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Composing in the Wake of War: The G.I. Bill and the Teaching of English

"During this period of convulsive dislocation teachers of the liberal arts will engage in heart-searching, and, what is more important, researching of the fundamentals and functions of these liberal arts."
Irwin Edman "The War and the Liberal Arts" 1942

"But September, 1945, will constitute a pronounced break with the past and herald the influx of war veterans—mature and expectant—to American colleges. The floodgates will open."
Gaynor Pearson, Lieutenant, USNR

Introduction[1]

Although the U.S. Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill,[2] has been well-documented in narratives of government caretaking and individual accomplishment, the Bill has a more complex educational history than such narratives would allow (Daniel Clark; Mettler; Olson, "The GI Bill and Higher Education"; Onkst). Those who initiated the Bill did so as a means of helping the economy rather than the veteran. Indeed, as Keith Olson argues, there was widespread concern that the veterans of World War II receive better treatment than the veterans of World War I,[3] who had received sixty dollars and no benefits, ultimately marching on Washington in 1932 (*The G.I. Bill, the Veterans* 100). FDR's government had many choices in confronting the potential economic decline in the aftermath of war but chose economic stimulus rather than social or economic reform. The social ramifications of this approach were consequently more uneven than popular representations suggest. Several historians have noted that while the G.I. Bill ameliorated some of the social class barriers to higher education on an individual level, it did not address barriers related to race or gender. The same racist practices in the Deep South that prevented black GIs from securing jobs and training for which proponents of the GI Bill linked to totalitarian-

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2. In addition to providing for college education, the GI Bill included hospitalization, vocational training, home and business loans, and unemployment benefits. Veterans on active duty between September 1940 and July 1947 were eligible, provided that they began schooling by July 1951.

3. Olson provides a thorough analysis of the veteran protest following World War I, including a discussion of European veteran unrest, which was linked to the growth of totalitarianism by proponents of the GI Bill (100).

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ism (100).[4] And women were, in various ways, discouraged from pursuing higher education (Fox-Genovese; Hartmann; Miller-Solomon). Contrary to popular lore, Olson observes that one of the G.I. Bill's "surprises" was that it actually achieved very little overall education reform, even though it did provide higher education to many men and women who could not otherwise have afforded to attend college. To a certain extent, it can be argued that the GI Bill contributed to its own kind of literacy myth-making (Daniel Clark).[5] The Bill figured prominently in some tales of individual transformation, but it did not figure prominently in planned educational changes at the systemic level.[6] Nevertheless, the students the Bill placed in college classrooms impacted the teaching of English and composition in subtle but significant ways. Despite the Bill's role in paving the way for larger classes, it also laid the groundwork for student-centered changes in the teaching of composition and literature that are often attributed to process-movement advances of the 1960s.

The sheer magnitude of demographic change brought by the Bill invites an investigation of administrative and faculty response to that change. Under the Bill, large numbers of GIs entered college within a relatively short span of time: "[b]y 1947, veterans accounted for half of enrolled college students, doubling the number of males registered in prewar times, and increasing overall enrollment by 75 percent" (Mettler 67). This enrollment peaked in 1948, when "annual enrollment reach[ed] ... nearly 900,000" (Mettler 62). Overall, 2,232,000 veterans attended college at a cost of $5.5 billion. The sudden expansion of the GI presence caused some colleges to compress the academic year (Mettler 67), to expand and diversify housing accommodations, and to offer special programming.[7] This cohort of students—older, more cosmopolitan and far more driven than their younger college classmates—influenced the shape and nature of the English classroom, impacting their professors and unknowingly influencing faculty to be more responsive to student learning. But it is an influence that has largely been muted, in part because the veterans wanted to be treated like other students (Willner),[8] and because these changes were not captured by textbooks of the day.

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4. Across the country, black men and women were still barred from attending many colleges; it was not until the Brown v. Topeka Board of Education decision of 1954 that black veterans could attend the colleges that had been accepting G.I.'s under the Bill for approximately ten years prior to the decision.

5. Mettler offers numerous rich narratives connecting the GI Bill to the formation of "citizen soldiers" who derived lessons about government based on their experiences with the Bill's benefits.

