

## **The Great Men of the Great War: Heroic Martial Masculinity in the Wartime Works of Harvey Dunn**

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<https://doi.org/10.30608/HJEAS/2022/28/1/3>

### **ABSTRACT**

American artist Harvey Dunn was one of the eight soldier artists recruited by the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F) during World War I (1914-1918). His wartime works can be situated within the moralizing, Wilsonian rhetoric surrounding America's entry into the war and linked with a conception of masculinity that was inextricably connected with war service. These images of heroic, martial, American masculinity align with the pronouncements President Woodrow Wilson made to justify America's participation in the war. They reflect the gendered language and imagery American propaganda posters used to glorify enlisted soldiers as masculine heroes. Rather than portraying German soldiers as savages, Dunn altered this discourse by portraying cowardly German soldiers in moments of vulnerability. Dunn's wartime images emphasize American ideas of martial masculinity in order to convey patriotic and propagandistic notions concerning the righteousness of the Allied cause, the superiority of American manhood, and the might of the American military. (KLM)

**KEYWORDS:** Harvey Dunn, World War I, American Expeditionary Forces, Woodrow Wilson, masculinity, posters

During World War I (1914-1918), Harvey Thomas Dunn (1884-1952) was one of the eight professional artists who were recruited by the United States Army and served in the American

Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F). While stationed in Europe as a combat artist, Dunn created exciting, idealized images of brave American soldiers in action. Dunn's works capture the intensity of battle, particularly frontline action, but the realism of these works is undermined by the distinct focus on and the glorification of the heroic masculinity of American troops. In Dunn's works, the physical brawn and stoic resolve of the American soldier male are contrasted with the lack of courage often demonstrated by belligerent German troops. These images align with the moralizing pronouncements made by President Woodrow Wilson to justify America's entry into the war. They also reflect the visual language of American propaganda posters, which used gendered slogans and imagery to hail enlisted soldiers as manly, heroic warriors. While Dunn largely refrained from the overblown, simplistic rhetoric that characterized such propaganda, many of his wartime works distinctly elevated the heroism of American soldiers by highlighting their physical prowess and mental fortitude at the expense of uncourageous, if not frightened, German troops, often shown in defeat, in order to convey patriotic ideas pertaining to the righteousness of the Allied cause, the superiority of American manhood, and the might of the American military.

### **President Wilson's war**

In the 1916 presidential election, incumbent Democrat President Woodrow Wilson narrowly defeated his Republican rival, Charles Evans Hughes. As part of his re-election campaign, Wilson used the slogan "He kept us [America] out of war." Despite his admonition in his Declaration of Neutrality on 19 August 1914 urging that the United States should remain "neutral in fact as well as in name," on 2 April 1917, Wilson addressed a joint session of Congress and called for a declaration of war against Germany (Axelrod 12). This address was steeped in meliorism and "righteous interventionism" (Gamble 136). Wilson announced that America would "fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts, for

democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free” (Congressional Record 104). Wilson famously proclaimed that “[t]he world must be made safe for democracy” and declared that “[w]e are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind” (Congressional Record 104). Congress approved the war resolution; Wilson signed the document on 6 April 1917, thereby inaugurating America’s entry into World War I (O’Toole 261).

Although interpretations of America’s entry into the Great War have changed over the last one hundred years, at the time many believed that German belligerence forced America into war. The German command’s decision to engage in unrestricted U-boat warfare, which resulted in the sinking of the *Lusitania*, a British passenger liner, on 7 May 1915, facilitated Allied propaganda emphasizing German aggression. Six days after the *Lusitania* incident, the British press published the Bryce Report, which detailed the war crimes committed by the Germans in Belgium (Mancini 141). On 24 March 1916, a German U-boat mistook the *Sussex*, an unarmed French cross-channel steamer, for a minelayer and torpedoed it. As a result, Wilson issued an ultimatum to Germany demanding the Germans to cease their practice of submarine warfare against passenger ships. In what became known as the Sussex Pledge, the Germans agreed to this if the British ended their blockade of the North Sea. However, after the fallout from the Zimmermann Telegram, which came to light in February 1917, and the German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917, some felt Wilson was left with no choice but to officially declare war on Germany (Gregory 124-126). In his Congressional address, Wilson concluded his call for America to intervene by pronouncing, “God helping her, she can do no other” (Gregory 148). This remark, which deliberately references Martin Luther’s

refusal to recant before the Diet of Worms in 1521, suggests a moral, if not holy, justification for America's involvement in the war (Oberman 203).

