THE OFFICER FETISH

A Dissertation

by

LARRY A. VAN METER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2004

Major Subject: English

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December 2004

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ABSTRACT

The Officer Fetish. (December 2004)

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The Officer Fetish examines the fetishized American military officer and the marginalized American enlisted man as they appear in post-World War II American film, television, and literature. The fetishized officer, whose cathexis is most prominent in the World War II-era propaganda film, has persisted as a convention since the war—a phenomenon that has contributed to the rise of militarism in America. Chapter II lays the foundation of Marxist and Freudian definitions of fetishism and fetishization, and then gauges those definitions with two films, In Which We Serve (1942), a standard World War II propaganda film, and Saving Private Ryan (1997), a film that postures itself as anti-war. Chapter III examines war narratives as a medium that polices class in American culture. The military, with its anti-democratic two-tiered rank system, is attractive to many novels and films because of its strict class boundaries. Chapter IV examines the degree to which so-called anti-war narratives contribute to America's rising economy of militarism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

LIST OF FIGURES v

CHAPTER

I INTRODUCTION 1

II THE OFFICER FETISH 17

III THE OFFICER AND THE POLICE 61

IV WAR NARRATIVE AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL INCAPACITY 106

V CONCLUSION 152

BIBLIOGRAPHY 153

FILMOGRAPHY 160

VITA 162

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE Page

1 U.S. Navy Officer Uniforms 1899 ……………………………….. 89

2 Still from the CBS Television program *JAG* (2003) ……………. 89

3 World War I Recruiting Poster (ca. 1919) ………………………. 91

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are only two industries in the world,
the peace industry and the war industry.
—Yoko Ono

I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle-man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism.
—General Smedley Butler (1935)

Laying down one's life for America is a poverty issue rather than one of honour.
—Zoe Williams

For this work, I have two projects in mind. The first is to expose the fetishistic investment in the military officer rank, one of the most enduring conventions in American narrative history. The second is to advocate a termination of the officer rank in American militaries. In the absence of an officer rank, there would be less impetus for war. But when one considers the fact that when high-ranking officers retire from military service, they often sit on the boards of multinational weapons manufacturers (with their associated six- and seven-figure salaries to augment their military retirement benefits)—firms whose economic survival *depends* on warmaking—that second project seems doomed to failure.

This dissertation follows the style of the *MLA Handbook*.

The arguments presented in this work necessitate an explanation of the American military rank system, a system modeled on the European military structure, which is divided into officer and enlisted ranks. For a full discussion of this division, one should consult Alfred Vagts's *A History of Militarism*. The European system mirrored the machinations of the feudal aristocracy: officers, upon whom culture conferred honor (the "sign" of which is/was the ornate uniforms they wear/wore), and the soldiery, upon whom culture conferred scorn. The problem with honor being associated with the officer rank, I will argue, is that the psychic and spectacular in*vest*ments in the officer rank works toward eroding the resistance American society has toward warmaking. To find compelling evidence of this lack of resistance, one need only examine the Bush *pere* and Bush *fils* wars in the Middle East. Though there were strong pockets of resistance to these wars, the fact that they nevertheless occurred implies a strong desire for those wars and (as I will argue in Chapter IV) an overall incapacitated resistance. But it was not a desire appearing from a mysterious void: it was a desire carefully fostered and cultivated by profiteers, unscrupulous politicians, and a pliant media. And, of course, centuries and centuries of narratives obsessed with warfare. In the half-century since World War II, Americans have bought (both literally and figuratively) the notion that military force is a sensible means of solving political problems. Instead of perceiving warmaking as the worst possible contingency, Americans often see it as a first option (though our leaders are careful in asserting that war is the last option). In this work, I hope to

present evidence that the media of war novels and films have conditioned us to this end.

Desire is a crucial word in this work, the a priori of which, borrowed from feminist film theory, is that discourse articulates desire. Officer/enlisted representational strategies present, among other things, a desire for a strictly segregated class system. The privileging of the officer rank, one of the most enduring tropes in American fictions, appears all too often as a fetish in both officially sanctioned discourse and military fictions.

What I hope to argue effectively in Chapter II is that the officer as he—and it is most certainly a *he*—appears in most American war fictions is a fetish. A large section of Chapter II is devoted to laying a foundation of Marxist and Freudian definitions of fetish and fetishism. Both programs of Marx and Freud work well with military fictions because, I believe, those fictions operate within a narrative economy where patriarchy, hyperbolic masculinity, and class desire rarely have to be encoded. Indeed, for many war narratives, those are their defining *virtues*.

As feminist film theorists such as Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, and Laura Mulvey have demonstrated, what is too often articulated in Western discourse is patriarchal desire. War offers artists a vehicle to, as de Lauretis says in a different context, "reaffirm a patriarchal order that has been badly shaken by feminism" (*Alice Doesn't* 116). Seemingly the best strategy for avoiding the problems posed by feminism (or, perhaps more accurately, the feminine) is to

explore a geography free of women. Susan Jeffords says in *The Remasculinization of America*, "The defining feature of American war narratives is that they are a 'man's story' from which women are generally excluded" (49). War narrative then becomes a convenient location for articulations of masculinity: "At a time when other arenas for masculine bonding in American culture are being 'invaded' [. . .] war can be perceived as the last 'pure' theater for the masculine bond" (73). War narratives often pine for a nostalgic version of civilization, the model of which one finds in the World War II narrative, wherein men seemed not so encumbered by gender (or class) dysphoria. Ostensibly "liberated," then, those narratives find themselves exploring themes masquerading as apolitical and non-ideological—pretending to be disaffected, merely descriptive. They have more important fish to fry. "Courage," "honor," "sacrifice," and "heroism" become the overarching *themes* of war narratives. They seek to transcend the historical, to recover an epic past where women knew their place, away from the important affairs of men: "In the past," Bakhtin notes of the epic genre, "everything is good" ("Epic and Novel" 15).

The problem, of course, is that war narratives are rife with anxieties; they are, to borrow Stephen Heath's famous film axiom, "a veritable festival of affects." Theorists such as Joanna Bourke, Katherine Kinney, Silverman, and Jeffords have noted that war narratives are *all about* masculine anxieties. Though many narratives (and their voices within them) willfully fantasize that they

function within an ideology-free zone, they nevertheless articulate the gender and class anxieties at the heart of so many sociopolitical problems.

With respect to class anxieties, the threat to capital is easy to measure in film. As Horkheimer and Adorno argue in *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, mainstream cinema functions primarily as a weapon of capital. Film is a multi-billion dollar industry and doesn't easily cotton to threats against it. Mainstream cinema neutralizes the threats to capital on both ideological and political fronts. Concerning the latter, one should note as examples the literal blacklists during the McCarthy era and de facto blacklists during the right wing frenzy of George W. Bush's Iraq War (note the backlash against politically active figures Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Sean Penn, and Michael Moore). With respect to the former, the film industry postures itself as part of the so-called "entertainment industry," a term implying a dissociation with any sort of politics. Because mainstream cinema pretends that it is merely an "escape from everyday drudgery" (Horkheimer and Adorno 142), it disavows any radical departure from the status quo. Any film may allow for variations, but the overall superstructure of the film industry provides too strong an insurance against those variations' materializing. Though the film may articulate certain anxieties regarding the oppressiveness of capital, too often it is doomed to legitimate that oppressiveness. One can find this "cured anxiety" in many narratives: I call it the "Ebenezer Scrooge Effect." As in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, many post-industrial narratives confronting capital attempt to rehabilitate it rather than

overthrow it. The artist certainly recognizes that capital is the source of so much injustice and misery, but reforming the capitalist provides so much easier a cure than anything else. One can see this narrative rehabilitation in many mainstream films, such as *Mary Poppins*, *Back to School*, *Groundhog Day*, *Where the Heart Is*, *The Coca Cola Kid*, *The Kid*, *Regarding Henry*, *The Family Man*, *The Game*, *Jerry Maguire*, *Annie*, *Working Girl*, *Pretty Woman*, *Sabrina*, *Secretary*, *Vanilla Sky*, *Billy Madison*, *The Emperor's New Groove*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Charade*, *About a Boy*, *Something's Gotta Give*, the *Spy Kids* films, and *Trading Places*,[1] wherein the oppressive boss "learns his lesson" and everyone is happier and wiser at story's end.

Of course, this program of epistemological closure serves only the interests of capital. However much the boss is "cured," he is still in charge. If there is any real "curing" effected, it is of the artist and the reader/spectator, who become acculturated into the primacy of capital. Furthermore, insofar as many of those narratives—especially the films[2]—couch their agenda within the framework of "comedy," they can disavow any material relationship with the agenda. This is the fetishist's disavowal, what Octave Mannoni calls the *je sais bien mais quand même* ("I know very well, but all the same"). The narrative, so it goes, can "connote" whatever it wants, but because it's just for entertainment and just for laughs, its relationship to politics is disguised. Thus film can be deeply reactionary without actually appearing to be so[2].

War cinema, on the other hand, has the unique luxury of not having to disguise its politics: because mainstream cinema *in general* encodes its conservative project, the war film *in specific* can assert its politics overtly. Disavowal is built into the structure of any mainstream film, but the war film perhaps benefits most from that phenomenon. Spectators see the war movie in literally the same space as the so-called entertainment movie, so they are predisposed to thinking the screen soldiers' occupying a similar ideological space as the singers and dancers. War films, to be specific, protect certain *real* interests, that is, those in the business of making war. Herman and Chomsky assert that art forms within capitalism "mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity" (20). Those interests benefit from film's strategy of concealment, an arrangement that film is all too often willing to facilitate.

It's a tall order to resist the seductions of war narrative, as innumerable texts—ranging from Homer to Malory to Tom Clancy—all too willingly submit to the romanticism of the bellicose. Perhaps more so than any other program, feminism has enabled intellectuals to both resist the appeals of war and to expose certain political (primarily patriarchal) agendas written into military discourse. Many theorists have effectively analyzed the workings of the military, especially as they are articulated in novels and film. Three books providing crucial background for this work are *An Intimate History of Killing* by Joanna Bourke,

Friendly Fire by Katherine Kinney, and *The Remasculinization of America* by Jeffords.

Bourke says, "The characteristic act of men at war is not dying, it is killing" (1). An exhaustively researched book—paying particular attention to first-person accounts, diaries, and memoirs—*An Intimate History of Killing* examines the psychology of killing in the two World Wars and Vietnam. She concludes (opposing innumerable military fictions) that there is no special warrior trait in soldiers: ordinary men and women can and did kill in war, and few of them report any psychic trauma as a result. In fact, many of them reported a certain joy in killing. Culture sanctions this bloodshed by positioning it within a war context—an equal opportunity sanction, as both liberal and conservative would agree that, in war, people get killed.

But it is not just soldiers who get killed, and it is within *that* context where the force of Bourke's argument lies, because one of the primary foci of her book is the My Lai Massacre, one of the most important violations of officer impunity in American military history. On March 16, 1968, an American Army unit, led by Lieutenant William Calley, murdered over 500 unarmed civilians[4]—most of whom were "old men, women, children, and babies" (160)—in a village in northeast Vietnam. For his part in the massacre, Calley (who was the only one convicted) served three and half years in confinement before being paroled in 1975 by Richard Nixon. A shocking aspect of the My Lai scandal was the

overwhelming support for Calley on the American home front following his conviction:

> Draft boards in Arkansas, Florida, Kansas, Michigan, Montana, and Wyoming resigned in protest; flags were flown at half-mast in state capitals throughout the nation, and veterans organizations such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars collected money to appeal against the conviction. At a revival meeting at the Columbus, Georgia, Memorial Stadium, the Revd Michael Lord proclaimed that 'there was a crucifixion 2,000 years ago of a man named Jesus Christ. I don't think we need another crucifixion of a man named Rusty Calley'. (Bourke 118)

The American socius is so conditioned to the fantasy that armies—specifically officers in those armies—occupy a space of virtue that when evidence appears to contradict that fantasy, the socius resists. Though William Calley is now an infamous figure, the fact that he is not a household name (on a par with Custer or Sherman) speaks less about American culture's ignorance of history and more about its resistance to certain historical strategies. Combatants, according to Bourke, "refused to narrate their war-stories in self-destructive ways" (360). Audiences are equally resistant to self-destructive war narrative.