6. Daniel Clark notes that women's college attendance diminished during the height of the GI Bill. Although women veterans were entitled to the same benefits as men, men were given acceptance over women at some colleges as seats became increasingly scarce (186). For further discussion of the GI Bill's impact on women see Fox-Genovese, "Mixed Messages: Women and the Impact of World War II," *Southern Humanities Review* 27 (1993): 235-245; Miller-Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women in Higher Education in America;* and Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s.*

7. The "Education Notes" of the March 19, 1944, *New York Times*, for example, included reports of Newark College opening a division of Veterans' Education and Placement.

8. One 23-year old veteran wrote to his Dean: "I am a civilian at heart and I don't want any special treatment. Treat me as an individual" (qtd. in McKnight 449).

Canonical composition history as constructed by Albert Kitzhaber and James Berlin has been relatively silent on the subject of the GI presence. But these histories, as Stephen North and Robin Varnum have observed, focused largely on textbooks and formalized programs. The college population surge caused by the Baby Boom, by contrast, has received more attention. Lester Faigley, for example, has argued that increased college enrollment resulting from the Baby Boom fueled the growth of composition at a later date: "Even by the end of the period that was the focus of the Watson conference—1963-1983—those teaching college writing in the United States recognized that the growth of their discipline was being propelled by the enormous expansion of college enrollment: from 2.7 million in 1949-1950, to 3.6 million in 1959-60, to over 8 million in 1969-1970, and over 11.5 million in 1979-80" (27).[9] Unlike the sudden college population explosion fueled by the GI Bill, however, this later expansion had been anticipated through demographic projections (Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans* 44). Although some increase in college enrollments was expected to result from the GI Bill, few involved in the planning of the Bill anticipated that so many veterans would use it to attend college.

Collectively, these faculty would "face" the challenges that war had brought to their profession.

As a result of this surprising surge, college administrators of the late 1940s did not have the same luxury of complete planning as those anticipating the Baby Boom impact would enjoy; nevertheless, the faculty involved did anticipate that their teaching practices would be affected by the GI presence. Many of the faculty preparing to teach the veterans acknowledged that this new population of students would challenge their pedagogical understanding. Henry A. Doak, of the University of North Dakota, emphasized the need for flexibility: "We should not assume that we know exactly what is or will be good, nor should we assume that the boys will know exactly what is good. Be prepared by all means, but also be prepared to change" (qtd. in "English for Ex-service Personnel" 206). Similarly, Merrill R. Patterson of Marietta College would offer, "Before we can set down specific remedies we must first acquaint ourselves thoroughly with what we have to face" (qtd. in "English for Ex-service Personnel" 207). These faculty were prepared to adapt their teaching as the needs of their students warranted, with a student-centered flexibility that is usually attributed to classrooms of the sixties rather than those of the forties. This flexibility was cast as a devotion to civic duty and an obligation to repay the soldiers who had served, rather than being constructed as a move toward expressive individualism. Recognizing the learning needs of veteran

9. Faigley cites the National Center for Education Statistics, 1995

students constituted a kind of patriotic act, faculty could offer the same "preparedness" that their veteran students had demonstrated in the fight against the enemy. [10] Collectively, these faculty would "face" the challenges that war had brought to their profession.

The improvisation and on-the-spot adaptations inspired by the sudden GI presence in the classroom were not reflected in textbooks or codified in formalized programs. The subtlety of their influence was reflected in a comment concluding a 1945 *College English* survey of faculty about the impact of GIs on their classes: "Finally may the surveyor hazard the guess that the most successful provisions for these special students—they are and will be special, however much we and they try to overlook the fact—will be through changes in motivation and teaching procedure rather than through changes in names or descriptions of courses" ("English for Ex-service Personnel" 210). These changes became increasingly evident as the decade unfolded, and later, as the full impact of the GIs began to be realized. Only four years after the *College English* survey, in 1949, Edna Hays observed, "during the past few years the teaching of writing has undergone more study and experimentation than any other phase of the English program" (435). The GI presence, manifest in both the student and eventually the faculty population, extended this foray into study and experimentation, initiating some of what is traditionally represented as being rooted in 1960's process movement. These adaptations included the use of contemporary periodicals in the English classroom, classroom debates about current issues, a questioning of grammar drills and more individualized approaches to learning. Unfortunately, this same surge in college population promulgated large classes and inadequate staffing, which were also accepted in the name of civic duty. The Bill's effect on composition and English classrooms is, therefore, somewhat of a mixed legacy.