### **Recruiting posters and the American ideal**

Some recruiting posters of the period echoed the president's "missionary moralism" (Kennedy 1). Arthur N. Edrop's poster *Make the World Safe—Enlist Now and Go with Your Friends* (1917), which depicts American troops with bayoneted rifles silhouetted in front of red and white stripes that reference the American flag, evokes Wilson's call to make the world "safe for democracy" (Wilson qtd. in Gregory 146). However, the poster does not contain the entire phrase; instead, it exhorts potential recruits to simply "make the world safe." The final word in that phrase is the only one comprised of all uppercase letters, which highlights its importance. The suggestion that America's mission was to "make the world safe" reveals the influence of Wilson's belief in American exceptionalism and humanitarian interventionism. As Ross Kennedy observes, Wilson regarded the United States as "an exceptional nation, one that was morally and politically superior to other peoples and one that embodied progress and justice" (159). The silhouetted soldiers in the poster lack distinct facial features so they function metaphorically to suggest the greater moral cause Wilson offered as justification for entering the war. The lack of individualized features emphasizes and encourages the enlistment of all able-bodied American men and seemingly advocates collective national support for the war effort. The troops have taken up arms against an unseen opponent, presumably Germany, or at least the autocratic German power politics against which Wilson railed. Thus, the poster subtly supports the idea, advanced by Wilson, that America's involvement in the war was justified on moral and ideological grounds. This correlates America's participation in the war with ideals of justice, liberty, and democracy and affirms the moral imperative of military service (Albrinck 316).



Figure 1. Arthur N. Edrop, *Make the World Safe Enlist Now and Go with Your Friends*, 1917

©Willard and Dorothy Straight Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs

Division, Washington, D.C.

Many propaganda posters visually associated the presupposition that enlistment was a matter of moral responsibility with a particular conception of the masculine ideal. Refusal to participate in this gendered construction of masculine wartime heroism left a man subject to charges of cowardice and impotence (Paret et al. 50). As Meg Albrinck contends, the “codes of militant masculinity” found in many World War I posters explicitly link the ethical obligation of protecting women and children from the alleged outrages perpetrated by the German army with “the cultural mythology surrounding the warrior,” which often correlated patriotism and male national identity with masculinity and virility (330). Borrowing Jean Bethke Elshtain’s terminology, Albrinck suggests that Allied propaganda portrays the soldier as “the Just Warrior, a primarily defensive figure, honorable in deed and noble in intent” (316). The pairing of the moralistic rhetoric of patriotism with gendered tropes of heroic martial masculinity became a

defining element of American propaganda posters that sought to persuade men to enlist and to convince the general public to support the war effort.

In the first months of America's participation in the war, Dunn created two posters for the United States Food Administration. Although neither work specifically quotes Wilson, the text of both posters aligns with Wilsonian moralistic language and links this rhetoric of righteousness with heroic martial masculinity. Like Edrop's poster, Dunn's color lithograph, *Victory is a Question of Stamina—Send the Wheat, Meats, Fats, Sugar—The Fuel for Fighters* (1917), depicts American soldiers with bayoneted rifles forcefully charging toward an unseen enemy who is not pictured in the image. Two soldiers are pictured mid-stride as they run through a generalized landscape. The gray clouds above them echo the outline of their forms and the horizon line is parallel with their bayonets. This apparent harmony between the soldiers and the environment potentially alludes to the righteousness of their cause and may hint at the peaceful balance that would be restored by an Allied victory. The large size of the figures and their placement in the immediate foreground monumentalizes the soldiers who tower over their surroundings. Their teeth are clenched in intense determination, which accentuates their square jawlines. These soldiers are clearly shown as virile, heroic combatants whose actions are worthy of respect and admiration; they are Wilson's quintessential champions of the rights of humankind.

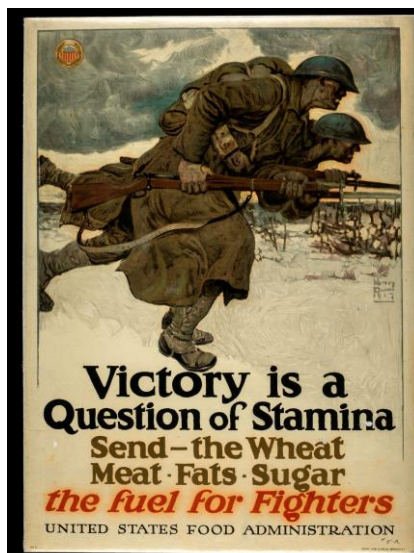


Figure 2. Harvey Thomas Dunn, *Victory is a Question of Stamina—United States Food Administration*, 1917 ©Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

The wording on the poster highlights the brawny manliness of the soldiers. Each soldier has one foot on the ground and these feet align over the word “Victory.” This interplay of text and image links the actions of these “Fighters” with the triumph of both America as one of the Allies and the ideals that Wilson used as the rationale for entering the conflict. These soldiers do not represent specific individuals; instead, they serve as stand-ins for American doughboys in general. The noble actions and courage displayed by these two heroic soldiers pictured are representative of the militant, masculine ideal that was promoted by the American military.

