeed, the tale narrates the story of a mob that, whipped up by anti-Communist sentiments, beats to death a man, because he did not lift his hat to the flag

---

[14] In *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Paul Bäumer accepts this logic after having killed Gérard Duval. Paul felt remorse for involuntarily killing a man out of survival instinct. However, his comrades remind him that he took no pleasure from his killing and he had no choice; it had to kill to survive. In contrast, in the comic, the 'kill or be killed' logic precedes the act of killing.

[15] This story was co-written by Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein and illustrated by Jack Kamen.

during a military parade. The reader later finds out that the dead man was a blind veteran who did not raise his hat because of his disability. This story reveals the hypocrisy behind patriotic celebrations as they usually essentialize war and idolize the military corps while neglecting the suffering inflicted upon the individual soldier. The presence of the blind veteran destabilizes the dominant triumphal war narrative confronting it with the reality and the aftermath of conflicts. Disabilities (and gruesome death) tend to be elided from official reports and recollection of the conflict, as they destabilize the image of the nation as a whole body. Consequently, the reader is left to wonder who (or what) the parade truly celebrates. As Qiana Whitted (2019) highlighted, this story shows the cruelty and indifference of everyday people, but also how a culture of containment can suddenly trigger a flash point of deadly mob violence. This type of educational tale belongs to what Qiana Whitted defines as 'preachies.' In fact, EC often used the sentimental invocation of shame to indict wrong social behavior.

Finally, it is worth remarking the year 1954 was particularly troublesome for comics. In this time, there was a (misguided) interest in the effects of mass culture on society, influenced often by a climate of suspicion. Like other entertainment media (e.g. Hollywood suffered from the investigative activities of the Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy), comics were subject to intensive scrutiny.[16] Dr. Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) sparked a wave of public indignation and hysteria, ferociously attacking comics and portraying them as the source of juvenile delinquency. Fearing a legislation against comics and a direct government intervention, publishers grouped together to create a system of self-regulation, known as the Comics Code Authority (CCA), somehow similar to the Hays Code.

EC publications were one of the most renowned victims of these repressive forces. Comics published by this publisher were unique in their socially conscious and progressive ideas as they included stories about racial equality, anti-war advocacy, nuclear disarmament, gender roles, anticipating some of the themes that would be prominent during the 1960s and 1970s thanks to the Civil Rights Movement and the counterculture. Indeed, as Art Spiegelman (2011 [1993], 191) discussed, "Harvey [Kurtzman]'s Mad was more important than pot and LSD in shaping the generation that protested the Vietnam War." However, as David Hadju (2008, 196) remarks, at first, the radical and innovative content of these war comics got unnoticed, "parents no doubt watched their children reading *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat* and figured that the kids were being spoon-feed jingoism, unaware of the books' diet on cynicism toward the

---

[16] It is worth remarking that even though McCarthy and Wertham belonged to the opposite political spectrum, they both shared concerned about the propagandistic and disruptive potentials of media.

American military and sensitivity to the impartial cruelty of war." EC comics did not feature only provocative stories, but they also employed talented people like Harvey Kurtzman, and the art quality was as good as the writing. Despite its quality, EC couldn't stand a chance against the demonization of the medium and Gaines was forced to kill off its comic line. The final issue of *Tales from the Crypt* appeared in February/March 1955.

5. 'A not so forgotten war': establishing interpretative paradigms for future conflicts

Even though the Korean War has been labeled as the 'Forgotten War,' the comics produced during this era left an important mark in the development of the war comics genre, anticipating some of the themes (and fractures) that would emerge within America during the Vietnam War thanks to the Civil Rights Movement and the counterculture. EC comics' commitment to realism would inspire Archie Goodwin's *Blazing Combat* (1965-1966), whereas its irony and love for the grotesque would influence (antiwar) underground comix, like Greg Irons and Tom Veitch's *The Legion of Charlies* (1971). Yet, the legacy of the 1950s is not limited to its more controversial comics, as jingoistic narratives would be adopted in the early phase of the Vietnam War. Interestingly, realistic and jingoistic narratives would be revisited, coopted and merged during the Reagan era in order to let America win even when it loses.

Mattia Arioli *is a research fellow at the University of Bologna. He holds a PhD degree in Modern Languages, Literatures, and Culture from the Alma Mater Studiorum—University of Bologna; his doctoral project focused on the remembrance of the Vietnam War in graphic narratives. His main research interests include Cultural Memory Studies, Comics Studies, Asian American Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Visual Culture.*

Works cited

Atom-Age Combat. Issues #1-6. New York: St. John, 1952-1958.

Atomic Attack. Issues #5-8. New York: Youthful Magazine, 1953.

Atomic War. Issues #1-4. Canton: Ace Magazine, 1952-1953.

Belletto, Steven. "The Korean War, the Cold War, and the American Novel." *American Literature* 87.1 (2015): 51-77.

Conroy, Mike. *War Comics: A Graphic History*. Lewes: Ilex Press, 2009.

Darda, Joseph. *Empire of Defense: Race and the Cultural Politics of Permanent War*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019.

Dos Passos, John. *Three Soldiers*. 1921. Claremont: Coyote Canyon Press, 2007.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. "The President's News Conference." 1954. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-361. Last visited 31/01/2022.