Significantly, the education component of the GI Bill had its detractors among those in higher education. The potentially democratizing effect on education—the same effect for which it was praised—struck fear in the hearts of at least some educators. In 1944, for example, Commander Francis J. Braceland declared at a meeting of the Eastern Association of College Deans and Advisers of Men that "[i]t would be a short-sighted policy to oversell our educational wares simply because the Government is paying the tuition. I would say that not everyone who knocks at our college doors prepared to pay his tuition and cries 'teach me!' will be able to learn" ("Caution Is Urged in G.I.'s Schooling" 51). Similarly, in 1947, the President of Harvard warned, "Unless high standards of performance can be maintained in spite of sentimental pressures and financial temptation, we may find the least capable among the war generation, instead of the most capable, flooding the facilities for advanced education in the United States" ("President's Report" 11). Though administrators declared their support for various war efforts, the idea of educational egalitarianism represented too radical a change, and concerns about the Bill's effect were expressed in terms of

10. There was also a concern that the veterans would not complete their education. As one observer noted, "Veterans share a common fear that their careers have been dangerously, hopelessly delayed" (Murphy 21).

student ability. Additional apprehension about the Bill was fueled by the sudden increase in faculty workload, for which the colleges were relatively unprepared. During the planning phases of the Bill, neither politicians nor college administrators expected the large numbers of veterans who used the Bill to further their college education. Shortages of qualified staff, compounded by a lack of planning, intensified the impact of the veteran throng. One newspaper observed the change in ivy idyll: "Harvard, like all the other great universities, is bursting at the seams. A single course like Gov. 1—the course in modern government—is attended by nearly 500 students...Professors are overworked. An exchange professor from Cambridge, England, accustomed to the English habit of leisurely bird walks or bicycling trips with promising students in the afternoon, has found himself buried with paperwork 'like a business executive'" (Murphy 16). The democratizing effect of the Bill, combined with a failure to increase faculty staffing, raised concern among faculty and administrators but ultimately laid the foundation for an acceptance of large composition classrooms. One of the Bill's unfortunate legacies was, as Olson puts it, "[t]he uncritical acceptance of largeness" (*The G.I. Bill, the Veterans* 103). Largeness created a paradoxical bulwark against complaint: by producing a shortage of space, the large numbers of students applying to college made veterans and non-veterans alike so grateful to have won coveted places that they did not protest. Faculty, for the most part, shouldered the load as their own patriotic contribution.

Initially, and possibly out of a desire to put student veterans at ease, faculty downplayed the differences between veterans and non-veterans. A 1945 *College English* survey reported that "Fifteen of the 35 schools which have enrolled ten or more returned service men and replied to our questionnaire say that these men show no notable differences in need or ability from usual civilian students..." ("English for Ex-service Personnel" 208). The surveyor chose the following comment from a respondent as representing faculty sentiment toward teaching veterans:

> if the teachers are honest, tolerant, idealistic, sympathetic men and women, we don't need a lot of planning about what to present or how to present it...They will have seen sights that they never should have seen and will have gone through hell perhaps, but man can go through hell physically and mentally and still get back to fairly normal living. I don't think that fussing over the veterans will be appreciated or even welcomed... I hope courses will be changed, but not cheapened. The veterans will and ought to be more thoughtful, more intent on the meaning of life. I doubt whether they will be any more practical or in a hurry to get a means of making a living than they were before the war. (207)

It is possible that the speaker here is projecting his or her own desire to return to "fairly normal living" and that faculty comments reflect an interest on their part and the veterans' to conduct academic life within a peaceful, civilian context relatively unscathed by the experience of war.