Katherine Kinney's *Friendly Fire* concludes that *the* story of Vietnam War narrative is "friendly fire," Americans killing Americans. Friendly fire, "the

revealed secret at the heart of war" (112), is both a literal and figurative symbol of the Vietnam War. Literally, of course, friendly fire is a tragic side effect of combat, but as a figure, it represents the nation at war with itself. The ideological confrontations on the home front created a tremendous amount of anxiety in a nation that was still intoxicated by its success in World War II. A conservative strategy for ameliorating that anxiety was to project the natural virtue of the World War II American soldier onto his Vietnam counterpart. Perhaps the biggest manifestation of that desire was John Wayne, who was "the model by which young American men learn to accept duty and responsibility" (12). It makes little difference that the John Wayne model was a fantasy—Wayne cited age and football injuries to procure a deferment from World War II service, but he "played" the hero in dozens of war films. Those roles repositioned the cathexis of the military hero onto Wayne himself (a similar cathexis was enjoyed by Ronald Reagan, a stateside journalist during World War II. An interesting feature of this cathexis was that the further away these men got from the war temporally, the more their hero cathexis increased)! Kinney demonstrates how that artificiality of the John Wayne *mythos* was in fact a key feature of its efficacy—if not for actual combat soldiers, then certainly for the Hawks back home, for whom manifest destiny was a crucial aspect of their self-conception. Soldiers themselves went to Vietnam hoping that the war was going to play like a John Wayne movie, not quite knowing that "John Wayne was always already an illusion" (13).

Feminist analysis offers a crucial diagnosis of the patriarchal/misogynist projects present in so many military narratives. Especially helpful to students of literature are feminist examinations of military fictions. What is absent in their works, however, is an adequate critique of the strictly delineated class system in the military, a feature I see as key to the efficacy of military discourse. And this is where I wish to enter the debate: to show how strongly the two-fold rank system plays a role in the mystifying power of military fictions. Jeffords, for example, says that the Vietnam War dissolved class and race barriers amongst soldiers. However true that may have been, it was only within an enlisted rank context. The officer/enlisted distinction persisted in the Vietnam War, and was perhaps even more balkanizing and dangerous than in previous wars because it was fueled by so much nostalgia. Such nostalgia can be easily gauged in the 1968 film *The Green Berets*, where John Wayne's Colonel Mike Kirby is a reformulation and reassertion of the iconic World War II officer hero[5].

Perhaps the crucial work exposing the vanity and dysfunction of the officer rank is *A History of Militarism* by Alfred Vagts, published originally in 1937, and then updated after World War II (in 1959). Prefiguring Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, it exposes certain fictions that culture entertains that wind up creating and supporting a narcissistic, militaristic State. Vagts makes a distinction between "the military way," that is "a primary concentration of men and materials in winning specific objectives of power with the utmost efficiency," and "militarism":

> Militarism is so constituted that it may hamper and defeat the purposes of the military way. Its influence is unlimited in scope. It may permeate all society and become dominant over all industry and arts. Rejecting the scientific character of the military way, militarism displays the qualities of caste and cult, authority and belief. (13)

Though militaries should be in the service of the State, they invariably become the State's *raison d'être*. Says Vagts, "national policy is military policy, no matter in what fine phrases it is couched" (36). Though Vagts is more concerned with specifically military history, he nevertheless notes a disturbing side effect of militarism, the *enlistment* of narrative:

> In both Britain and the United States the general staffs [. . .] agreed to let civilian professional historians compose the voluminous histories of the Second World War. It cannot be said that this change resulted in a civilianization of war history, but rather in a militarization of civilian writers. (37)

However tempting it may be to assume that such militaristic histories as Stephen Ambrose's *Band of Brothers* or Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* represent a new trend in chauvinist historiography, they hardly differ from the bellicose, nostalgic histories of Vagts' contemporaries, such as Winston Churchill's *The*

River War or Lieutenant-Colonel H.F.N. Jourdain's *Ranging Memories*. As I will argue, the "civilian writers" Vagts refers to are not limited to historians.

We tend to attach a romanticism and nostalgia to military affairs, factors that distract people from the material realities of war and militarism. This is the phenomenon I trace in Chapter II. In the 1970 Hungarian film *Szerelmesfilm* director Istvan Szabo integrates flashbacks from 1940s and 1950s Budapest, time periods of Nazi and Soviet military occupation. In the film, there are gritty, *cinema verité* scenes of tanks and soldiers rolling into Budapest. For Szabo, the presence of a soldier is clearly designed to recreate and (re)incite horror and terror. But *Szerelmesfilm* is not, generically speaking, "war cinema," and how disorienting this film must seem to American audiences, highly skilled in recognizing film genre, conditioned to the fantasy that the military *is* the locus of virtue. There is something lost in the translation to a culture that has not seen an invading army in two centuries but is nevertheless obsessed with militarism and violence, a culture conditioned to perceiving the soldier as hero.

I will argue in Chapter III that the romanticism of the bellicose noted by Vagts is rooted in society's distrust of democracy, and a yearning for "purer" forms of governance—meritocracy, feudalism, monarchy. The military is the overarching metonymy of those forms, but because the military is also literal, the signs of distrust are slightly concealed. War narrative offers a compelling locus for class struggle insofar as it presents a clearly demarcated class boundary, that separating the officer and the enlisted classes. It is a boundary that most war

narrative protects. Chapter III, as suggested by its title, borrows heavily from D.A. Miller's 1988 book, *The Novel and the Police*. Though Miller is more concerned with how novels participate in the cultural practice of surveillance and discipline (Miller's key reference is Foucault's *Surveiller et Punir*), I think his thesis is fruitful for an examination of how military fictions participate in class management. My claim in the chapter is that a key attraction to war narrative is its protected class system—there is no class warfare in warfare.

Chapter IV was the most difficult chapter to write. My claim in the chapter is that war narrative, in a way, works to "disarm" both artists and readers. I've read, it seems, hundreds of works on war and seen hundreds of war films, and though most of them profess to be "anti-war," their investments and participation in the conventions of war narrative (most notably the subscription to the glorious officer and divested enlisted man tropes) exposes that profession as a sham. This repulsion/attraction dynamic articulates the fetishism often associated with war narrative: we may call ourselves anti-war, but we are often turned on by the visceral thrills associated with war stories. Freud would call this a classic case of disavowal. Most war narratives, I argue, seem to crumble beneath the weight of the allurements of war: I call the resultant phenomenon "epistemological incapacity" in order to describe war narrative's persistent ability to seduce—rather than repel—artists and readers. To me, the artist best equipped to resist those seductions is Tim O'Brien, whose *Going After*

Cacciato and *The Things They Carried* are models for successfully resisting the conventions of war narrative.

A characteristic of militarism is that it postures its elite members—the officers—as paragons of civilization. "Conservative forces," Vagts says, "strove to re-erect what Edmund Burke called the state of 'knights and saints,' and sought mass appeals through its romantic appeals" (17). Those "knights and saints" are the officer rank. When art forms do not interrogate that rank, they participate in culture's secession of control of government to a "caste" of people who are in the business of killing.

Perhaps the key factor in the proliferation of militarism is that the military command succeeds in posturing itself as anti-war, despite all evidence to the contrary. It's not just that art forms collude with this practice; they extend militarism by ingesting the prescriptions written by the military command. Let us make no mistake: the military is in the business of exterminating human life. Anything less than a sober realization of that fact is a de facto collusion with and extension of militarism.

Notes

[1] A variation of this theme can be seen in narratives that replace the bad capitalist with the good (i.e., younger) one, e.g., "How to Succeed in Business Without Even Trying," "The Secret of My Success," "Tommy Boy," and "Monsters, Inc."

[2] "The cinema, particularly the industrial cinema, and most particularly the Hollywood studio system cinema." Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* 8.

[3] One can see this phenomenon writ large in a current beer commercial. In it, two guys ponder what would make the perfect beer commercial. The "narrative" melts into a scene wherein two voluptuous women have a "catfight" and end up wrestling in mud. The commercial *knows* that such a commercial, if it actually existed, would be exploitative . . . but it's not *really* a commercial; it exists only in the minds of the two men. The commercial further disavows the politics of the *sous rature* commercial by showing the guys' "real" girlfriends' obvious disapproval of the guys' fantasy. Thus the commercial can articulate *desire* for homosocialism, fetishism, and misogyny, but—heh, heh—it's just for laughs, so no harm done.

[4] There seems to be no consensus on My Lai casualty figures. Apparently, how one votes governs how many people one thinks died at My Lai. Bourke's statistics are most likely garnered from Seymour Hersh, *Cover-Up: The Army's Secret Investigation of the Massacre at My Lai 4* (New York: Random House, 1973). Conservate historian Barbara Tuchman, on the other hand, cites "over 200" in *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* (New York: Ballantine, 1984): 365, though she does not cite a source. The Army's official My Lai document, *The Peers Commission Report* (New York: Free Press, 1976), is deliberately (and maddeningly) confusing and distracting, in various passages citing 175-200, 400, and 490 deaths.

[5] For an in-depth analysis of *The Green Berets* as a propaganda film, see David L. Robb, *Operation Hollywood:How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2004): 277-85.

CHAPTER II

THE OFFICER FETISH

For the officer, honor is reserved, for the
common man obedience and loyalty.
—1752 Saxon-Polish Field Service Rules

Fifty gentilhommes have more effect
than two hundred soldiers.
—Montluc

Discuss unto me; art thou officer?
Or art thou base, common, and popular?
– Henry V

In the opening sequence of *V.*, a Navy Chief urinates into the fuel tank of a Packard. This sequence functions, as Lucien Dallenbach demonstrates in *The Mirror in the Text*, as an example of *mise en abyme du code,* an encoded doppelganger of the text: the Chief[1] within the novel "mirrors" the young Thomas Pynchon's resistant project with the novel—or at least attempts to announce that project. The political effect, however, is ambivalent. While the urinating Chief might function as a signifier of dissension, he is nevertheless a reinscription of a strict literary convention—the drunken enlisted man, a convention one can trace in Western fictions from *The Iliad*[2] to *Henry V* to twentieth-century mainstream war cinema. I call the effect in *V.* ambivalent because, though the employment of the convention may on one hand signal—to use a term from Barthes—the novel's *writerliness*, it on the other hand reinforces a centuries-old system of state-sanctioned oppression: an officer/enlisted division

fueled by a fantasy that officers are sophisticated gentlemen, their enlisted counterparts illiterate drunkards. In many twentieth-century art forms that fantasy materializes as a certain fetish, the officer fetish, one that empowers the militaristic State.

This work will examine the officer fetish and how it materializes in American war fictions. The privileging of the officer rank, while hardly unique to American discourse, is a powerful political tool: representing the officer rank as virtuous facilitates militarism. As I write, the American military budget is 396 billion dollars, six times larger than the military budget of its nearest competitor[3]. One reason the military is able to procure these funds is that officially sanctioned discourse conditions the American people to believe that the military is wise, competent, and responsible. But the military does not have to labor intensively to achieve that effect. Laura Mulvey, in the context of film analysis, says, "formal preoccupations reflect the psychical preoccupations of the society which produced it" ("Visual Pleasure" 16). American military discourse both articulates a specific type of desire and "reflects" that same desire: that Americans cultivate an aristocracy—the military officer. A particular strategy one can easily trace within that discourse is the representation of the officer as the virtuous gentleman. Few images are more dazzling than the senior officer, replete in his crisply pressed uniform adorned with ribbons and insignia, standing before a television camera, more often than not fielding softball questions from reporters paralyzed by the spectacle. American culture

simultaneously assumes and desires that image to connote virtue[4]. However troublesome it may be that American culture desires the military officer to signify virtue, it is perhaps even more problematic that art forms are seduced by—and ultimately collude with—that signifying practice.