The text of this poster links military victory with physical endurance rather than superior technology or military strategy. The doughboys are called “Fighters,” not soldiers, which evokes the idea of boxers and aligns with the suggestion of victory’s reliance upon stamina. Furthermore, the foodstuffs specified on the poster are referred to as “fuel,” which associates the men with machines. In the years of the Great War, machinery was perceived as being male-engineered so it was visually and culturally associated with maleness and the masculine realm

(Oldenziel 141). At that time, various European avant-garde art movements, including Italian Futurism, glorified the role of the machine in modern society and explicitly linked certain qualities of machines, such as speed and power, with virile masculinity. The idealized masculinity of the heroic soldier males in Dunn's poster is linked with propagandistic militarism that connects courage, strength, and resilience with patriotism and national duty. These aspects are glorified and even eroticized. In Dunn's poster, the foreground man holds a bayoneted rifle at the level of his crotch, which has distinctly phallic connotations. The "stamina" required for victory is not only correlated with physical endurance like that demonstrated by a boxer but also associated with the virile sexual stamina possessed by the robust young men boldly charging into battle.

Dunn's color lithograph, *They Are Giving All—Will You Send Them Wheat* (1918), depicts armed American soldiers racing across uneven terrain. The energy and movement of the image convey the spontaneity of a photographic snapshot, but the landscape and the soldiers sprinting over it are non-specific. Instead of focusing on particular individuals, Dunn highlights the intrepidity of the soldiers' unflinching charge and the solidarity of the troops as they enact a coordinated attack as a unit. The block letter text of the poster stresses the intensity of the soldiers' actions and the depth of their devotion to the Allied cause by announcing that "THEY ARE GIVING ALL." In exchange for such a tremendous sacrifice, the poster inquires if the viewers will "SEND THEM WHEAT." This implies that the action of the viewers in providing simple foodstuff like wheat, pales in comparison to the incredible fortitude and patriotic commitment demonstrated by American soldiers fighting on the front lines. Although Dunn's poster does not overtly shame noncombatants, the text plainly expresses the magnitude of the soldiers' selfless actions on behalf of their country.





Figure 3. Harvey Thomas Dunn, *They Are Giving All—Will You Send Them Wheat?* 1918

©Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

In contrast to Dunn's posters that emphasize the fortitude of American soldiers, Laura Brey's *Enlist—On Which Side of the Window Are You?* (1917) explicitly associates military service with masculinity and patriotism and the lack of military service with effeminacy and timidity. This poster depicts a civilian man of slight build wearing a dark-colored suit and bowtie. He stands in a dim room gazing toward a large window beyond which rows of American servicemen march with rifles over their shoulders. Above the troops waves a large American flag. In the upper left, the word "ENLIST" is superimposed over the flag. The word "ENLIST" appears inside the room with the foppish young man, and the last two letters of the word hover directly over his head. This placement seems to suggest that the civilian man's conscience is troubled by his failure to enlist; try as he might, he cannot hide from his moral duty to his county. To the left of the civilian, the question "On Which Side of the Window are YOU?" is posed to the viewer. The word "you" appears in red capital letters, while the rest of the question's text is green. The use of block letters visually links the words "YOU" and "ENLIST," thereby exhorting the viewer to do just that. By enlisting, the viewer would join the ranks of the patriotic, masculine troops marching just outside the window.



Figure 4. Laura Bryer, *Enlist—On Which Side of the Window Are You?* 1917 ©Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

In this poster, the un-enlisted man appears as the passive, feminized Other (Albrinck 327-28). In opposition to the implied confident forward marching of the soldiers, the civilian man's pose connotes stillness and faintheartedness. He stands motionless and, instead of shouldering a rifle, his right hand grasps the lapel of his suit jacket. He has timidly slipped his left hand into his pocket in contrast with the confident swinging of the soldiers' left arms. His face conveys hesitancy and trepidation. His narrow-shouldered physique does not compare favorably to the manly specimens trooping past him. This uninspiring non-combatant stands in the dark, which associates him with shame and suggests his pusillanimity. The rows of patriotic enlisted men march before a yellow background; this links their actions and their masculine, nationalistic character with the word, "ENLIST," which also appears in yellow. The large American flag proudly waves over the enlisted men, while the black horizontal and vertical bars of the window seem to trap the effete un-enlisted man in a prison of his own cowardice.