But even in the early days of the Bill's enactment, despite and against this desire for "normalcy," there was an awareness that the GI was bringing something different to the class-

room. Despite the overwhelming desire on the part of respondents and the author of the survey to dismiss the symptoms of what we would now recognize as post-traumatic stress, there were some faculty who acknowledged that the GIs needed time to overcome "battle nerves" (Kraines 296) and "patience with their fidgeting and nervous ways" ("English for Ex-service Personnel" 208). Military personnel who had served in the war provided special insight into the GI mindset; one offered that "Many [veterans] will find the severe routine of scholarship both tedious and unbearable and will forsake the campus after a few weeks" (Pearson 131). So although there was an initial desire on the part of faculty and veteran alike to downplay the effects of war and the differentness of the veteran population, once significant numbers of veterans began enrolling, the impact of their differentness had to be acknowledged. In comparison to non-veteran students, the GIs were more mature, closer or older in age to those teaching them, had a clear sense of educational purpose, and a broader range of life experience and reflection—all of which worked together to lead faculty to create more democratic classrooms, but not without some trepidation over what such accommodation might indicate.

Even before GIs began impacting academia, humanities education was already experiencing considerable anxiety over its fate. Harrison Smith noted that the humanities would not survive if the educational trend was "to fit education into handmade careers" (20). Irwin Edman, writing in the *Nation* in 1943 reported that Wendell Wilkie had broadcast a radio program advocating the importance of liberal studies (337). Edman lamented the devastating effect World War II would have on liberal arts college populations: the war "will have removed for the duration practically the whole undergraduate male population of American colleges and universities" (337). He noted with suspicion a kind of readiness, in time of war, to give over the college curriculum to the necessities of life: "It would be calamitous if the colleges at their best...were committed to the robot education of purely technical studies" (338). This anxiety carried into fears that the GI presence would further contribute to the demise of liberal education. These concerns reflect a response to what Deborah Brandt characterizes as World War II's "production imperative" (497), which was driven by the military's escalating literacy needs in "technology, bureaucracy, and communication" (495). The GIs themselves embodied this imperative, tending to enroll in practical programs such as business administration and professional fields that would convert instantly into jobs (Mettler 71). But many veterans did not reject English as impractical and instead embraced its lessons in English literature and composition, which they deemed relevant to their future lives beyond the campus. Faculty teaching, in turn, shifted to emphasize the relevance that literature brought.

Within two years of the *College English* survey, more veterans had begun to fill classes, and more advice to and by the faculty who taught them acknowledged what "being more intent on the meaning of life" entailed in the classroom. The civic responsibility that faculty felt toward the GI manifested itself in an increased desire to meet student learning needs. While some professors might have dismissed non-veteran 18-year-olds for their "shallow sophistry" (Grinell 282), it was inconceivable that they would reject the concerns of those who had risked their lives for their

country and fought for the higher ideals espoused by the humanities. Edward C. McDonagh, an occupational counselor in the Separation Center at Fort Levenworth, Kansas, offered the following "sincere suggestions to some of the college teachers who will help teach the 600,000 veterans of [World War II] in... American universities" (643). McDonagh pointed out to faculty that "Veterans attending college are giving up much for the privilege of attending your classes. They are choosing your courses and the college over the lure of high wages in industries manufacturing products. The college professor of such students has the obligation to be well-prepared and up-to-date on the information imparted" (643). McDonagh's unusually direct address to a professional group unaccustomed to such candid advice was justified through the appeal to citizenship and patriotism. Rather than being a critique of the professoriate,[11] his was a call to civic duty; faculty had a moral obligation to focus on their teaching. Veterans in their classes were making an additional sacrifice of immediate material gain and faculty were expected to respond to the sacrifice by honing their pedagogy. Some of this patriotism may also have been rooted in a desire to right the past wrongs committed against the veterans of World War I, many of whom ended up on bread lines (Olson "The G.I. Bill and Higher" 599). Faculty had an opportunity to offer the World War II veteran a better homecoming.

The veterans' cosmopolitan outlook,[12] maturity[13] and enthusiasm for learning[14] encouraged the faculty's willingness to adapt to their students' needs. While some were cautious and in some cases outwardly skeptical, faculty teaching GIs ultimately were enthusiastic about them as students. At Harvard, one anonymous professor was quoted as saying, "You've got to be awfully careful. These kids have been everywhere; they have stored up an enormous amount of information" and another would offer, "Sure, there are plenty of radicals—but there's not much ideology. These men don't want to tear everything down; they want to make the existing system better" (Murphy 18). Indeed, the faculty publishing in *College English* rejected Braceland's view of the GI threat to pedagogical integrity. Sibyl Bishop asserted that "very few...are brilliant students; many have no better than average intelligence; some are downright slow mentally; but they are alert,

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11. Roger M. Shaw, for example, observed in 1947 that "The war has worked no startling revolution in collegiate lecture halls.... Slightly on the arid, verbalistic, cloistered, comfortable side—professors are still professors" (18).