The novel, says Lukács, is "a surface riddled with holes" (92), a complex of often unmanageable contradictions and ambiguities. Theorists in the wake of Bakhtin are perhaps too hasty in concluding that contradiction—the Russian word translated as *heteroglossia* (*raznorechie*) means "contradiction"—moves in a liberalizing, liberatory political trajectory. And it is within the framework of ambiguity where the ambivalence of Pynchon's opening gambit comes into play. Though the *mise en abyme* suggests that Pynchon—who in the 1950s served a two-year enlistment in the American Navy after his sophomore year at Cornell—identifies with the enlisted man (the urinating chief is a "yeoman," whose rate insignia consists of two crossed pens), he fails to interrogate the officer/enlisted *praxis*. As a result, Pynchon cannot contain the trajectories of connotation associated with the conventional figure. Considering the nature of Pynchon's style (encyclopedic, Mennipean, unchained), it seems highly unlikely that he would even *want* to contain those trajectories. But those trajectories do not exist outside of a politico-historical context (as much as, say, actors in blackface would like to believe otherwise). They are in fact culturally and politically motivated. A truly resistant narrative, being presumably what Mulvey calls a "formal preoccupation," would therefore challenge the convention. When narrative does

not interrogate the convention, it risks reinforcing the "legitimacy" of the convention[5].

In his analysis of Hitchcock's film *Rope*, D.A. Miller says of connotation,

> On one hand connotation enjoys, or suffers from, an abiding deniability. To refuse the evidence for a merely connoted meaning is as simple—and as frequent—as uttering the words "But isn't it just . . . ?" before retorting the denotation. On the other this maneuver is so far betrayed by the spirit of irritation, willfulness, and triumphalism in which it is infallibly performed, that it ends up attesting not just to the excesses of connotation but also to the impossibility of ever really eliminating them from signifying practice. ("Anal Rope" 118)

When artists fail to interrogate convention—because convention is so overdriven with connotation—they collude with the political forces that empower it, though it is a collusion with a built-in disavowal. With respect to military fictions, it is in the best interests of the state to present the officer rank as beautiful and the enlisted rank as ugly: such "work" in art forms preserves the status quo.

Thomas Pynchon is not alone. The overwhelming majority of literary and filmic texts submit to this convention, a convention rising from class and patriarchal anxieties. A narrative strategy in these texts is a privileging of the officer rank, and the deliberate marginalization of the enlisted rank.

What is at stake in military fictions is, ultimately, death. No matter how cleverly or subtly culture tries to disguise the fact, militaries are about killing. We might comfort ourselves with the notion that our militaries are organized for killing people of other cultures, but militaries—with their officer and enlisted rank divisions—are organized in such a way to ensure that casualties occur primarily within certain elements of its *own* culture (primarily the poor and minorities), while at the same time preserving the "right sort." Art forms sanction this practice by "playing along" with conventional figures—primarily a fetishization of the officer rank.

The military command would naturally bristle at the term *fetish*, but cannot deny the *fact* of officer prerogative. Though this factor of enlisted rank marginalization—both in narrative and in reality—reveals the levels of advocacy the officer rank enjoys, it also positions the enlisted rank into a particular space: the space marked for death. The officer is spared that marginalization because he (and it is most certainly a "he"—a crucial attraction of war narrative is that it is a priori patriarchal) has certain traits that are either inherent or engendered in officer training programs ("leadership" is the trait having the most currency in today's military rhetoric), traits that excuse the officer from occupying that space. That is not to say that officers do not die in war narratives (or in actual wars), but it is a different sort of tragedy when the lieutenant dies as opposed to the private.[6]

That officer prerogative/enlisted negativity is deeply structured in officer-generated discourse. One does not have to look hard to find it, either. As Herman and Chomsky note in *Manufacturing Consent*, there are over 1200 military journals, all of which are generated from officer circles (the enlisted rank is rendered mute). In one of them, *Publications of the Strategic Studies Institute* (the publication of the Army War College), three West Point professors, Don M. Snider, John A. Nagl, and Tony Pfaff wrote an article in 1999 called "Army Professionalism, The Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century." In it they bemoan the loss of officer "moral fiber," a phenomenon they assert arose from the Vietnam War and was further exacerbated during the Clinton years[7]. For Doctors Snider, Nagle, and Pfaff, a manifestation of that loss of "military professionalism" is the modern officer's alleged hesitancy to suffer casualties in his unit. The authors write,

> On January 25, 1999, a tall, ramrod-straight young combat-arms officer serving in Bosnia with the 1st Armored Division told the about-to-graduate cadets at West Point, "I tell my men every day there is nothing there worth one of them dying for." It was a startling admission to the cadets who were in the midst of a series of classes on the professional military ethic; the lieutenant's admission was utterly contradictory to what they had been studying. Their studies had led them to believe that minimizing casualties was an inherent part of every combat mission but not a

> mission in and of itself, particularly one which might impede or even preclude success in the unit's mission—in this case, peace operations within the American sector of Bosnia. Queried by a cadet in the audience as to why he communicated this to his men, the lieutenant responded, "Because minimizing, really prohibiting, casualties is the top-priority mission I have been given by my battalion commander." (1)

According to the authors, the combat-arms officer exhibited a "corrosion" of the military ethic by confessing an unwillingness to sacrifice his men, even within a context of so-called "peace operations." Two implicit ideas in the above passage bear mentioning: 1) Genuine "military professionalism" involves an unflinching willingness to kill, and 2) Bureaucracy hampers that willingness.

The authors' solution to the "officer corps' intellectual muddle" (2) is to "Reconceiv[e] the Officer as Self-Sacrificing Servant of Society" (34), that is, to look backwards to a time when officers were perhaps not so burdened by public scrutiny. One aspect of that reconception is that "Officers are gentle-men and -women—persons of character, courtesy and cultivation, possessing the qualities requisite for military leadership" (37). This "reconception" of the officer mythos is therefore motivated by nostalgia and a deliberate over-valorization[8], though of course not articulated as such but rather in terms implying that those "qualities" are natural and/or engendered. Slavoj Žižek would call this sort of discursive

maneuvering a strategy to make reality mirror a prescriptive fantasy of reality, to make the real "appear to be found rather than produced":

> Although any object can function as the object-cause of desire—insofar as the power of fascination it exerts is not its immediate property but results from the place it occupies in the structure—we must, by structural necessity, fall prey to the illusion that the power of fascination belongs to the object as such. (*Looking Awry* 32, 33)

Though it may be unclear what precisely "gentle-men and –women" means, we can be assured that we'll know it when we see it.

The military, with its built-in "power of fascination" and caste system disguised as a rank system, provides a convenient locus for conservative forces to assert their dominance, a dominance constantly threatened by democracy. Keith Nelson and Spencer Olin, in their historiographical analysis of militarism, *Why War?*, say, "the principle of majoritarianism strikes at the heart of hierarchical authority" (12). A problem associated with military discourse is that conservative desires are not just dangerous in and of themselves: those desires *desire*. They are couched in terms of oppression, surveillance, and domination. They don't merely seek to control the Other (both outside and *within* borders); they desire a mechanism of perpetual domination. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault uses the prison as the trope of western culture's desire for domination. Our desire is not only for a domination of others, but also (and perhaps even moreso) for a domination over ourselves. Foucault argues that power is

exercised over a socius that desires to be controlled and monitored, and furthermore that that power and control are not specifically in the hands of a class of controllers:

> This power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege', acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions—an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated. (26-27)

Though Foucault asserts that power cannot be ultimately—to borrow a term from Derrida—"traced" to a particular point, power is nevertheless both exercised *and* possessed. The American socius produces a class of *surveillants* and *punirants* that exercises that power. The military provides a compelling model for how power that Foucault describes is literally exercised: the military is a mechanism for exerting real power, but is also carefully disguised, so as not to appear as such. The military is an overarching dominating class, and that we do in fact glamorize and privilege it—not unlike our treatment of the wealthiest segment of culture—bespeaks our desire for domination. The military officer, both as a narrative figure and as a material presence, stands as a constant signifier of our need for domination and control. As for power "extended by the position of those who are dominated," nowhere does that seem truer than within military enlisted ranks, whose members are legally—and, perhaps more effectively, traditionally—compelled to extend the power of their "superiors"

(and the mystification and aura attached to them). Moreover, the officer class, mysteriously liberated from the taint suffered by the preterite enlisted caste, brokers, negotiates, and wages war, but enjoys a cathexis that refracts those facts.

That we endow the military officer with certain immeasurable, nebulous characteristics ("leadership," "gentlemanliness," "courage") signifies, in Freudian terms, some sort of perceived *lack*, a lack that necessitates the compensation of fetishism. The frustrating, problematic aspect of Freudianism arises from this sort of analysis: does the "monstrous presence of the irrational in politics"[9] arise exclusively from certain psychological drives, particularly when those politics are in the service of class and militarism?[10] It was this sort of question that has led many theorists (most notably Laura Mulvey in *Fetishism and Curiosity*) towards a synthesis of Freud and Marx.

The term *fetish* necessitates a negotiation between Freudian and Marxian spaces. With respect to military rank representation in American novels and films, one cannot compartmentalize the fetish programs of Marx and Freud, as both have converging validities in texts dealing with the military *object*. The military officer as he appears in most American fictions is, in Freudian terms, "an idealized-self image, and an ego ideal, an externally projected standpoint from which the subject judges himself or herself in relation to that image" (Krips 75). The essential issue is that although the fetishization of the officer rank in American fictions reveals a certain cultural anxiety, that fetishization cannot be separated from the fact that it is a class phenomenon.

Marx views the phenomenon of fetishism as a feature of capitalism, more specifically, capitalism-as-opposed-to-feudalism (an important distinction to be explored later). There has been much recent work done in fetish analysis[11] which, at the risk of my essentializing and trivializing profoundly complex phenomena, describes fetish and fetishization as strategies designed to attach to things a significance belying their real material conditions. Henry Krips calls fetishism the "contradiction between knowledge and practice, between knowing and doing" (159). *Fetish* has specialized meanings within both the Marxian and Freudian programs, but those meanings do not work at cross purposes, a concession Laura Mulvey makes in her book *Fetishism and Curiosity*, where she asserts that feminism arising from the 1960s "unbalanced the potential alchemical mix [of Marx and Freud] in the direction of Freud." Nevertheless, because "advanced capitalism consolidates its world power through the entertainment and communications industries [psychoanalysis] needs Marx" (1). And with respect to texts dealing with the military object, Marx and Freud both provide useful ways of understanding many of the disturbing elements in them, the most immediate of which is the continuing rise of militarism in the post-Cold War age. Both Marx and Freud define *fetish* as a "symptom." For Freud, fetish is a symptom of castration anxiety, for Marx of capital's voraciousness.

In a Marxian sense, the "something" of fetish is a thing, a "commodity." But the manifestation of fetish is not limited to commodities, or to be more precise—as Marx says—"things *qua* commodities." Though many factors

contributed to nineteenth-century industrialists' wildly successful exploitation of labor, one specifically noted by Marx was the phenomenon of commodification. Capital is so dominant a force that, ultimately, human interactions become indistinguishable from market transactions: "social action takes the form of the action of objects, which rule the producers rather than being ruled by them" (86). Therefore, it should be hardly surprising that non-commodities such as human interactions become "commodified." Marx graphically maps out the dark side of commodification practice in his exposé of nineteenth-century labor practices, Chapter X of *Capital*, where the products of labor became barely distinguishable from—and just as easily exploitable as—the producers of labor, often referred to as "hands." Though the have-nots were assigned this synechdocic fate, the products of their labors enjoyed more success. The strategy capital uses to consolidate power into the correct "hands" is commodity fetishism, that is, sublimating the real conditions of labor to conditions of over- and under-valuation: many of the mundane objects produced became infected with an "aura", but not the laborers—despite the efforts of the Russian Revolution—who produced those objects. More disturbing than the fetishization of the commodity, however, is that the exploiters of labor were able to attach that aura to themselves. Thorstein Veblen understood this in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* where he suggested that no revolution would occur in the West because those exploited are conditioned to overvalue the exploiters, a phenomenon that extended power to those who needed it least: "The possession of wealth, which

was at the outset valued simply as an evidence of efficiency, becomes, in popular apprehension, itself a meritorious act. Wealth is now itself intrinsically honourable and confers honour on its possessor" (29).

As a result of the commodification practice, the exploiters of labor not only enjoy the fetishism attached to the object (for example, the $200.00 per pair Nike Air Jordan basketball sneaker) but also attached to themselves (Nike founder Phil Knight).[12] Walter Benjamin, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," predicted that the mass production of goods would remove the aura attached to them. He was mistaken. What he overlooked was that the overvaluation of a commodity (and the commodifier) has almost nothing to do with the commodity itself but much to do with men's interrelations, interrelations designed to consolidate power within a small arena. Marx says that commodity fetishism is "a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (83). He should have added "and between themselves." A dangerous aspect of this "fantastic form" is that it is not perceived as anything other than normal.