Eisner, Will. "The Tale of the Dictator's Reform." *The Spirit* #54. Des Moines: Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1941.

Erll, Astrid. "Remembering Across Time, Space, and Cultures: Premediation, Remediation and the 'Indian Mutiny.'" *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*. Edited by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009. 109-138.

Feldstein, Al. *Shock SuspenStories*. Issues 1-18. New York: Educational Comics, 1952-1953.

Fertig, Mark. *Take that, Adolf! The Fighting Comic Books of the Second World War*. Seattle: Fantagraphics Book, 2017.

Frank, Pat. *Hold Back the Night*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1951.

Franklin, Bruce H. *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993.

Fussel, Paul. *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

G.I. Sweethearts. Issue # 32-35. Buffalo: Quality, 1953-1955.

Goldstein, Donald M. and Harry James Maihafer. *The Korean War: The Story and Photographs*. Washington: Potomac Books, Inc., 2000.

Goodwin, Archie. *Blazing Combat*. New York: Warren, 1965-1966.

Goulden, Joseph C. *Korea: The Untold Story*. 1982. New York: Dover Publications, 2020.

Hadju, David. *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic Book Scare and How It Changed America*. New York: Picador, 2009.

Halliday, Jon and Bruce Cummings. *Korea: The Unknown War*. New York: Pantheon, 1988.

Hallin, Daniel C. *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

Hastings, Max. *The Korean War*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

Herz, John H. "The Relevancy and Irrelevancy of Appeasement." *Social Research* (1964): 296-320.

Horrors of War. Issue #11. Buffalo: Star Publication, 1953.

Jarvis, Christina S. *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During World War II*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004.

Jeffords, Susan. *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Kim, Daniel Y. and Viet Thanh Nguyen. "The Literature of the Korean War and Vietnam War." *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*. Edited by Crystal Parikh and Daniel Y. Kim. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 59-72.

Kim, Elaine H. "Korean American Literature." *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*. Edited by King-kok Cheung. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 156-191.

---. "Roots and Wings: An Overview of Korean American Literature, 1934-2003." *Korean American Literature*. Edited by Young-Key Kim-Renaud, R. Richard Grinker and Kirk W. Larsen. Washington: The Sigur Center Asia Papers, 2004. 1-19.

King Jr, Martin Luther. "Beyond Vietnam." 1967. https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/beyond-vietnam. Last visited 31/01/2022.

"Korea: The 'Forgotten' War." *US News & World Report* 5 October 1951: 21.

Kurtzman, Harvey. *Frontline Combat*. Issues #1-15. New York: EC Comics, 1951-1954.

---. "G.I. Shmoe." *Mad*. Issue #10. New York: Educational Comics, 1954.

---. *Two-fisted Tales*. Issues #18-41. New York: EC Comics, 1950-1951.

Mailer, Norman. *The Naked and the Dead*. 1948. New York: Penguin Random House, 2018.

Matray, James I. "Korea's War at 60: A Survey of the Literature." *Cold War History* 11.01 (2011): 99-129.

Melville, Herman. "The March into Virginia Ending in the First Manassas." 1861. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45904/the-march-into-virginia-ending-in-the-first-manassas-july-1861. Last visited 31/01/2022.

Michener, James. *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*. New York: Random House, 1953.

Millet, Allan R. "The Korean War: A 50-year Critical Historiography." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 24.1 (2001): 188-224.

Murray, Doug and Heath Russ. *Hearts and Minds: a Vietnam Love Story*. New York: Epic Comics, 1990.

Piehler, G. Kurt. *Remembering War the American Way*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.

Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*. 1929. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1975.

Rifas, Leonard. *Korean War Comic Books*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2021.

Robertson, Linda R. *The Dream of Civilized Warfare: World War I Flying Aces and the American Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Rosso, Stefano. *Musi gialli e berretti verdi. Narrazioni USA sulla guerra del Vietnam*. Bergamo: Sestante (Bergamo University Press), 2003.

Simon, Joe and Jack Kirby. *Young Allies*. Issues 1-20. New York: Timely Periodicals, 1941-1946.

Spiegelman, Art. "A Furshlugginer Genius." 1993. *MetaMaus*. 2011. 191-192.

Stueck, Jr., William W. *The Koran War: An International History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

True War Romance. Issues #1-21. Buffalo: Quality, 1952-1955.

Truman, Harry S. *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope*. New York: Doubleday & Co., 1956.

---. "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine." https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-greece-and-turkey-the-truman-doctrine. Last visited 31/01/2021.

Veitch, Tom and Irons Greg. "The Legion of Charlies." 1971. *The Mammoth Book of Best War Comics*. Edited by David Kendall. London: Robinson, 2007. 253-286.

Vidor, King. *The Big Parade*. 1925.

War Comics. Issue #1. New York: Marvel, 1950.

Wertham, Fredric. *Seduction of the Innocent*. New York: Rinehart & Company, 1954.

Whitted, Qiana. *EC Comics: Race, Shock, and Social Protest*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019.

World War III. Issues 1-2. Canton: Ace Magazine, 1952-1953.