12. One instructor's description of his class typifies the responses of faculty to their veteran students:"The group did not have to be prodded into composition work. It was unnecessary to set up artificial stimuli in the classroom. Each had a wealth of experience to draw on, and the reading of their compositions was, for me, constantly interesting and informative" (Dias 551).

13. One G.I. reflected, "Military service is a great tempering agent. I have a much better idea now of what college can do for a man. And I have also a much better idea of what it cannot do" (qtd. in McKnight 452).

14. Scholarly literature of the forties is filled with examples of student learning and the faculty's appreciative response. Weingarten quotes the following comment by a former Japanese prisoner of war: "A book was something to be hoarded, read many times, and finally it was traded for another of equal or better value...There was solace, relaxation, a closer feeling of home and folks, and forgetfulness to some degree in any kind of book" (299).

eager, responsive and for the most part broad minded and intelligent in their approach to their problems" (Bishop 429). Indeed, the veteran students' enthusiasm for learning is a recurring refrain throughout much of the college composition literature of the late 1940s (Grinnell; Pennington; Shuey; Young).[15] One teacher of veterans recalled asking his veteran students if they felt an assignment was too long, only to be met with the following: "'Just pour it on, sir,' said one of them with a smile. 'Just pour it on, and we'll take it'" (Dias 550). This kind of stoic devotion to their studies and to the professoriate in general caused no end of delight for their professors, who wrote about their experiences teaching veterans with enthusiasm. The veterans, for some faculty, made ideal students because they did not pose an ideological challenge. They were neither the "flaming youth" of the 1920s nor the "revolutionists" of the 1930s (Hilton 156). Though the GIs were only several years older than the students of traditional age, they had a far greater range of life experience, both in and out of war: one third of them were married and 10 percent had at least one child (Mettler 70). Their maturity, combined with their devout commitment to the underlying promise of a college education, reduced any sense of threat that faculty might have experienced when confronted with the idea that they would need to alter some of their teaching practices. Finally, veterans routinely outperformed non-veterans academically (Olson "The G.I. Bill and Higher" 604-605),[16] further strengthening their identities as students worthy of accommodation.

Within the English classroom, the production imperative, which emphasizes the acquisition of new learning over the maintenance of a stable body of knowledge (Brandt 498), took hold through a shift toward student-oriented teaching. In this context, then, English and composition had value, not for their own sake, but for how they would immediately assist the veteran with post-graduation employment. A 1949 assessment of trends in the teaching of English would acknowledge that "more departments show a conviction that 'English' has a variety of functions for actual people in the actual world" (Perrin 259). One instructor of veterans somewhat dramatically declared a resigned acceptance of this functionality: "I do not delude myself for a moment that [veterans] are in class because they are captivated by the charms of our mother tongue and are zealous to investigate in all their depth and ramifications the mysteries of the subjunctive mood or any of the moot questions of syntax or accidence" (Pennington 38). Instead, the veterans "do recognize that it will be helpful to them in their future work if they can write and speak and read more effectively than they do at present" (Pennington 38). This appeal to usefulness was propelled by a desire

15. Pennington offers the following anecdote: the student, "who drives a bus in his off-hours, told me one morning that the assignment for the day was not easy and that the information was not generally known; for he had asked nearly a hundred of his passengers what a complex sentence was and none of them knew" (38).