Slavoj Žižek notes that a phenomenon occurring in fetishization is that we come to think that the fetishized characteristic of the commodity is its "natural" state, a process he calls "fetishistic misrecognition" (*Sublime Object* 25). The misrecognition is never haphazard—the misrecognized elements are projected in such a way as to empower officially sanctioned ideology. Noting how this phenomenon relates to art, Terry Eagleton says that art participates in that

process of misrecognition as a strategy collusive with systems of domination, thereby becoming

> part of a society's ideology—an element in that complex structure of social perception which ensures that the situation in which one social class has powers over the others is either seen by most members of the society as 'natural,' or not seen at all. (5)

Thus the real conditions of existence (to be precise, the real conditions of labor) are engineered in such a way as to appear natural or normal, rather than engineered. This process brings to mind Althusser's famous assertion that "Ideology is a 'Representation' of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence" (162). The germane consideration here is that those in the business of exploitation can manufacture an aura, attach it to themselves, and simultaneously strip those under their control of that aura, all the while profiting from the illusion that it is all a natural process.

Freud, in fact, describes fetishism in similar terms, that is, as a form of misrecognition. In his 1927 essay "Fetishism," he notes a patient whose peculiar fetish was a "shine on the nose": the patient saw an imaginary sheen on others' noses. Freud's diagnosis was that the English-born patient had attached a forgotten English signifier to the German sign, *glanz*, in the phrase *glanz auf der nase*:

> The fetish, which originated from his earliest childhood, had to be understood in English, not German. The 'shine on the nose'—was in reality a '*glance* at the nose'. The nose was thus the fetish, which, incidentally, he endowed at will with the luminous shine which was not perceptible to others. (162)

There was no literal shine; there was only the confusion between sign and signifier, the symptom of which was the fetish.

Though Freud concludes that the fetish is a substitute for the penis (or *glans*, as Freud puns in the previous example)—specifically "a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and—for reasons familiar to us—does not want to give up" (152-53)—it is crucial to understand that the effect/affect of fetish, as in the Marxian schema, results from the misrecognition[13] of a sign. A pertinent consideration here is that in both Freud and Marx, the misrecognition produces the symptom, the sign of the fetish. The manifestation of the fetish is thus a way of compensating for a perceived lack: producing something to make up for its ostensible non-existence. The misrecognition that often occurs in war narrative is that the military engenders a culture of virtue (which militaries, as a matter of policy, deliberately formulate in nebulous terms, such as "honor," "leadership," "discipline," or "responsibility"). It does not: it engenders a culture of death. What seems to get lost in the shuffle is the simple fact that militaries are designed specifically to exterminate human life. However problematic it may be that militaries imagine

themselves as embodying certain qualities of virtue, it is an even more dangerous practice that non-military entities become incorporated into that *zeitgeist*. Perhaps the most famous articulation of that fetishistic misrecognition, Helmut von Moltke said, "the army is the most outstanding institution in every country, for it alone makes possible the existence of all civic institutions" (22).

Freud's pertinence to military texts (where the distinction between historical and fictional is hardly relevant) arises in no small way from feminist theory, its efficacy rooted in its twin critiques of both narrative *and* Freud. Feminist theory (particularly film theory) finds in psychoanalysis a fertile ground from which to harvest its exposure of hegemonic systems, for Freud not only articulates the patriarchal energies present in discourse, he also *codifies* them. If it be true that psychoanalysis reveals the Oedipal contract present in narrative, it is because both narrative and psychoanalysis are overdriven by masculine/patriarchal energies, what Teresa de Lauretis calls the "patriarchal prerogative written into the psychoanalytical contract" (*The Practice of Love* xvi). Such a devastating a priori enables feminism then to expose that "patriarchal prerogative written" into narrative, both filmic and literary. Near the beginning of "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey says, "Psychoanalytic theory is thus appropriated here as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (34).

The problem with psychoanalysis, however, is its apparent ahistoricity, observed as early as the 1920s by the Bakhtin Circle. Valentin Voloshinov asserts in *Freudianism:A Critical Sketch* (1927) that Freud is attractive to the Western bourgeoisie because, by locating their drives to the merely sexual, he liberates them from any otherwise historical/political anxieties:

> [W]hat really counts in a human being is not at all what determines *his place and role in history*—the *class, nation, historical period* to which he belongs; only his *sex* and his *age* are essential, everything else being merely a superstructure. *A person's consciousness is shaped not by his historical existence but by his biological being*, the main facet of which is *sexuality*. Such is the basic ideological motif of Freudianism. (10)

Foucault crystallizes this observation in *The History of Sexuality* by saying that psychoanalysis offers "a scientific guarantee of innocuousness" (5). The attack on psychoanalysis reaches its full articulation in the *Anti-Oedipus*, where Deleuze and Guattari write, "psychoanalysis is taking part in the work of bourgeois repression at its most far-reaching level, that is to say, keeping European humanity harnessed to the yoke of daddy-mommy and making no effort to do away with this problem once and for all" (50).

The reductionist critiques of Freud, however, neglect to observe that the rise of psychoanalysis is itself a historical phenomenon (and, as many theorists

have noted, coincident with the rise of film). One finds an unexpected apologist for Freud in the person of Marxist theorist Terry Eagleton, who says,

> One criticism of Freud still sometimes heard on the political Left is that his thinking is individualist—that he substitutes 'private' psychological causes and explanations for social and historical ones. This accusation reflects a radical misunderstanding of Freudian theory. There is indeed a real problem about how social and historical factors are *related* to the unconscious; but one point of Freud's work is that it makes it possible for us to think of the development of the individual in social and historical terms. (*Literary Theory* 163).

As many feminist theorists have said, Freud's centrality to twentieth-century discourse arises from a masculine/patriarchal dysphoria resulting from women's increasing political strength.

Perhaps the most effective synthesis of Marxian and Freudian concepts of the fetish is William Pietz's history of fetishism, appearing in three separate issues of *Res* in the 1980s.[14] Pietz traces the word *fetish* both etymologically and historically, suggesting that although the term came into currency as a European description of African social, political, religious, and—most importantly—trade practices ("*Fetisso* derives from the Portuguese word *feitiço*, which in the late Middle Ages meant 'magical practice' or 'witchcraft'" [*Fetish I* 5]), the term seems much more apropos of *Western* practices. Early Modern European tradesmen,

bemused by the "false objective values" of the Africans they exploited in business ventures, nevertheless had their own curious habits. The Portuguese tradesman who scoffed at the West African "dressed in a Mandinga smock, with amulets of his fetishes (gods) around his neck,"[15] himself owned *lingueros* ("a sort of rod on which were suspended serpent tongues or a large number of rare stones [. . .] to which were attributed magical virtues"[16]), the "horn of a unicorn" ("to detect envenomed food" [*Fetish II* 35]), and other objects designed to fend off evil spirits. When Pietz describes mystical objects "worn about the body which itself embodied an actual power resulting from the ritual combination of materials" (*Fetish II* 36), it is clear that he is indicting Western practices, practices whose traces persist to this day.

The full array of fetishistic *affects*—the "Imaginary Relationships" and "misrecognition"—clearly materialize in World War II-era Hollywood combat films where the narrative attaches a romanticism, a "luminous shine," to military affairs. The standard trope in these propaganda films is the beautiful, freshly-shaven officer juxtaposed against the ugly, three-day-stubble private.

In the film *Crash Dive* (1943), for example, the film takes great pains to position the two overvalued officers (Tyrone Power and Dana Andrews) in both social (the New London officer's club) and combat (the interior of a submarine) interiors. The point of placing them in the social setting is to establish their virtue. In "What Novels can do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)," Seymour Chatman asserts that "film does not describe at all but merely presents; or better,

it depicts" (128). Because there is no voiceover—or Brechtian sign—saying, "These officers represent goodness," the film resorts to that most tried and true semiological link: physical beauty signifies goodness. As is the case with most mainstream war films, *Crash Dive* exploits the actor's (in this case Tyrone Power's) physical beauty because once the spectator has decoded the sign, Power can then "prove" the validity of the code by demonstrating valor in combat. The film spectator can therefore take the physical beauty of the officer at "face value." Showing Tyrone Power in the officer's club is a necessary element in the film because when he is transplanted to the grubby, claustrophobic interior of a submarine, his virtue has already been established—he is certainly not part of the *mise en scene*. The enlisted sailors aboard the submarine are, conversely, merely elements of the *mise en scene*: their physical ugliness semiologically links them to their "natural" marginalized status, a status not at all interrogated by the film. The camera may focus on that rank, but only for a moment, and only then to neutralize any socioeconomic anxiety the film or the audience may experience: those sailors are clearly content in their position as inferiors. This representational strategy, present in the overwhelming majority of mainstream war films, is clearly an Ideological State Apparatus: like white hats on Westerns' good guys, the representational tropes in the combat film are comforting (and, as we shall see in Chapter III, policing) signifiers for a traumatized nation. What interests me in this study is the persistence of these tropes in contemporary art forms.

In Officer/Enlisted rank representations, that fetishization of the officer rank is the *symptom* of—and this is where Freud is so crucial—a *patriarchal* nostalgia. As Lacan says, "One has to look for the origins of the notion of symptom not in Hippocrates but in Marx, in the connection he was first to establish between capitalism and what?—the good old times, what we call the feudal times" (106). The officer caste fantasizes that its special-ness results from a rich tradition dating from a glorious past, that is, from the feudal aristocracy. This nostalgic fantasy in fact materializes in military institutions' baccalaureate ceremonies where graduates—freshly commissioned military officers—wield actual swords.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the American mainstream cinema machinery has produced numerous films that use the World War II propaganda film as the model for the depiction of American virtue. Films such as *Pearl Harbor* (2001)[17], *We Were Soldiers* (2002), *Behind Enemy Lines* (2001), *Hart's War* (2002), and *Tears of the Sun* (2003) use the fetishization of the officer rank as the primary trope in representing American exceptionalism. The fetishized officer of the World War II propaganda film is transplanted into these films in order to address the September 11 trauma. Who better to restore order to chaos than the beautiful, virtuous American military officer, an icon untainted by skepticism or cynicism?

To see how officer fetishism presents itself in American fictions, one need only tune in to the television program *Jag*, where patriarchal codes are openly

embraced, both as a reinforcement of the male prerogative and as an active participant in the disempowerment (and punishment) of women. It is also as an entertainment form that has exploited September 11th to legitimate fantasies of American exceptionalism. The protagonist of the show is Commander Harmon "Harm" Rabb, a conventional American officer hero, a reassertion of the World War II officer. *Jag* seeks to disburden itself from the complications of Vietnam, where—in the wake of Lieutenant Calley—the military-as-locus-of virtue was called into question. *Jag*, overdriven by nostalgia, therefore pretends that Vietnam never existed. Vietnam, however, is *the* motivating impetus for the show. Looming over every episode is the reactionary fantasy that America's defeat at the hands of a poor third-world army occurred because of a lack of military resolve. This lack materializes in *Jag* as a virulent form of militaristic fetishism that seeks to "correct" that troublesome past. Disencumbered from the baggage of a problematic history, *Jag* is free then to reclaim nationalistic/masculine territories that ostensibly existed before Vietnam. In *Jag*, the men officers have free reign to embody the characteristics one saw back in the good old days.

One episode, "The Mission," provides a television version of "Army Professionalism, The Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century" inasmuch as it presents the anxieties of the officer rank, but of course only as a straw man that can be knocked down by the unselfconscious super officer. In this episode, a JAG officer stationed aboard an American aircraft carrier hesitates

to order an air strike against a group of gun-toting, camel-riding Afghanis. Because it is night, the officer cannot make a positive identification, and he aborts the mission. This completely sane decision is, of course, represented in the show as cowardice, an example of the "officer muddle." The frustrated commanding officer of the aircraft carrier then recruits Harm to fly an attack mission because he knows that Harm is not that sort of hesitant officer. Harm flies the mission, blows up the bad guys, and returns to the carrier, thereby restoring the order threatened by the "muddled" officer.