Bryer's poster suggests that the hesitant civilian man is on the wrong side of the window. Although he glances toward the marching enlisted men, he has his back to them and the

American flag. This implies that failure to enlist is tantamount to turning his back on the country and his braver fellow Americans who have enlisted. Thus, the poster questions not only his masculinity, but also his patriotism. If, as Wilson asserted in his declaration of war against Germany, the motive for American involvement in the conflict was “the vindication of right, of human right” and the protection of “the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power,” then, certainly, it would behoove a truly patriotic, American man to enlist and fight for the Allied cause (Wilson qtd in Gregory 142, 144). In the context of fighting in a war supported by a moral imperative set forth by the president himself, military service is inextricably linked with patriotism, masculinity, and honor. If the Allies in general and the Americans in particular were “Just Warriors” whose intentions and actions were pure, honorable, and righteous, then those who declined to enlist were subject to being denounced as immoral cowards and malingerers (Albrinck 316).

### **Dunn’s heroic doughboys and cowardly Germans**

Framing America’s entry into the war as an ideological crusade for peace and freedom emphasized the moral superiority of the Allied troops, especially the Americans. The desire for images that could be used for propaganda materials that would portray American involvement in a positive light was one of the primary forces driving the American War Department’s decision to send American artists to France. Inspired by the British government’s utilization of artists to create art that advanced the cause of the war, the American War Department commissioned eight men, including Harvey Dunn, in late 1917 to serve as official war artists. According to the commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, General John J. Pershing, “a highly important function of [the A.E.F artists’] work is to preserve these scenes in the zone of operations and elsewhere for the historical record of the war, as well as to provide needs in periodicals” (Pershing qtd. in Chenoweth 103). These artists, the majority

of whom were professional illustrators, were commissioned as captains in the Engineer Reserve Corps (Cornebise 12). They were quickly sent overseas with no military training and only vague instructions about their artistic mission. (Howell 47).

Despite this lack of adequate preparation, Dunn was reportedly eager to see action during the Great War. When a representative of the War Department called and inquired about how much time he would need to be prepared to leave for France, he exclaimed, “Two hours!” (Cornebise 12). Dunn entered military service on 7 March 1918 and was sent to Europe before the end of that month. In the Toul Sector in September 1918, Dunn attached to Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 167<sup>th</sup> Infantry for a time. He worked extensively along the front lines in France (Cornebise 36).

In spite of Dunn’s particular experiences during the war, the images he created tend to be rather generalized. Even the titles of his works, such as *The Machine Gunner* (ca. 1918), lack identifying details such as the battalion or division. The men in such images are not identified by name and their location is usually not indicated. Even the uniforms and weaponry depicted in his works are too generic to aid in the identification of particulars (Cornebise 50). Dunn himself even acknowledged the inexactitude of his wartime imagery. In a report to headquarters from August 1918, Dunn defended his artistic approach by stating that “The pictures which I am delivering are of no specific place or organization and while, consequently, may be lacking in fact, are not however barren insofar as I have succeeded in expressing in them the character of the struggle of and the men engaged” (Dunn qtd. in Reed 79). Dunn sacrificed precise, detailed visual information for the rendering of broader attitudes and experiences, both physical and psychological.



Figure 5. Harvey Thomas Dunn, *The Machine Gunner*, ca. 1918 ©Division of Political and Military History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

During his time as an A.E.F artist, Dunn repeatedly created images of the “universal man at war” (Howell 50). This universal man, however, demonstrates many similarities with Dunn himself. Dunn’s biographer, Edgar M. Howell, noted that the artist’s A.E.F works contain “the projection of his self-image” (50). Howell specifically singled out *The Machine Gunner* as an image of Dunn painting himself (52). If one compares this work with a photograph of Dunn taken around the time he created the sketch, the resemblance between the two men is striking. The men stand in similar poses, and both proudly don their military uniforms. Dunn was a captain in the Engineer Reserve Corps, so he sports an officer’s uniform (Reed 73). Both Dunn and the machine gunner he depicted share a similar body type characterized by broad shoulders and square jaw.



Figure 6. Photograph of Captain Harvey Dunn, ca. 1917 ©National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland

The photograph of Dunn was taken from below, which accentuates his height. He is visually linked with the trees behind him, which further emphasizes his tall stature. He is positioned squarely in the center of the composition and takes up most of the frame; this heightens the perception that he is a particularly imposing figure. Similarly, the machine gunner has a commanding presence, even though he is only shown from his mid-thighs up. The soldier, whom Howell called “the John Wayne of the A.E.F.,” is placed slightly off center and stands with arms akimbo (52). There is no indication of a setting but the loosely rendered, aura-like shadow behind him augments his physical stature. His large thighs give him a solid physical presence and his helmet strap emphasizes the angularity of his square jaw. As Alfred Emile Cornebise notes, the man seen in *The Machine Gunner* “is obviously in charge of his situation, a man master of himself and of others under his command and unafraid of the enemy or anything that fate might have in store for him” (65).