16. For some English departments the increase in student GPA created a mystery; for an example of a department's attempt at discerning the cause, see the North Carolina State University English department minutes of November 7, 1946.

to be as veteran-oriented as possible, and it was often expressed as a respect and recognition for what veterans would bring to the classroom. As the *College English* survey authors observed, "Routine work in composition and study of great literature without relating it to present experiences and problems seem likely to be unprofitable and may even be rejected" ("Teaching English to Ex-service Personnel" 210). Significantly, faculty did not contend that students had to adapt and accept what faculty presented to them. There was an overriding concern that learning would not occur if it were not adapted to the interests and needs of the student. Included in McDonagh's advice to faculty was what would now be considered student-centered pedagogy: "Try as much as possible to connect your course with the life of the veteran as a living person...Make your courses expressions of effective living....This does not mean that your courses need become mundane statements of utilities, but it may mean something to the men out of uniform to know that there is a good reason for including your course in the curriculum" (645). John Grinnell would take such student-centered learning one step further, offering that veterans "want discussion and illustrations; they want to raise questions and have them answered...Not only do they want a chance to prove that they can think and express their thoughts, but they want to be recognized as individuals—not as a number of objects to be lectured to" (245-246). The production imperative, then, was legitimated by the idea that the students had earned their right to it. Constructed as adult men who brought respected life experiences to their learning, the veterans had their interest in the practical accommodated rather than challenged. Despite differences in social class, veterans and the faculty declared a shared ethos rooted in a belief in the American dream, which had been defended by one group and would be perpetuated by the other.

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The production imperative manifested itself in the GI demand for writing instruction in form and thought that would help them with life after college. Contrary to their non-veteran peers, the GI students often seemed to regret gaps in their education prior to their military service. They embraced formal instruction with far more enthusiasm than their non-veteran peers, often citing past military experiences in which better English skills (often identified by the veterans as consisting of vocabulary, spelling, grammar and punctuation) would have enhanced their service performance (Walser). Life after graduation was therefore understood in some ways as making demands similar to those of the military. But veterans did not seek form at the expense of thought. Paradoxically, military training had also produced a desire for education that valorized individual thought. One veteran wrote this critique of his earlier education:

"Again harping back to student days, we got an awful lot of form thrust upon us and little

> enough emphasis on ideas. Like a good many others I could throw together a 2,000-word theme that really said nothing from stem to stern and which would net me a 95 because I was careful to avoid split infinitives. On the other hand, I can remember fellows who put some real thought into their work and then failed the course because of the split infinitive. I don't know whether this kind of absurdity still prevails. I would like to see 'ideas' encouraged above every other factor." (qtd. in Harriet Clark 240)

This demand for ideas and meaning pervaded the GI approach to education in composition and literature, including those arrangements that would be considered remedial or basic. Many of the GIs had not completed high school before going to war and enrolled in "refresher" courses that focused on grammar ("English for Ex-service Personnel" 208). Yet even here the GI performance in class led teachers to begin questioning their approach. One faculty member teaching a ten-week college prepatory course focusing on grammar asked, "Why formal grammar in this enlightened age?...The reports trickle back from colleges that our boys are showing splendidly in their freshman English courses...[But] even now I am not convinced that so much formal grammar is desirable for less mature minds" (Bishop 429). For Sibyl Bishop, there was an acknowledgement that the writing success of the student depended at least in part on the psychological maturity of the student, and that explicit grammar instruction was not necessarily the key to writing instruction. Hers is an early suggestion that writing accomplishment was related in some way to student development, which complemented an ongoing acknowledgement of the veteran student as individual learner.

Although the veterans had been trained to function as a group and were treated collectively, there was nevertheless a continued emphasis on their individuality.[17] George Stoddard, the New York State Commissioner of Education, reflected in 1945 on the veteran student: "All men are created equal in civil rights and universal brotherhood, but they show incredible variation in physique, intelligence, emotional stability, and the promise of special achievement" (45). Faculty accommodated these differences by relying less on whole-class instruction (Pennington 39). Other adaptations included individual conferences and an increased individualizing of assignments ("English for Ex-service Personnel" 210). The desire to engage the veteran also included the use of periodicals like *The Atlantic Monthly* in the classroom (Anderson; Pennington; Weingarten) and scaffolding course work so that students could see and assess their individual progress (Dias 551). Whereas the younger, non-veteran students were considered an undifferentiated, collective tabula rasa, the veterans—recognized as grown adult males—were seen both as being more worthy of and more likely to benefit from an acknowledgement of their individuality.

