was the “paradoxical” element, but that intellectual stance is so standard as to seem not worth noting. The book also includes a number of small but unfortunate mistakes: for example, it wrongly portrays two Pound critics, Hugh Kenner and Marjorie Perloff, as being on opposite sides of the “Pound-Stevens” debate (p. 6), and it asserts that Yvor Winters “favored cerebral poetry (à la T. S. Eliot)” (p. 189), an idea belied by Winters’s biting critiques of Eliot’s writing (collected in *In Defense of Reason, 1947*).

Cohen’s initial conception of canonical poets beleaguered by leftist detractors suffered from oversimplification, as he himself acknowledges (p. 8). But his efforts to complicate the story, while laudable, do not fix the problem. Recognizing that his thesis about “leftist critics” does not work very well, he switches to “leftist pressure” in his conclusion (p. 199 and passim). This new term properly recasts the reviewers as a subheading within a larger category of social and cultural phenomena. The era beleaguered poets and critics alike. But Cohen inexplicably continues to term the writers “essentially apolitical” (p. 192) despite his massive accumulation of evidence that each of them did have his “own politics” (p. 196)—as idiosyncratic and protean as everyone else’s.

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Two new studies of the long Civil War period and its impact on American literature and culture probe the era’s political and ideological landscape, connecting back not only to the big-picture scholars of a generation ago such as Edmund Wilson and Daniel Aaron but also following the more recent paths blazed by John Carlos Rowe, Elizabeth Young, Drew Gilpin Faust, and others. The authors of these two new books, Randall Fuller and Cynthia Wachtell, investigate the shifting value of canonical works and their creators.
and go on to explore the new perspectives offered by long-forgotten but fascinating texts such as “The Case of George Dedlow,” S. Weir Mitchell’s 1866 story of a multiple amputee in the army medical system. Although Fuller’s and Wachtell’s selection of writers overlaps to a noticeable extent, as indeed do their broader aims, their books achieve somewhat different ends.

Randall Fuller sets out to understand how the Civil War disrupted both the domestic and the professional lives of key figures in the northeastern literary scene, presenting them with choices and experiences for which they were little prepared. His examples range from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s ambivalence about his son Edward’s desire to fight for the Union—despite advocating community sacrifice in talks and print, he would not permit Edward to join the army—to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s abandoning of his last novel, *The Elixir of Life*—an act and a text that Fuller reads as a succumbing to “narrative exhaustion” (p. 175), as if the war had overwhelmed not just Hawthorne’s sensibility but the core of his creative energies.

The ubiquitous Thomas Wentworth Higginson becomes a crucial figure in *From Battlefields Rising*. From antislavery activist to epistolary advisor of Emily Dickinson to commander of a black regiment made up of escaped slaves, Higginson pursued a course through the Civil War era that forms a thread of communication between culture and politics, meditation and action. He is a figure whose career seems to have integrated, to the best of his ability, the intellectual and moral demands that the war placed on him—although Fuller points out that it was the fear of a collapse of masculine self-respect that ultimately drove Higginson to volunteer.

At the end of this wide-ranging study, Fuller argues that the war appears to have inspired and invigorated poets, essayists, and philosophers, but it also seems to have left them drained by its end. Nobody would claim that Emerson or Melville produced his best work after the late 1860s, for example, and Dickinson’s brief period of intense creativity coincided with the war years. It would take the passage of two or three decades for a new kind of American fiction—realistic and even confrontational—to emerge. It was the members of this next generation (among whom Twain was the oldest, Crane the youngest) who would begin facing the central problems of the war—and of American society—with a skeptical, if not cynical, eye regarding presumptions of virtue.

While Fuller’s work is largely contained by the flexible but distinct parameters of American literary history, Cynthia Wachtell’s *War
No More focuses on a broader and somewhat more problematic phenomenon: the increasing presence in American writing of an antiwar and sometimes outright pacifist sensibility. This literary trend grew out of the Civil War experience and achieved a kind of cultural hegemony in the twentieth century. Wachtell’s thesis is that the decline of the idealistic perspective on war (once embodied in Sir Walter Scott’s romances, which were consumed obsessively on both sides of the Atlantic) made space for the grimly realistic fiction and nonfiction accounts that came to determine the language of American war writing. She gives justifiable prominence to John W. DeForest’s 1867 novel Miss Ravenel’s Conversion from Secession to Loyalty as a kind of failed experiment in realist war fiction that, nevertheless, achieved validation over succeeding decades as the creative germ without which the talent of an Ambrose Bierce or an Ernest Hemingway could not have flourished.

In War No More, Wachtell notes that “privately and publicly, authors worried about overstepping the acceptable bounds for war-writing” (p. 109). Wrestling with the painful nonalignment of bloody process with historically legitimate, even desirable, outcomes, American authors have over the last century and a half sometimes tilted one way, sometimes another. Wachtell reveals these shifts in attitude through careful readings of a range of authors from the immediate and later postwar era, including Whitman, DeForest, Bierce, Crane, and Harold Frederic, whose view of armed conflict in The Copperhead (1893) broke with the standard Northern memory of the Civil War. In these authors’ depictions, war gradually ceases to be anything but a tool of destruction used by the powerful—aided by the collaboration of fools who blindly accept nationalist folklore—against the powerless.

Wachtell narrates how in time, a somewhat covert, fringe phenomenon became “majority literature” (p. 186). This tendency, however, brought about an unexpected result. Readers’ acceptance of the horror of war and the almost complete decline of the literature of romantic idealism led to the curious emergence of the lost existential hero: the man who sees what he sees and narrates his experience but whose strength is ultimately to endure and survive. In effect, a new kind of heroism was born out of the ashes of the old. This was perhaps not what the earlier generation of writers would have imagined their struggle and protest developing into—war as a backdrop for existential self-realization.

Despite the achievements of From Battlefields Rising and War No More, one question remains unanswered in both studies: Where was
the South in all this? Did nobody in Dixie have any doubts or uncertainties and write them down? In their different ways, Fuller and Wachtell underline once again how it was undeniably the intellectual culture of the Northeast—with its social networks, national reputation, and publishing experience—that felt these qualms and struggles with a greater, if not unique, intensity.

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In the acknowledgments to *Unfinished Revolution,* noted southwestern historian Sam W. Haynes tells his readers that he has been “obliged to take on the role of free-range historian, trespassing upon several subfields in order to fully explore the extent to which anti-British sentiment informed American attitudes” in the years between the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War (p. ix). Haynes indeed ranges freely over a wide array of topics and delves into various historical methodologies while maintaining a tight focus on the ways in which perceptions of Great Britain helped to forge American national identity in the early republic. Haynes argues that, as was the case with most former British colonies just after gaining independence, citizens of the United States were alternately fascinated and repulsed by the kingdom’s culture and politics, and their obsessive reactions to Britain shaped American economics, politics, and culture. His insights lead to a particularly fresh interpretation of manifest destiny and the battles over Texas annexation. Haynes illuminates how American exceptionalism was born not only out of overweening national self-confidence but also out of anxiety and envy toward the former colonial parent.

The subtitle of *Unfinished Revolution* dubs the volume a history of “the Early American Republic in a British World,” a phrase that suggests a level of engagement with the current emphasis on transnational and global approaches to U.S. history. While the most radical proponents of transnationalism would argue for a study that decenters the nation-state itself as a subject of inquiry, Haynes does not go that far. In twelve chapters, he reviews how American attitudes toward