The brawny manliness of *The Machine Gunner* is clearly related to the person of Dunn himself, who was a so-called “man’s man.” As the son of homesteaders in the Dakota Territory,

Dunn had a rugged upbringing in which his stamina and physical abilities were praised (Cornebise 15). Even at a young age, he was known for his height and strength. Supposedly, by the age of fourteen, he was physically capable of performing the work of a full-grown man on his family's farm. According to a local story, hired hands on the Dunn family property were paid by how well they were physically able to keep up with young Harvey (Karolevitz 19). As an adult, his stature and physicality were often remarked upon by his colleagues and students. Dunn's friend and student, Grant Reynard, described the artist as follows: "He was a whale of a man, a veritable pioneer hulk of a man, with a head reminding you of a cross between an Indian chief and a Viking. He looked as though he could easily bite a spike in two with one crunch of his broad jaws" (Reynard qtd. in Fernandez 62). According to Dunn's wife, he was approximately six feet two and a half inches tall and weighed about two-hundred and twenty pounds (Howell 55 n18).

During the war, Dunn was known for his intrepidity and supposedly saw a lot of front-line action (Howell 49). Even though General Pershing declared that "[i]t is out of the question to have any artist at work in front line trenches or anywhere near them during active engagement," Dunn went "over the top" with an infantry division, meaning that he accompanied the soldiers as they climbed out of the trenches to mount an assault on the enemy (Chenoweth 103). His frontline exploits caught the attention of cartoonist H. T. Webster, who drew a caricatured image of a physically imposing Dunn painting at his easel despite a barrage of exploding shells and a hail of bullets whizzing above his head; one bullet even pierces the upper portion of his cap. In this cartoon, one of Pershing's aides salutes Dunn and relays a message from the general inquiring if Dunn will move his easel so the troops can bombard the area. The artist appears unfazed and remarks that he will move his materials after he finishes his sketches. This cartoon appeared in multiple newspapers across the United States (Karolevitz 54). Such accounts of Dunn's wartime heroics apparently annoyed at least one of his artist

colleagues. In his diary, Harry Townsend fumed, “This pose of Dunn’s having seen more of the actual fighting than any of the rest and of being the only one who has really gone over the top is unbearable at times” (Townshend qtd. in Howell 49).

Such accounts attest to Dunn’s bravery (or bravado) and, when interpreted in light of the visual similarities between Dunn and the soldiers he represented, the degree to which he identified himself with his own ideal of the heroic soldier male becomes clear. The specifically American character of these masculine military men is obvious when one compares them to Dunn’s wartime images of German soldiers. For instance, in contrast to the steely-eyed American in *The Machine Gunner*, the look of fear on the surrendering German soldier’s face in *The Sniper* (ca. 1918) belies the weakness underlying his superficial brawn. The wide-eyed soldier, whose gas mask dangles around his midsection, stands unsteadily atop a pile of rubble and raises his arms in surrender.



Figure 7. Harvey Thomas Dunn, *The Sniper*, ca. 1918 ©Division of Political and Military History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



Although the German soldier is identified as a sniper, the overturned weapon by his right foot more closely resembles a machine gun, perhaps the German MG 08/15, than a sniper rifle. In fact, the weapon in *The Sniper* looks like the same kind of gun seen atop the body of a dead German soldier in *Sept. 26, The Argonne* (1918). The *Maschinengewehr* (MG) 08/15, which was standardized in 1915, had a wooden shoulder stock and grip. It used belt-style ammunition or a drum magazine and could be held or fired by one man in a standing or prone position (Bull 26, 39-40).

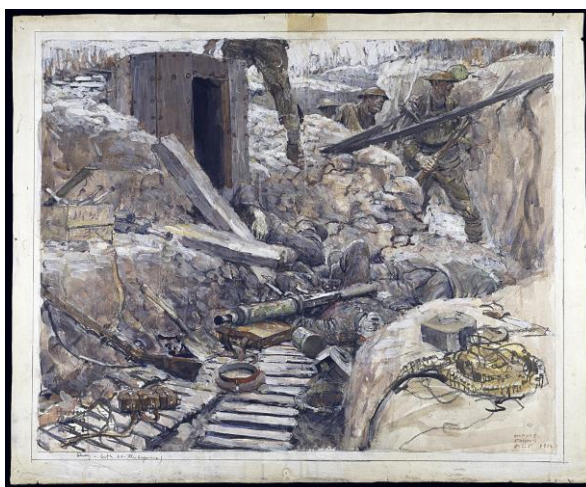


Figure 8. Harvey Thomas Dunn, *Sept. 26, The Argonne*, 1918 ©Division of Political and Military History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

During the war, German snipers were typically armed with the 7.922 mm (0.31 in) *Scharfschützen Gewehr 98*, which was a bolt-action rifle; it did not fire the belt-style ammunition that most machine guns used (Haskew 28, 30). In *Sept. 26, The Argonne* (1918), the inverted weapon in the left foreground is possibly a *Gewehr 98*; the MG 08/15 lies to the right behind this rifle and makes the differences between these two weapons quite apparent (“Sept. 26, The Argonne”). They are clearly dissimilar, and Dunn obviously knew the difference between them. Dunn potentially included a machine gun instead of a sniper rifle,

because of the former's notoriety in combat and its more impressive visual impact. By including a larger, visually intimidating weapon, Dunn highlights the aggressive nature of the German soldier, which makes his surrender to unseen American forces even more notable.