The shift to more student-centered teaching was further reflected in changes to instruction in literature. Writing in 1949, W.L. Werner offered the following critique: "Now our students learn

17. One veteran affirmed the individuality of the GI by comparing him to the non-veteran student: "Service men are pretty much like civilians—there's no more agreement among us on fundamental issues, such as religion, politics, postwar jobs, than there is among civilians" (qtd. in McKnight 449). See also "A Member of NCTE on Veteran Education."

primarily connections between authors and their environments, their immediate past and near future; what they should learn first is the connections between the authors and the students themselves" (Werner 213). Similarly, Samuel Weingarten would advocate that general education should include "a functional reading program related to their interests and needs" (338). In the aftermath of a world war whose repercussions were carried into the safe haven of the English classroom, the pressing need for meaning and relevance was made most apparent by the veteran student body. Those who taught literature were challenged explicitly and tacitly to make their worlds immediate and worthy of the tangible sacrifices made by individuals in defense of abstract ideals. The shift to connect literature to individual experience paralleled the move to increase student discussion and participation—classroom engagement that went beyond the chalk and talk lecture. Additionally, this move to recognize individual connections to literature helped foster the democratic classroom. The GI student classroom participants were yet another instance of what Mettler describes as "citizen soldiers"—a civic-minded generation of veterans committed to participatory democracy.

Despite the acceptance of large classes and efforts made to adapt to the veterans, there was nevertheless an awareness of what these accommodations might mean for the teaching of English: "Socially this arrangement is almost necessary, but intellectually (and perhaps emotionally) it may often be bad if the instructors for this supposedly temporary division of the college are inexperienced and overworked graduate students...Drill and more drill in mechanics by youngsters who do not know too much about the language, have not learned teaching techniques, and are impatient to get back to the courses they must pass and the theses they are writing does not give the servicemen much satisfaction or profit" ("English for Ex-service Personnel" 208). While the graduate students are recognized as being "overworked," there is little other recognition of diminished labor conditions and the resulting effect on those working under them. They are "youngsters," presumably with less legitimate claim to concern than the veterans they were teaching.

The emphasis of this moment was less concern for the teacher-worker and more concern for the students, who had risked life and sacrificed comfort for the sake of their country. The idea that the servicemen are owed "satisfaction or profit" is in some sense an expression of education as a transaction in which the student is consumer. In an effort to recognize and meet individualized student learning needs, the adaptations fueled by the G.I. presence were further contributing to the notion of higher education as a consumable good, something that would be adjusted to the needs and demands of the student, a part of the consumer ethos accelerated by the Bill (Daniel Clark 167). Justified initially as patriotic contribution, these adaptations left mixed legacies. On the one hand, they paved the way for a more democratic classroom through flexible, student-oriented teaching, and they reminded the humanities of the continuing need for social and philosophical relevance. On the other hand, they created a climate amenable to unquestioned and often unplanned growth that was justified simply by demand for the product that education was becoming.

The final paradoxical composition legacy created by the GI Bill came through its ability to fund a supply of teachers willing to meet the burgeoning populations of undergraduates. The Bill funded

the graduate education of individuals from both lower- and middle-class backgrounds who were eager to teach modern literature as well as composition (Connors 204). They arrived just in time to meet the demand for the increasing populism of English studies. The Bill had produced the ideal labor supply for the demand it generated: a large number of eager-to-work instructors who were sympathetic to the needs and interests of a burgeoning undergraduate population.

The Bill had, in effect, created a call and response between consumer students and the suppliers of education. These consumers' needs were met without question for a variety of reasons: first and foremost they constituted a kind of patriotic exchange between the veteran student who had devoted part of his youth and innocence for this country, and the faculty who either had served alongside him or who had remained stateside and wanted to make their own contribution. There also was likely an easy affinity in terms of race and gender between those who learned and those who taught.

Moreover, as a result of their service and their relative maturity, these students were quickly accorded the right to have their opinions heard and their needs met. The veteran student had sacrificed for his country, was explicitly committed to his own learning, and participated in classroom life. If education were to be thought of as a commodity, there would be no consumer considered more worthy than the ex-GI. Faculty could adapt to his needs without fear of reprisal for coddling, failure to maintain standards, or an inability to keep the barbarians from the gates. The shift generated by the sheer magnitude of these students would lay the groundwork for progressive, student-centered education, but it also paved the way for an undervaluing of teaching labor that continues today and is perhaps one of the Bill's unforeseen and most unfortunate legacies.

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