The most disingenuous aspect of *Jag*, however, is its sexual politics. *Jag* is a reformulation of 1980s Vietnam buddy programs (*Magnum P.I.*, *Miami Vice, The A Team*) where, according to Susan Jeffords, "[i]n order to ensure that the value of the masculine bonds is maintained, women must be effectively and finally eliminated from the masculine realm" (xiii). *Jag*, though, has a twist: there are three major women characters in the show—all officers—but their function in the show is to reinforce the primacy of the male officer and to reaffirm their own valuelessness in a man's world: Lieutenant-Colonel Sarah MacKenzie (played by Catherine Bell) is a fetishized sex-object, Lieutenant Harriet Sims[18] (Karri Turner) is the Madonna, and Lieutenant Loren Singer (Nanci Chambers) is the iron maiden.

The biggest in-joke of the show is that Harm's love interest, Marine Lieutenant-Colonel Sarah MacKenzie, actually outranks him. This rank differential threatens to undermine Rabb's dominance, but that differential is

only a ruse: the standard plot complication in the long-running show is MacKenzie's frequent facing off against Harm in court. Harm invariably wins these face-offs, thus signifying his "real" superiority to her.

Just as prevalent as the patriarchal nostalgia—and this is where Marx comes into play—is that Officer/Enlisted rank representations also articulate a bourgeois anxiety. Military fictions juxtaposing the officer and enlisted ranks offer clearly demarcated class boundaries. I say "clearly," but that is not altogether accurate within an American context: Americans' relationship to democracy manifests a discomfort with suggestions of class identification and differentiation. We Americans are, after all, "created equal." But those class differentiations do exist: the wealthy and beautiful enjoy a higher social status in America. Americans just don't like calling it a class system. The military offers a sheltered example of that class system-called-by-another-name: officers have access to segregated facilities (officers' clubs, wardrooms[19], credit unions), they live in segregated military housing, and—of course—they make significantly more money (and enjoy vastly superior retirement benefits). But these features of the officer rank are apparently not perceived as evidence of a class system, but rather as a natural state of military affairs. In this manner, the officer rank is a sort of Lacanian articulation of fantasy, a "realized hallucination." The officer, desiring the signifiers of social rank, can manufacture and enjoy them, but without any residual anxiety because those signifiers are after all *not really there*, a

phenomenon Lacan calls "the Other of the Other": a disavowal built into the mechanism.

American military fictions can then play their own game of class: military rank clearly signifies class, but it does not have to call it class. It can even be fantasized as representing "democracy." The military officer can thus "play" the aristocrat, but he is ostensibly disencumbered with connotations associated with aristocracy. The flip side of the coin is that the fictional American officer can even play the system-bucking rebel and still enjoy the social position afforded his rank. This sort of John Wayne officer—present in a large number of American novels and films—is what Žižek calls a "radical conformist," that is, one who is firmly entrenched in the system but "paradoxically experiences himself as an outlaw" (*Looking Awry* 103). The dangerous psychological effect of this radical conformist is that he has currency: readers or spectators can experience him as a rebel as well.

The fetishization of the officer rank reveals, as a deep structure, a distrust of democracy. The privileging of the officer rank is always at the expense of the enlisted rank—art forms often collude with the notion that only the beautiful and brilliant (the officer) are fit for the high "office." On a more dangerous level, however, this practice of privileging one class over another reveals a hatred for certain elements within a population. War narratives, and indeed wars themselves, cull those "ranks" in order to neutralize certain class anxieties.

What we often see in art forms dealing with military subjects is the artist's participation in "fetishistic misrecognition." The example used earlier, Pynchon's deployment of the "drunken sailor" convention, participates—however ironically—in that fetishization. There are, of course, innumerable examples of straightforward articulations of officer fetishism, where the artist "writes" the symptom as if it were not the symptom, but rather—as an attempt to block interpretation—of "reality." What primarily prompts this study, though, is the appearance of the fetishized officer in the so-called anti-war fiction. One early example is Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, where the fetishization of the officer rank undermines the anti-war agenda.

In Chapter XXVII of *A Farewell to Arms*, the narrator, Henry, an American in the Italian officer corps, expresses a disillusionment with war:

> I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury. (184-85)

This oft-cited passage expresses what one might reasonably call an anti-war sentiment, but Hemingway problematizes that sentiment only a few pages later when Henry confronts the enlisted rank, described in Chapter XXVIII as "two sergeants of engineers" (195). After this curiously rank-specific introduction, Hemingway inserts several narrative clues to orient the reader against the two sergeants. The first is the sergeants' inability to recognize Henry as an American (presumably because Henry's Italian is so fluent)—an ignorance designed both to signify their stupidity and to reinforce Henry's superiority. Five pages later, Henry catches one of the sergeants stealing a clock from an abandoned farmhouse. On the next page, Henry says to one of the sergeants, "An army travels on its stomach" (201). But the sergeant does not recognize the famous quote (from Napoleon), further signifying his stupidity. By the time Henry concludes that the sergeants "hated the lot of us," Hemingway has apparently gathered enough textual evidence to justify killing them. But there is no evidence to suggest that the sergeants hated the ambulance crew; there is only evidence to suggest that Henry hated the sergeants. In Chapter XXIX, the two sergeants abandon Henry's ambulance stuck in the Italian mud, whereupon Henry takes out his revolver and shoots at them, killing one (204). The fraudulent *mitigations* inserted into the narrative notwithstanding, the killing of the sergeant is an act of murder, but an act that demands the collusion of the reader. Moreover, that murder seems to undercut the anti-war sentiment

articulated only a few pages earlier: to Henry, war may be a tragic waste, but some men really deserve killing.

Moreso than in the novel, the libidinal investments present in the film medium render it even more subject to fetishization. Though Mulvey's analysis in "Visual Pleasure" of the phenomenon of fetishization diagnoses a specific filmic problem—that women primarily function as objects of consumption in mainstream cinema—the larger issue at stake is the persistent disempowerment of women. Mulvey's thesis is particularly effective with respect to the fetishization of women's body parts: the woman's objectified position in the film reinforces and restates her marginalized political status. The mainstream film mechanism fetishizes the military officer in a similar way. The major difference between the fictional military officer and the objectified woman, however, is that the fetishization of the officer buttresses his *real* power.

Mainstream film is what Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino call "cinema of mystification," that is, it is a commodity that seeks to legitimate the status quo by a process of dazzling the spectator. Everything about mainstream film is fetishized: the costumes, the film stock, the sets, the sound, and—most importantly—the stable of overvalued actors who are coddled and nurtured by the various studios and worshipped by a culture mesmerized by physical beauty. A major factor in the success of its mystification is that mainstream film pretends to represent the underrepresented and to champion liberal causes. Baudrillard would say that those postures are merely simulations of liberalism. The

Hollywood movie is, rather, as Solanas and Gettino say, "one more *consumer good*" that "succeed[s] in bearing witness to the decay of bourgeois values and testif[ies] to social injustice" (44).

However, one arena where even the simulation of bourgeois values is jettisoned is mainstream war cinema, a medium that openly embraces a politics of aristocracy and legitimates the social injustice of a class society. In order for these propaganda films to "work," the ideological strategy must be in direct proportion to the representational strategy. The film mechanism tries to shore up any holes in the (primarily visual) program in order to eliminate any gaps between sign and signifier. The military officer must function as a watertight icon—to be a full representation of nationalism, he must be unalloyed, racially pure.

But propaganda can only function if it appears as not propaganda—no propaganda film can bear the burden of a cast filled with unalloyed icons. Fortunately for the symbiotic relationship of mainstream cinema and the state, the military provides a dichotomous rank system that provides a release valve for filmic anxiety. Thus the film can ostensibly temper its iconographic strategy by displaying a flawed population segment: in war film, the enlisted rank is decidedly *not* beautiful. The film delights in this representation; because of it, the film can appear realistic and non-propagandistic. The problem, however, is that the spectator (and of course the film director) does not identify with this "flawed" population segment. The end result is that war film participates in the

marginalization of the largest part of its own population, thereby becoming a *realpolitiker* in eugenics. War cinema, taking its cues from the military, treats the enlisted rank with an unconscionable contempt.

This section will examine two films, made over fifty years apart from each other, that fully exploit officer fetishism and enlisted rank marginalization: *In Which We Serve* (directed by Noel Coward and David Lean, 1942) and *Saving Private Ryan* (directed by Steven Spielberg, 1997). In these films, there is no effort made to challenge the legitimacy or efficacy of the dichotomous rank system. Both films, in fact, embrace that system and posit that virtue is *specifically* located within the officer rank, the military's simulation of aristocracy.

The primary value of the propaganda film is that, by examining it, we can clearly gauge how the state facilitates militarism. In the propagandistic text, no effort is made to conceal how it is in the service of the state. These narratives are joyous: they revel in the "naturalness" and desirability of hierarchical systems. Though there are always deaths in these narratives, those deaths do not temper the unfiltered joy of the narrator or the camera, both delighting in the perfect system of governance promised by military rank. In war, the best men rise to the top of the social chain, and the low elements of society are kept where they belong, immediately in front of the bullets. Any self-consciousness about class dissolves in the ideological space between reader/spectator and narrative, a space strategically invested with concealing the narrative's investment in class boundaries. A crucial strategy in the assertion of class in the war film is the

unironic engagement of the epic genre, whose key attractions are nostalgia and masculine prerogative. War demands a redistribution of the epic tropes.

In Which We Serve is a straightforward exemplum of the British World War II propaganda war movie. Like American war cinema of the same time period, there is no attempt in the film to disguise the fact that it is in the service of the state: it clearly seeks to mobilize public support for the war effort. A key difference is that whereas in American war cinema class anxieties often have to be either suppressed or encoded, the British—especially in war time—seem to embrace fully the notion that officers and men are people coming from two separate worlds, one worth saving, the other sacrificing (primarily for the benefit of the former).

The film is an account of a fictional ship, HMS *Torrin*, and the exploits of its crew during the early days of World War II. The film's hero is the ship's stalwart commanding officer, Captain Edward Kinross, played by Coward. *Hero*, however, is not quite an adequate term to describe him: the film overdrives its propagandistic strategy by hyperbolizing Kinross. He is the perfect officer, but the film can only signify that perfection via a process of juxtaposing him—like light against darkness—against his "inferiors," the enlisted rank. The film uses two key sequences to project his heroic superiority.

The first occurs when Captain Kinross (Coward) pays a visit to the home of Ordinary Seaman "Shorty" Blake (John Mills). Before departing for Seaman Blake's house, Captain Kinross is shown in his home, palatial and opulent.

Coward and co-director David Lean then juxtapose the officer home (complete with trophy wife Celia Johnson and other *objets d'art*) with the enlisted home, cheap and grubby (without paintings or sculptures, though tidy). Every element in the sequence—clothing, accent, posture, even manners (Captain Kinross's natural, Seaman Blake's affected)—projects and protects Kinross's superiority and bears witness to the huge socioeconomic gap between the urbane officer and the scroungy enlisted man. There seems to be no specter of economic self-consciousness in the scene: the semi-literate seaman with his humble house and homely wife is in the "proper" condition of the enlisted man, and he is content in that environment. This socioeconomic juxtaposition would seem parodic in anything other than a war film, towards which the otherwise self-conscious spectator suspends his sensibility.

The second sequence involves military, rather than social, *noblesse oblige*. Late in the film, as the ship is under attack, a seaman, played by David Attenborough (in his first film role), abandons his post, an act of cowardice that under British military law is punishable by death. Kinross, however, spares the young seaman's life. Though the film desires this sequence to underline Kinross's superior heroic qualities, it also transmits a subtle message to a war-torn nation: enlisted lives are better sacrificed at the hands of the enemy.

An interesting feature of Captain Kinross is that he seems to be designed to function as a filmic teacher of the "actual" officer rank of the British military. Few, if any, actual military officers would act in the way Kinross does in the film.

Almost no officer—regardless of rank—would stoop to visit the home of an enlisted person (a fact just as true today as it was 60 years ago). Furthermore, no ship's captain would tolerate an enlisted sailor's—especially a low ranking seaman's—abandoning his post. There are far too many libidinal and masculinity issues invested in the *actual* officer rank to permit those social and combat fissures. These sequences in the film are extraordinary, as if Coward wishes to project his own fantasy of liberalism onto the military, an impossible task, it would seem, within either the genre of epic or the war film. But it should be noted that these bizarre expressions of pseudo-liberalism, however ingenuous they may be designed to be, still have as their primary purpose the reinforcement of the hierarchical mechanism in the military. They moreover reveal the intellectual/psychological contract between the filmmaker and the *object*: dazzled by the overdriven signifiers of the officer rank—the aura, the power, the beauty—, the filmmaker seems powerless to resist. It is a relationship that profits both parties.