Even though Dunn labels the German soldier as a sniper, the absence of a weapon that resembles an actual sniper rifle could potentially trouble this identification. However, in the War Department's *Catalogue of Official A.E.F. Photographs Taken by the Signal Corps, U.S.A.*, published in 1919, the title of Dunn's drawing of the German sniper is actually listed as "*Kamerade.*' *The Sniper.*" (United States War Plans Division 410). During World War I, surrendering German soldiers called out the word "*Kamerade*," meaning "comrade." The word became synonymous with German surrender and some American and British soldiers mistakenly thought it was the German phrase for "I surrender" (Gilbert 426 n3). According to a 1925 book on *Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases* compiled by Edward Fraser and John Gibbons, "the word was taken up . . . in jest and used more or less derisively" (134). Thus, the inclusion of the word *Kamerade* in the title emphasizes that the German soldier in Dunn's drawing has capitulated to his Allied enemies. He no longer poses a threat to Allied troops; instead, he is now at risk of being shot unless he obeys his captors. At the time, there were accounts of false surrenders in which German soldiers pretended to surrender and then used small weapons, known as "*Kamerad pistols*," to shoot at Allied soldiers (Beamish and March 448). However, in Dunn's work, the alarmed look on the sniper's face suggests his surrender is genuine, and his clearly displayed hands, which are empty of any weaponry, indicate that he will not attempt to shoot his unseen captors. Despite the fearsome reputation of German snipers, Dunn's depiction portrays the sniper, who has timorously discarded his weapon, in a decidedly impotent light and the inclusion of the word *Kamerade* in the original title highlights the disparaging intent of this portrayal.

Snipers were a formidable element of the German military, especially during the first two years of the war. They were highly skilled marksmen who adapted quickly to the unique problems posed by trench warfare and learned to skillfully camouflage themselves from enemy snipers (Haskew 30, 36). Due to the intimidating reputation of German snipers, Dunn's depiction of a frightened German sniper at the moment of surrender suggests that the supremacy of such combatants was ended at the hands (and guns) of the American forces. When compared to *The Machine Gunner*, the submissive body language and panicked expression on the German's face become even more apparent. One can almost imagine the American soldier in *The Machine Gunner* giving the order to surrender to which the emasculated German acquiesces without protest.

The soldier in *The Sniper* closely resembles the standing man in Dunn's *Machine Gunners at Pomme-St. Mihiel Salient* (1918). In this scene, which Dunn apparently witnessed, the machine gunner stands atop a pile of rubble from a destroyed wall ("Machine Gunners at Pomme-St. Mihiel Salient"). As in *The Sniper*, this work depicts a surrendering German soldier with his arms in the air. His attire and accoutrements are almost identical to the aforementioned capitulating sniper. This machine gunner also clearly displays his palms indicating that he is unarmed. His shoulders are elevated, and his arms are not raised very high, which makes his pose seem decidedly timid. He is turned in a three-quarter view toward the left side of the work and he gazes toward his unseen American captors with a look of trepidation as though he is afraid of being shot. Two dead German soldiers lie on the ground nearby. Ironically, the helmet of the standing soldier, the only living German machine gunner in the scene, has either been knocked off or removed; his two comrades died wearing their helmets. Without his helmet, the remaining German machine gunner looks less imposing and more vulnerable than he would otherwise. Instead of showing the unarmed German as a fearless savage brute, Dunn portrays him as an emasculated opponent whose weakness is exposed by the unseen American soldiers.



Figure 9. Harvey Thomas Dunn, *Machine Gunners at Pomme-St. Mihiel Salient*, 1918

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Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

The visual similarity between these two images of surrendering German soldiers highlights Dunn's tendency to focus on moments of German vulnerability. The apprehensive sniper in the process of submitting to American soldiers seems at odds with the notoriety of snipers during the Great War and the prestige often given to snipers by their fellow soldiers in the trenches (Haskew 38). Similarly, the cowed German machine gunner, who stands exposed and unarmed before the unseen conquering Americans, almost makes a mockery of the machine gunner's fearsome reputation as the deadly wielder of the so-called "Devil's Paintbrush," which could unleash swaths of carnage on the battlefield (Bull 5). Although neither image actually depicts American doughboys, their courage and frontline prowess are implied by the depictions of capitulating German soldiers, specifically soldiers whose battlefield roles usually generated fear.

The martial failings of the surrendering German sniper and machine gunner are further contrasted with Dunn's depiction of an American soldier in *Street Fighting* (ca. 1918) who

continues to fire his weapon despite what appears to be a dire situation. The soldier stands next to the debris of a ruined building and fires his M1903 Springfield rifle at an unseen enemy (“Street Fighting”). A yellow blast emanates from the barrel and extends beyond the frame. An apparently dead soldier lies face-down on the ground by the standing soldier’s feet. The standing soldier’s face is obscured but his actions and his firmly planted stance seem to indicate that he is unafraid. Rather than surrendering like the German soldier or attempting to flee or hide, the American doughboy bravely faces his opponent and continues the fight for which his compatriot gave his life. The line of the dead soldier’s leg leads the viewer’s eye directly to pieces of debris with red and white stripes and traces of blue. This rubble is piled behind the standing soldier. The colors of this debris evoke the American flag and make the faceless soldier and his courage under fire emblematic of the valor of the American military in general. This subtle evocation of the American flag also affirms the rhetoric of the heroic sacrifice of the fallen warrior who died fighting for the noble ideals of peace, justice, and freedom.



Figure 10. Harvey Thomas Dunn, *Street Fighting*, ca. 1918 ©Division of Political and Military History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

During World War I, the American army was actually substantially smaller than the German army. At the time of Wilson's war message to Congress, there were only 127,588 soldiers in the regular American army (Fairlie 58). During the war, the American army was comprised of over four million soldiers but only about half of them actually served in Europe (Eisenhower 288). In contrast, the German imperial forces consisted of 13.4 million soldiers, most of whom served in the army (Stone 133). In Dunn's art, however, the numerical advantage of the German army seems irrelevant as his courageous American soldiers, such as the one in *Street Fighting*, seem undaunted by the trials of modern warfare and the looming threat of death on the battlefield. Furthermore, by highlighting the timidity of German soldiers, Dunn seemingly implies that the numerical superiority of the German army cannot compensate for the inferior manhood of the German troops.

While the American soldier in *Street Fighting* heroically holds his ground, the five German soldiers in Dunn's *The Hand Grenade* (ca. 1918) try to frantically flee from the projectile. A thin plume of white smoke rises from the grenade, which has not yet detonated. The specific type of grenade is difficult to determine, but the National Museum of American History indicates that it might be "an Mk. I Offensive Fragmentation grenade, an Mk. II Defensive Fragmentation grenade, or a French F1 Defensive grenade" ("The Hand Grenade"). Offensive grenades, which were often used by soldiers charging a particular target, were used as stun grenades, because the force of the blast would daze opponents, but the fragments would not necessarily kill or injure them. Defensive grenades were designed to fragment in a way that would specifically kill or maim opponents (Henry 35). Americans used French, British, and American grenades during the war and, because Dunn created the work in question, it is probably safe to assume that the likely thrower of the grenade in this work was an American soldier. The grenade was apparently thrown through the arched doorway in the back of the stone room, which could either be a bunker or cellar shelter known as an "alabri" ("The Hand

Grenade”). In contrast to the American soldier in *Street Fighting* who bravely makes a stand in street cluttered with debris, Dunn portrays the German soldiers as cravenly hiding in a bunker.



Figure 11. Harvey Thomas Dunn, *The Hand Grenade*, ca. 1918 ©Division of Political and Military History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

In *The Hand Grenade*, the man who stands on the far-left side of the scene recoils from the imminent blast. He covers his face with his left hand and futilely attempts to block the explosion with his outstretched right hand. The centermost German dives away from the grenade. The helmeted soldier appears to be in mid-air and might land on or next to the soldier with the fatigue cap who tries to crawl away from the blast. The bald man behind them cowers in the back right corner of the room. His pose is echoed by the soldier in the lower left corner who has his back to the viewer and appears to use his legs to push himself away from the grenade.

When Dunn spent a week at the front near Château-Thierry, he slept in a stone-floored wine cellar and, after leaving that town, he and fellow A.E.F artist William James Aylward, slept in a wine cellar that had been converted into a dugout (Krass 80-81). Either one of these wine cellars could have inspired the interior of the shelter seen in *The Hand Grenade*. Dunn served at the front so he likely saw grenades thrown at enemy targets, but he clearly did not



witness the scene he depicts. Perhaps he transposed a similar scene he saw on the battlefield to the interior of a German bunker. Otherwise, the artist must have largely imagined what he thought German soldiers would do when confronted by a live grenade. These Germans behave in a distinctly unheroic, recreant manner. None of the soldiers try to throw the unexploded grenade back out the door or fall on the grenade in a valiant effort to shield their compatriots from the blast; instead, they all frantically and ineffectually attempt to save themselves by trying to take cover from the impending explosion.