But that powerlessness does not extend to the filmmaker's relationship to the enlisted rank, for which there is no aura. No fetish. Devoid of those libidinal investments, the enlisted rank can function as the compartment for the film's war anxiety. Of the two ranks, the enlisted rank has no monopoly on cowardice, sloth, drunkenness, bloodlust, and stupidity; but the enlisted rank nevertheless bears those burdens in the film medium. This phenomenon benefits the officer rank in two ways: it extends the power and myth of the officer cult (and by

extension militarism, inasmuch as militarism profits from the mystification attached to officers), and it provides a medium through which the film can articulate its fraudulent "anti-war" sentiment (a development I will examine in Chapter IV). David Attenborough's unnamed seaman provides a model for those benefits: the spectator can hate him because of his cowardice, and this indignation can be carefully modulated by the film, especially insofar as the spectator in the film (as in most war film) does not get to see the *real* enemy. One must hate something in a war movie.

Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* is perhaps the *sine qua non* of ersatz anti-war film. It is, to a surprising degree, quite similar to *In Which We Serve*, both thematically and ideologically. The political project of both films is to legitimate the fantasies of nationalism and exceptionalism, two of the most prominent features in the proliferation of militarism.

Saving Private Ryan's anti-war project leans on one overweening strategy: pushing the envelope of cinematic violence. But this violence is merely a disingenuous strategy of concealment: the film is little more than a nostalgic object that restates the themes ever-present in World War II propaganda film. Spielberg and cinematographer Janusz Kaminski shot the film using desaturated film stock to give the film a grainy texture, a strategy designed to make the film seem old. But not just any type of old: Spielberg engineers the film to look precisely like a World War II-era combat movie. This strategy, ostensibly designed to give the film a *cinema verité* legitimacy, serves rather to underline the

film's artificiality and also its position as a nostalgic object, to reinforce its larger project of articulating and extending the myth of American exceptionalism. The film asserts this agenda microcosmically in the character of Captain John Miller (played by Tom Hanks), who serves as a reinscription of the stalwart World War II film officer: implacable, unflappable, and utterly watertight (and most certainly white). This unalloyed figure is a palimpsest of the World War II-era propagandistic officer, moreover a reassertion of the epic hero, of whom Bakhtin says, "There is not the slightest gap between his authentic essence and its external manifestation" ("Epic and Novel" 34).

The key difference between the two films is that one is about the present, the other the past. But which one is which? By utilizing a certain iconography of the military officer, Coward projects a "pastness" to his film. And Spielberg, aware of his own preeminence in the history of mainstream cinema, invokes America's shining moment in order to assert his own vision of political stabilization. Both films, for entirely differing political reasons, seek to epicize the film "text."

Epic as a genre, says Bakhtin in his famous essay "Epic and Novel," has three distinct features:

> (1) a national epic past [. . .] serves as the subject of the epic; (2) national tradition (not personal experience and the free thought that grows out of it) serves as the source for the epic; (3) an absolute epic distance separates the epic world from contemporary reality,

> that is, from the time in which the singer (the author and his audience) lives. (13)

An important consideration with respect to "Epic and Novel" is that Bakhtin's project is to trace how the novel seeks to escape from the prescriptions of the epic. But both Coward and Spielberg—and, it would seem, the overwhelming majority of artists working in the *genre* of war narrative—desire those prescriptions, because, as their works attest, those prescriptions promise stability in a destabilized world. For both Coward and Spielberg, invoking their nations' great pasts is a means by which they reinforce their fantasies of national/natural primacy. The films become ideological fortresses where destabilization threats—figurative and literal, allegorical and political—are kept out. War re-presents and re-states "the national heroic past [. . .], a world of fathers and founders of families, a world of 'firsts' and 'bests'" ("Epic and Novel" 13). For Spielberg especially, World War II is a sacrosanct text, an epic where "the tradition of the past is sacred" ("Epic and Novel" 15).

Filmed in the late 1990s, *Saving Private Ryan* is a profoundly reactionary film that invokes America's epic past and, from a technical perspective, the epic genre in order to de-problematize the past. That particular past—unlike American specters like slavery, the extermination of Native Americans, and the brutal exploitation of labor—stands for Spielberg impervious to analysis. That epic past is "in the zone [. . .] beyond the sphere of possible contact with the developing, incomplete and therefore re-thinking and re-evaluating present"

("Epic and Novel" 17). Spielberg's full deployment of film technology serves to reinforce the untouchability of the epic past, to seal it against the threats of re-evaluation.

The plot of the film is an adjustment of the biography of, and more specifically the biographical film, *The Sullivans* (1944), where five brothers all perished aboard a U.S. Navy warship in World War II. *Saving Private Ryan* seeks to redress the Sullivans tragedy—and correct that problematic history—by sparing the life of the last son, Private Ryan, whose brothers have died in combat. Spielberg frontloads that adjustment or correction at the beginning of the film where we see the elderly Ryan weeping at the gravesite of the officer who saved him. Having thereby pre-articulated the successful project of the film, Spielberg transitions directly to a flashback of that mission, beginning of course with the famous Omaha Beach sequence. The spectator then witnesses scenes of almost indescribable horror, but the horror is only a straw man that Spielberg has already knocked down, the spectator's anxieties having been conveniently removed beforehand.

The most disingenuous aspect of *Saving Private Ryan* is the fact that James Ryan is a private, the lowest enlisted rank, and the film leads one to believe that a key feature of America's exceptionalism is that we care so much for our lower-class that we will spare no effort or expense to save it. This feature may in fact be true, but not in the way one might think: the fact of America's dichotomous

military rank system speaks more for our desire for class separation than for the survival of any one member of that class.

Spielberg writes the full program of epicization into the character of Captain John Miller, whose moral superiority the film presents by contrasting him against the enlisted soldiers under his command, a strategy identical to *In Which We Serve*. The enlisted soldiers' function in *Saving Private Ryan*, as it is in most war film, is to follow orders—to kill and be killed. Spielberg complicates this arrangement by allowing two enlisted soldiers to articulate their dissatisfaction with the mission—but the film makes it clear that that dissension is a threat that must be neutralized. Like all skilled mainstream film directors, Spielberg is a master at recruiting the spectator into a collusion with his project: in this particular case, collusion with the neutralization of that threat. What the enlisted soldiers understand—specifically the characters Private Richard Reiben (Edward Burns) and Private Stanley Mellish (Adam Goldberg)—is that the unit's mission is insane: sacrificing the many for the benefit of the few. After the death of the unit's medic, the third of the unit's casualties during their mission, the disgusted Private Reiben threatens to abandon the unit. The question of the sensibility of this abandonment is moot. The film has already worked its magic on the spectator—it has rendered the spectator incredulous. Spielberg, so expert in utilizing pathos to direct the spectator's sensibilities, now only has to convert the skeptical Reiben. We spectators know that such a mutiny threatens the trust that the film has invested in the character of Captain Miller.

Miller, like many cinematic heroes, is what Christian Metz calls a "diegetic illusion," a willful distortion that the spectator nevertheless *pretends* to believe in: "it is of vital importance for the correct unfolding of the spectacle that this make-believe be scrupulously respected" (72). The film, as a result, will simply not allow that trust to be violated: Miller's greatness, like Odysseus's or Aeneas's, is too powerful, too dazzling for those under his command to really resist, certainly too dazzling for the spectator to resist. The film then projects this greatness in an absurdly artificial and cloying fashion: Miller—whose past has been to that point in the film a carefully guarded secret—*tells* his past (that he was a schoolteacher in Pennsylvania before the war) so that Reiben will return. Having learned this truth, that the captain's greatness is *mystical* rather than literal, reorients Reiben, and he returns to the unit contrite. It seems to matter very little in this crucial sequence that Reiben's conversion/reorientation is fraudulent; rather, the germane issue is that he come to the condition that the spectator is *already in*.

For Spielberg, the late 1990s was a time apparently far enough from Vietnam to bring back the stalwart officer-hero. *Saving Private Ryan* simply could not exist in the jungles of Vietnam, a locus where the officers were apparently not quite noble enough, their enlisted inferiors not quite comfortable enough in their subordination. Compare Captain Miller with the incompetent Lieutenant Wolfe in Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (filmed a decade prior to *Saving Private Ryan*), so obviously a figure of ridicule, wearing his "Wisconsin Wrestling" sweatshirt while "hanging out" with the enlisted soldiers.

Saving Private Ryan, because of its divorce from the complications of Vietnam and its unironic engagement with the World War II propaganda film, ushered in a new era of American war cinema. In its wake, filmmakers now exploit nostalgia to its fullest extent. In films such as *Pearl Harbor*, *We Were Soldiers*, *Hart's War*, and *Tears of the Sun*, nostalgia becomes a sort of currency by which the filmmaker can negotiate a settlement between materiality and ideology, now even possible within the context of Vietnam film: via nostalgia, insofar as it articulates and simultaneously disavows its subject matter, there is no real price to be paid for the insanity and horror of war.

One would reasonably expect "anti-war" cinema to be against war, but *Saving Private Ryan* and its offspring are not against war; they are, in fact, very pro-war—provided, of course, that Americans are waging it. For it is within war fictions than Americans can entertain the fantasy of their own exceptionalism: they alone are immune to history.

Notes

[1] Though it is perhaps not germane to my argument, I should nonetheless note a mimicry phenomenon associated with the Navy Chief. The Navy Chief is an American military version of Homi Bhabha's "Mimic Man." Mimicry, for Bhabha, is both a simulation and non-simulation of power: "the sign of a double articulation[:] a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (86). The mimicry associated with the Navy Chief, a senior enlisted rank (E-7), is that he gets to wear a simulated officer uniform. This is not to say, however, that the Navy Chief enjoys the same social rank as officers—he is still barred from officers' clubs, wardrooms, officers' housing, and even the Naval Postgraduate School. He has no more authority than his sergeant counterparts in the Army and Air Force (and certainly just as little advocacy in Washington: an O-7 earns three times more than an E-7 [http://www.dfas.mil/money/milpay/pay/01-2002.pdf]), but his uniform bolsters the power of the officer rank by a process of "appropriating" a segment of the enlisted rank—thus extending its power into spaces otherwise out of its purview. Though Bhabha asserts that the "partial presence" of the Mimic Man disrupts hegemonic authority, no such disruption has yet to appear—after 100 years—in Navy circles.

[2] Note the contrast between the proto-enlisted "young men"—who

> filled the mixing bowl with pure wine
> And passed it to all, pouring first a libation in goblets.
> Then when they had poured out wine, and drunk as much as their hearts wished,
> They set out from the shelter of Atreus' son, Agamemnon. (9.175-78)

—and the more "officerly" Hector, who tells his mother, "lift not to me the kindly sweet wine,/ For fear you stagger my strength and make me forget my courage" (6.264-65).

[3] http://www.cdi.org/issues/wme.

[4] The American is conditioned to believe that the officer uniform is a signifier of virtue, intelligence, and wisdom. The second Iraq war has, however, seen an evolution in that conditioning. In the constant barrage of television news coverage of the war, a steady stream of military officers (most of them retired) was paraded into television studios to provide expert analysis. Almost none of them wore their military uniforms because their military rank, suffixed to their names at the bottom of the TV screen, surrogated the uniform. Thus the officers' merits were *pre-connoted*, those officers' astounding ignorance of Iraqi geography and language notwithstanding.

[6] Wolfgang Peterson uses a similar device at the beginning of his 1982 film, *Das Boot*, where two officers run a gauntlet of urinating sailors.

[6] This "relative" tragedy can be seen in two movies filmed 60 years apart. In the 1943 film *Action in the North Atlantic*, the stalwart commanding officer of a merchant ship, Lieutenant Joe Rossi (played by Humphrey Bogart), administers the eulogy for a group of sailors who died in a Nazi submarine attack. As he stands over the bodies of the subaltern sailors, he says their names—but only their last names. The last body, however, is that of an officer, so Rossi says his entire name, "Cadet Robert Parker." This scene is repeated in the 2003 film *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, where Captain Jack Aubrey (played by Russell Crowe), the stalwart commanding officer of a nineteenth century British warship, administers the eulogy for a group of sailors who died in a skirmish with a French ship. As in *Action in the North Atlantic*, the captain mentions only the last names of the fallen subalterns, but he pauses and, stifling sobs, mentions the full name of the young officer, "Midshipman Peter Calamy."
[7] E.g., "It has been the unwillingness, or inability, of the Clinton administration to create an elite consensus that leaves their policy 'hostage' to the public's recoiling from the loss of American soldiers' lives" (24). This passage brings to mind Alfred Vagts' complaint that "Although military men are often disgusted with the necessity that compels them to argue their case with anybody [. . .] they recognize the necessity and accept it, especially when they are on the defensive" (94).

[8] Not to mention a *petitio principii* logical fallacy: officers are gentlemen, and because of that fact have the "qualities requisite for military leadership."

[9] Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1996) 1.

[10] Herman and Chomsky note, "The citizenry pays to be propagandized in the interests of powerful groups such as military contractors and other sponsors of state terrorism" (22).

[11] E.g., Laura Mulvey, William Pietz, Jean Baudrillard, Teresa de Lauretis, Jacques Derrida, Frederic Jameson, Kaja Silverman, and Henry Krips.

[11] The Nike Air Jordan basketball shoe provides an object lesson for the voracious appetites of capital. In the mid-1980s, the Nike machinery hired independent filmmaker Spike Lee (fresh off the underground success of *She's Gotta Have It*, which he had to self-finance) to film a series of black and white television commercials to pitch the Air Jordan. Spike Lee was a clever choice: in *She's Gotta*

Have It, the character Mars Blackman (played by Lee) wears a pair of Air Jordans while having sex with the lead character, Lola. The ads (starring Lee as Mars Blackman and Jordan as himself) were extremely successful, propelling shoe, athlete, and filmmaker to international stardom. In the three decades since those ads, the Air Jordan has become—other than the automobile—perhaps the most fetishized male-associated object in American culture; Michael Jordan has become the most fetishized *objects* in history (thus challenging Laura Mulvey's famous assertion that the male body cannot bear the burden of the fetishized gaze); and Spike Lee has become a film director dutifully following the path of absorption so graphically mapped out in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as his overtly political films disappear in the spectacle of Lee's own public life as a famous basketball fan and peddler of Pizza Hut pizza.

[12] Within Freud's essay there appears a strange example of *mise en abyme*. In the fourth paragraph, he says, "If I am not mistaken, Laforgue would say in this case that the boy 'scotomizes' his perception of the woman's lack of a penis," but then retracts that assertion in a footnote. Several sentences later, realizing that he has "misrecognized" Laforgue's definition of "scotomization," he says, "'Scotomization' seems to me particularly unsuitable" (153). This misrecognition/disavowal scenario would have been avoided if Freud had simply erased the Laforgue sentence. Amazingly, he *repeats* the "scotomization" mis-definition in a diagnosis of two boys who had repressed the memories of their father's death: "In the analysis of two young men I learned that each [. . .] had failed to take cognizance of the death of his beloved father—had 'scotomized' it." Then, in the next paragraph, he says, "It turned out that the two young men had no more 'scotomized' their father's death than a fetishist does the castration of women" (155-56).

[13] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, I," *Res* 9 (1985): 5-17; "The Problem of the Fetish, II," *Res* 13 (1987): 23-45; "The Problem of the Fetish IIIa," *Res* 16 (1988): 105-123. A shorter version appears as "Fetishism and Materialism" in *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse,* Eds., Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993): 119-151.

[14] Andre Donelha, qtd. in Pietz, "Fetish, II" 38.

[15] Oliveira Marques, qtd. in Pietz, "Fetish, II," 35.

[17] *Pearl Harbor* was filmed prior to the September 11th tragedy, but its extraordinary popularity is, I believe, directly linked to its temporal proximity to 9/11.

[18] She plays the wife of Lieutenant Bud Roberts, a character whose demasculinization is symbolized by his amputated leg.

[16] On U.S. Navy submarines, where space is allegedly limited, officers have their own separate dining facility, the wardroom. At mealtimes, the officers are attended by the cooks (called Mess Specialists, mostly African Americans) who are forced to wear simulated waiter uniforms. I witnessed these phenomena myself aboard three American submarines: *Albuquerque* (SSN 706), *Scranton* (SSN 756), and *Springfield* (SSN 761).

CHAPTER III

THE OFFICER AND THE POLICE

The capitalist state cannot be anything other than an instrument of class domination because it is organized to sustain the basic relation between capital and labor.
—David Harvey

The soldier becomes an individual only in moments of danger, or when he attains high rank; the rest of the time he is subordinate, and stereotyped.
—Alfred Vagts

When the rabbit is caught, the hunter kills, boils, and eats his hunting dog.
—Korean proverb

The primary attractions of war narrative are violence and class management. Violence is the medium through which order is restored, an insidious fantasy that is one of the crucial constructions of American masculinity, but also one of the primary means by which the military and "the security elite"[1] exercise their ideological power: any uneasiness about the graphic depiction of death and suffering dissolving in the assurance that what the soldiers are doing is the right thing. Equally as important is the notion that, in the military, people know their place. These attractions are key elements in the proliferation of militarism: in the armed forces there is a rigid rank structure, a system that is extraordinarily attractive to a society which, as Keith Nelson and Spencer Olin note in their book *Why War?*, "believe[s] in the desirability of hierarchy and differentiated status" (11).

I derive the title of this chapter from D.A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police* (1988), a work that examines the regulatory function of narrative, or more precisely, of narrative that does not necessarily present itself as regulatory.[2] Miller notes that although "the novel is felt to celebrate and encourage misconduct" (3), often it instead performs a policing function that is a more effective regulator than the actual *police*. In many novels, "no other role for the police is possible than that of a patrol which ineptly stands guard over a border fated to be transgressed" (2). In the absence of a competent police, then, the novel steps in to preserve order, with its implication of laissez faire politics: an "always already" ordered society, surrogated by the novel, is obsessed enough with surveillance and discipline to work well enough without a meddlesome police force.

While Miller does some impressive "detective work" to reveal the covert regulation performed by the narratives he examines, most war narratives make no effort to conceal their agenda of censure and discipline. They in fact revel in that agenda insofar as it promises order in a world turned upside down. One of the disturbing phenomena of American war narrative—particularly war narrative in the post World War II era—is the persistence of the mystical aura surrounding military affairs. The military officer stands as one of the last bastions of signified virtue in a culture obsessed with the notion that its moral foundations are crumbling. Unlike nostalgic objects such as the western hero or the knight in shining armor, the military officer is *really there*; thus his "power of

fascination" within narrative is bolstered by his material presence in American culture. But as Slavoj Žižek says, "the power of fascination exerted by a sublime image always announces a lethal dimension" (*Looking Awry* 84). Nowhere is that lethal dimension more *present* than in the military.

The military officer as trope within the context of post-World War II American narrative is one of the most convenient semiological devices for representing virtue. Not coincidentally, the currency of the trope works in the service of an insidious class system—the class system that is not there. The officer can function as a symbol of virtue, but that symbolism can be disavowed because the narrative officer is after all not a *figure*, but an entity having an analog in the *real* world. This sort of narrative disavowal symptomatizes the fetishization practice in narrative. Mulvey says that fetishization "epitomizes the human ability to project value onto a material object, *repress the fact that the projection has taken place*, and then interpret the object as the autonomous source of that value" ("The Carapace That Failed" 49). The incessant barrage of narratives bearing witness to the virtues of the officer rank performs two major functions: it legitimates the socioeconomic prerogative of the leisure classes (for which the officer stands as a sort of objective correlative) and it re-presents a material desire within culture, that is, of the naturalness and stability of hierarchical systems—all the while occurring under the pretense that it is not occurring.

The primary regulation that occurs in many military narratives is an articulation of class desire: keeping the ranks separated. Military fictions—and to be precise, the military way—jibe perfectly with any regulatory powers narrative may possess. To both artists and audiences, the military provides a model for order, not only because of its built-in powers of fascination and mystification, but also because of its *literal* organization. The military rank system seeks to improve on the Great Chain of Being, which is flawed because it is only a single chain. It ultimately excludes no one. The military system is a double chain, the first for its elites, the officers; the second for its preterite, the enlisted rank. This is a very attractive arrangement in a post-industrial economy where the threat of vertical movement creates a significant amount of anxiety to entrenched systems of power. In the military system, the enlisted rank is explicitly excluded from the important chain, thereby presenting no threat to the military's elitist *praxis*, an aristocracy simulation that is, in the words of Ejub Kučuk, an "obedient instrument for protecting the general conditions of the class system suited to the ruling class" (149). That separation of ranks functions as a very effective policeman, keeping as it does the proper pigs in their proper pens.

Military organizations in the United States operate their class system as a sort of open secret. It operates in the full view of the society it purports to serve. However incredible it may seem that the military rank division is predicated on and fueled by exclusion (all American military facilities—even submarines—have segregated quarters and dining facilities), that division nevertheless

persists, largely unchallenged. This feature of exclusion, as it turns out, is for many a compelling *attraction*, the military offering a haven for many antiquated practices ("The Middle Ages," says Anatole France in *Le Lys Rouge*, "are nowhere ended except in the history handbooks"). And, of course, it is more than just people in the military who are bedazzled by this rank fetishization; many in the civilian sector are fascinated by the glamour and prestige of the officer rank and attach a romanticism to America's version of "knights and saints." This fascination would seem merely curious or quaint if it did not have such a lethal dimension.

The litmus test for this sort of attraction is to be found in *non*-military narratives. Two examples come to mind, one from film and one from literature. In the 2001 film *The Royal Tannenbaums* (dir. Wes Anderson), a film whose dramatic action takes place in a New York winter, Henry Sherman (played by Danny Glover), the African-American boyfriend of Etheline Tenenbaum, a white middle class divorcee (Angelica Houston), must prove his worthiness to Houston's ex-husband, Royal Tenenbaum (Gene Hackman), and thus by extension to the spectator, whose loyalties have been carefully steered by the film toward Royal, who is a cad. Late in the film, Henry introduces his son to Royal. The son is an officer, a Navy pilot wearing his dress white uniform. Royal is genuinely impressed with both the officer and the deeper implication that Glover must have been a terrific father to have raised such an overachieving son. The spectator is enlisted into this incredulity primarily via the visual spectacle of the

officer uniform, so clearly presented to signify "good." The film here "deploys" the officer uniform to neutralize all kinds of anxieties, perhaps the most immediate of which is the mixed-race relationship between Etheline and Henry. Surely there had to have been a consultant on the film set to point out the complication that Navy personnel do not wear white uniforms in the winter, but the filmmakers' exploitation of this overweening symbol in the film overrules that complication. And more so than the symbol, the film exploits the predisposition of the spectator, who is not likely to interrogate that symbolic impact in the film.

The second example comes from Sloan Wilson's 1955 novel, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*. The story involves a Harvard-educated combat veteran, Tom Rath, who struggles to make ends meet in post-World War II corporate America. A subplot in the novel juxtaposes Rath, who was a captain in the Army paratroopers during the war, with one of his combat subordinates, "Caesar" Gardella, a conventional army private, complete with overexposed stupidity and ethnicity (two of the standard tropes in the representation of the enlisted rank). That juxtaposition occurs, however, not on the battlefield, but in the corporate world, six years after the end of World War II. Both characters find themselves facing financial difficulties in post-war New York, an accurate microcosm of America inasmuch as it faithfully records the huge gap between the haves, the have-nots, and that in-the-margins population segment (represented by Rath) that imagined itself economic outsiders.

Wanting more money, Rath "risks everything" by quitting his $7,000-a-year job at a charitable foundation to work as a PR man for a multinational media conglomerate, The United Broadcasting Corporation. It is within this context of the UBC where Rath's *relative* have-not status comes into focus because there he finds Gardella, working as one of the elevator operators, certainly earning far less than even Rath's previous salary (interestingly, the omniscient narrator—who faithfully records the salaries of Rath and his boss Ralph Hopkins—does not mention Gardella's salary). The novel implies that both Rath and Gardella live outside the comfort zone of American corporate wealth, but the novel isn't concerned with Gardella's socioeconomic position, only Rath's. The narrative strategy in the novel is to align Rath's socioeconomic position with his ethical condition: Rath is honest, forthright, and hard-working, but not so hard-working that he neglects his family (as does the miserable workaholic Hopkins, the president of the UBC, who earns over 20 times what Rath does). Thus the reader perceives that Rath's material reward in the narrative—a Connecticut mansion inherited from his blue-blood grandmother—is a reward proportionate to his character. Gardella, who is no less *virtuous* than Rath in the narrative (and probably even more so: it is he, after all, who informs Rath of the child he fathered in Italy during the war, the mother of whom *Gardella* has even been sending money to ever since), also receives a material reward, but it is on a different scale than Rath's: management—but certainly not ownership—of an apartment building.