While one could argue that diving for cover would be the sensible thing to do if a grenade were to land in one's midst, the actions of the German soldiers seem decidedly cowardly in comparison to the lone living soldier in *Street Fighting* who takes a heroic stand and continues fighting by the side of his fallen brother-in-arms. Whereas the American soldier in *Street Fighting* unflinchingly battles an unseen number of German troops, *The Hand Grenade* suggests that a small hand grenade lobbed by a single American soldier is enough to kill or seriously injure five German soldiers. The fact that two of the German soldiers wear their field caps, *Feldmützen*, instead of their helmets indicates that they were caught off guard. Two bayoneted rifles are propped to the right of the door, which further suggests that the Germans did not anticipate an Allied attack (Trout 163). Even though no American soldiers are actually depicted in this work, the vulnerability of the Germans and their unpreparedness for the attack contrasts with the implied military prowess and decisive action of the American soldiers responsible for the strike, which will, by all indications, successfully neutralize any threat posed by these German soldiers.

In *The Hand Grenade*, Dunn again uses general types to suggest that the pusillanimity of these five German troops is representative of the unsoldierly conduct and inferior manhood of the German army as a whole in contrast to the unwavering heroic masculinity of the American doughboys. This unflattering depiction of German soldiers seems deliberately



calculated to counter then-existing perceptions of the German army. According to military historian David Stone, at the outbreak of the war the German army was “widely acknowledged as the best trained, prepared, equipped and motivated European army of the day” (54). However, the actions and attitudes displayed by the German soldiers in *The Sniper* and *The Hand Grenade* bear little resemblance to their impressive reputation. Even though Dunn’s depictions of these Germans are decidedly unflattering, the surrendering sniper and cowering soldiers are presented as human beings, albeit impotent ones, rather than bloodthirsty monsters.

By creating images in which the Germans were shown as being weak and feminized, Dunn highlighted the heroism of the manly doughboys who were touted as fighting for American democratic ideals. Instead of focusing on German bellicosity and savagery, as much wartime propaganda did, Dunn deliberately undermined the German army by depicting its soldiers in ways that strategically impugned their fighting skills and character. In contrast, the American soldiers in these works are presented as virile, masculine warriors who could successfully defeat the German army and easily secure the Wilsonian ideals that Americans purportedly entered the war to defend.

## **Conclusion**

Dunn’s approach to depicting the Great War has proven to be persistently appealing. Of the official A.E.F war artists, Dunn was “the best known in the postwar years” (Cornebise 44), and has remained the most popular since (Howell 45). When one considers that over five hundred works were created by the A.E.F Eight, but Dunn completed fewer than thirty works, the continued attention his works have received is particularly impressive (Cornebise 35). Most of Dunn’s wartime images were not evaluated in Washington, D.C. until after the war. When these were reviewed, the official verdict was positive, and his wartime works are often regarded as excellent examples of war reportage (Reed 79). By the end of 1918, the A.E.F artists’ works

were typically well-received in the United States (Cornebise 37-41). Regarding the postwar audience's reception of Dunn's wartime works, Howell remarks: "This was the war as they imagined it. This was the war they wanted to see" (49). After the war, these works were reproduced in magazines, including *The American Legion Monthly*, and Dunn's later covers for this publication further bolstered his reputation (Trout 169). The continued interest in his art is a testament not only to his skill in rendering exciting, memorable scenes of frontline action, but also to the enduring power of the particular conception of manly, courageous American soldiers that he consistently portrayed and that still coincides with American conceptions of heroic martial masculinity.

In many of his wartime works, Harvey Dunn clearly and dramatically visualizes the heroism of American soldiers. By depicting these troops as physically impressive, masculine figures engaged in noble combat against the physically and morally compromised German forces, Dunn emphasized his conception of the American doughboys as "Just Warriors" whose brave conduct aligned with the "discourse of patriotic honor" that was common at the time (Albrinck 316, 322). His images of heroic masculinity, which depict the bravery and stamina of the soldiers as being worthy of admiration, coincide with the moral imperative offered by President Woodrow Wilson to rationalize American intervention in the war. Dunn's iconic soldiers embody idealized conceptions of virile, active manhood with which Americans were already familiar thanks to propaganda posters that glorified enlisted men as exemplars of certain national ideals and conceptions of honorable, military masculinity. His overt valorization of the generalized American soldier-hero likely contributes to his ongoing popularity, as it coincides with common conceptions justifying America's involvement in the Great War. Indeed, it seems that just as Dunn projected his own romanticized self-image onto his images of heroic doughboys, so too is America's supposed moral justification for participation in World War I projected onto these same images.

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