Here we see how officer fetishism is translated outside of the war narrative: both Rath's and Gardella's socioeconomic conditions outside the context of war mirror those conditions inside the context of war. To the reader, this relationship seems natural insofar as it invokes a meritocratic a priori regarding "officers and men."

The point of these two examples is that military rank has currency in the American political consciousness, and that currency has no less relevance outside the context of war narrative than inside. The virtuous officer as a trope may in fact have more currency *outside* of war narrative because non-war narrative doesn't suffer from the same generic problems as war narrative—war narrative is an unstable economy, a "festival of affects" where the stalwart officer's cathexis is often threatened. While *The Royal Tannenbaums* and *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* are a far cry from the over-the-top officer fetishism present in World War II propaganda film or in popular novels such as the *Master and Commander* series by Patrick O'Brian or *The Hunt for Red October* by Tom Clancy, they nevertheless participate in the class *desire* presented by the officer rank.

Thus many military narratives fantasize that they operate within a protected ideological zone where elitism and class prerogative reign unfettered. However tempting it may be to assume that those phenomena are inconvenient side effects of narratives that have other fish to fry, we should nonetheless note that those phenomena "work" as a component of the superstructure of capitalism—class desire symptomatizes in the cultural praxis of war narrative.

The larger problem of military organizations' increasing dominance in American political culture does not occur in a vacuum. Patrick Regan says,

> A unique aspect of the militarization process is that when a society becomes highly militarized, it may no longer require a specific set of domestic institutions that manipulates perceptions in order to sustain public support for the policies of the security elite [. . .] The larger society may itself become the engine driving the continued militarization of its political, social, and economic fabric. (82)

Though Regan implies that, after a certain point, it is militarization itself that fuels militarization, there are, to be sure, agents at play in that intrigue. Though we may rightly look to the usual suspects contributing to that process—military and paramilitary journals, GI Joe and George W. Bush dolls, the persistent production of flag-waving mainstream movies, combat video games, the plague of right-wing radio and television commentators—we should not overlook how militarism rises as a symptom in ostensibly non-militaristic narratives. *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and *The Royal Tannenbaums*, for example, are not "militaristic narratives," but their investment in the cathexis of the military officer symptomatize a dangerous fetishism.

But it seems odd that an American culture so sensitive to outward displays of wealth and power would be so accommodating to a military *praxis* that is so overarching in its elitism and anti-democratic spirit. The Officer/Enlisted distinction is strictly policed within military circles: according to

Article 134, paragraph 60 of the United States Uniform Code of Military Justice, fraternization between officer and enlisted ranks is strictly forbidden. The policing does not end there: many films and novels collude with the military practice of keeping the ranks separated. The presence of the enlisted man within officer circles creates anxiety similar to the subaltern's presence within imperialist circles (*subaltern*, after all, is a military term meaning "of inferior rank"). In many cases, the narrative reinforces the strict code of the UCMJ by repositioning the enlisted man back to his "proper" circle.

Perhaps the overriding fantasy of war narrative is that, on the battlefield, man finds himself in his natural condition. But on this so-called even playing field, not all men are created equal. Some men are created more equal than others. So the war narrative fantasizes, and so the war narrative functions: both as an ostensible gauge of the differences amongst men, and as an empowerment of that differentiation. The officer/enlisted distinction is an overweening articulation of both class and patriarchy: soldiers and sailors have strictly defined roles in fictions that reify their material condition in a culture desiring the military to function as both locus of virtue *and* efficient killing machine. The private or sergeant is, after all, free to be a bloodthirsty killer during the day and a drunken whoremonger at night. The model for this figure is Sergeant Stryker from the film *The Sands of Iwo Jima*[3], a character whose over-the-top neurosis, instability, and violence are projected in the film as virtues, provided of course that those traits are fenced within the enlisted caste. But those *virtues* bear

witness to the unstable economy of war: a subtext of the Sergeant Stryker model is that his "place" is in the army, which can best utilize his pathological behaviors.

The officer, on the other hand, cannot be associated with those traits. The term that the officer caste has engineered to dissociate itself from those violent pathologies is "leadership," the efficacy of which is directly related to its nebulousness. Thus the captain can "lead" his men to victory on the battlefield, thereby rhetorically distancing himself from the fact of warfare, killing.

"Sadism demands a story," Mulvey famously says in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (14). War is the ultimate expression of sadism, but so much killing produces a degree of anxiety that culture has difficulty coming to terms with[4], thus prompting the "story." One of those terms is the rank distinction: can a real man be both killer and gentleman? Yes, but only if he is fetishized. War as it is presented in narrative form is an unstable economy, but often that instability functions as merely the vehicle—the straw man—by which the artist negotiates epistemological closure. More so than physical boundaries, what is under threat in war narratives is "real" masculinity. Fetishization addresses the threat by legitimating (and making appear natural) affected masculine behaviors such as homocentrism, homosocialism, homophobia, and homoeroticism (with those behaviors' associated misogyny, a phenomenon brilliantly analyzed in Sedgwick's *Between Men*), behaviors given a sort of diplomatic immunity in the free fire zone of war narrative.

What should be clear from an examination of Marx and Freud is that fetishization is deployed to protect certain interests. In the case of military fictions, the fetish appears, not as a prophylactic against threats to the state, but rather against threats to hegemony—specifically against threats to capital and patriarchy. With respect to Freudianism, the fetish serves the interests of patriarchy specifically. The fetishist, after all, can have it both ways: he gets to have the substitution (the woman's foot, for example, surrogating the missing phallus) and the thing it is substituted for.[5] The officer as he is conventionally presented in narrative functions as that substitution. Such *praxis*, on both small and large scales, reinforces the primacy of the male.

Correlative to the narrative strategy for buttressing the officer class via fetishization is the presentation of the enlisted rank in strictly enforced conventions. A sort of anti-fetishization. This *negative* strategy is most clearly *seen* in the mainstream World War II film, where the enlisted rank occupies a completely different space—physically and ideologically—than the officer. The film, having initiated the visual presentation (the private is, after all, *uglier* than the officer) compounds the private's *not-to-be-looked-at-ness* with enlisted-rank conventions: ethnicity (the exaggerated Bronx or Texas accent, or, for example Corporal Klinger's Lebanese accent and Semitic nose in the long-running television program *M*A*S*H*), poor grammar (exploited to a cloying degree in the novels *From Here to Eternity* and *The Naked and the Dead*), and drunkenness (true for almost all war narratives—it is their unifying convention). It makes no

difference whether those characteristics have *real* analogs in the *real* military—*cinema verité* is not the point: the point is to position the enlisted rank in the space marked for death, and furthermore to coerce the spectator into a collusion with that positioning.

Many war novels are equally adept at this coercion/collusion project. But rather than leaning so heavily on the visual ugliness of the enlisted rank, the novel deploys certain linguistic signifiers to extort a collusion from the reader.[6] There is a sharp contrast between the language of the officer class and that of the enlisted class, a contrast especially attractive for the novelist who wishes to present a "gritty" and "realistic" story. James Jones' novel, *From Here to Eternity* (1951), provides a model for this program. For example, when the novel's hero, Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt, is introduced to the platoon corporal, "Ike" Galovitch, Jones overdrives the sequence with dialectal signifiers to trigger an alliance between the novel and the reader:

> The apparition stopped before them, at the foot of Prewitt's bed. Old Ike stood looking at them, the red eyes set in a well of wrinkles, and worked his loose-hung lips in and out ruminatingly, like a toothless man.
>
> "Prewitt?" Galovitch said.
>
> "Thats me."
>
> "Sargint Galovitch, platoon guide am I of dis platoon," he said, proudly. "When assigned to dis platoon you are, you become

> under me. Consequential one a my men. Am coming to give for you the lowdown setup."[7]

The comedy of this sequence rests on the collusion between the novelist and the reader, both understanding the incongruous power dynamics at play: Prewitt, a "smart" private, is subordinate to an idiot[8], a power incongruency that parallels the power play between the enlisted and officer rank (examined below). What we should understand here is that the currency of this sort of linguistic or dialectal representation in the text relates directly to the reader's sensitivity to military rank. It is only within the context of the enlisted rank that this sort of sequence can *work*. Bakhtin asserts in "Discourse in the Novel" that "the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of a novel is the system of its 'languages'" (262); but one should not infer from this sort of combination that *From Here to Eternity* is *dialogic*. Jones' highlighting of dialectal incongruity does not challenge differentiated status; it seeks rather to underline and legitimate it for the purpose of establishing the relative superiority of one character over another, thereby exposing the novel as monologic rather than dialogic. Bakhtin says, "[E]very struggle of two voices for possession of and dominance in the world in which they appear is decided in advance—it is a sham struggle" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 168).

What this sort of monologism reveals is the American war narrative's anxiety about class difference. That anxiety is not about the fact of rank separation, but rather about the danger when the lower rank encroaches on the

upper—a struggle decided in advance. A persistent convention in military narrative that exposes class anxiety is the wheeling-dealing enlisted man who exploits his "position" (i.e., outside the jurisdiction of regular law) to conduct illegal activities under the nose of an incompetent commanding officer. The model for this character is Sergeant Bilko, a regular feature in the 1950s *Phil Silvers Show*[9]. Other versions of this character appear as Sergeant O'Hayer in *From Here to Eternity*, Seaman Bodine (who appears in Pynchon's *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*), Ex.-PFC Wintergreen in Heller's *Catch-22*, John Winger in *Stripes* (1981, dir. Ivan Reitman), Otto Sharkey in the 1970s sitcom *CPO Sharkey*, and Specialist Ray Ellwood in *Buffalo Soldiers* (2001, dir. Gregor Jordan). Cynicism is the energy that drives the representational strategy of this convention, which appears as a symptom of class dysphoria.

Sergeant Bilko is the realized threat when the lower class doesn't know its place. He is what happens when officers are not vigilant *enough* in their management of military affairs. But we mustn't infer from the persistence or the relative novelty of this convention that the "uppity" private or seaman fantasizes itself as a statement of democratic values, nor even that narrative condemns their transgressive behavior. The narrative regulation effected by this convention is not of the enlisted rank *per se*, but rather of the class system that it surrogates. Unlike the incompetent policemen in the Victorian novels Miller analyzes—who are there to be brushed aside by the more competent text—Sergeant Bilko is decidedly *not* neutralized. But it is not freedom he exercises but rather a

submission to an insidious prescription—transgressive behavior, after all, being reserved for the enlisted rank, as *proof* for the necessity of keeping them separated from the officer rank.

A model for this transgression/reward dynamic is the Jim Trueblood sequence in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, where an impoverished black southerner impregnates his teenage daughter. Condemned and spurned by his neighbors, he seeks help from the local whites, who are mysteriously accommodating and generous to him:

> Things got to happenin' right off. The nigguhs up at school came down to chase me off and that made me mad. I went to see the white folks and they gave me help. That's what I don't understand. I done the worst thing a man could ever do in his family and instead of chasing me out of the county, they gimme more help than they ever give any other colored man, no matter how good a nigguh he was. (64-65)

What we see as a result this sort of transgressive behavior is that people are willing to pay good money to see their deepest prejudices confirmed. Thus transgression is a reward, somewhat akin to a doublewide mobile home, for the lower ranks[10].

This is not to say, however, that the enlisted rank does not have certain appeals. Narratives such as *The Sands of Iwo Jima* and *From Here to Eternity* are attracted to certain conventional features of the enlisted rank, primarily violent

behavior and an overdriven sexual virility. Though John Wayne played far more officers than enlisted men in his Hollywood career, his most famous non-cowboy role was Sergeant John Stryker in the 1949 film, *The Sands of Iwo Jima*, a role that landed him an Academy Award nomination. It is a role that, according to Katherine Kinney, provides the model for American masculinity in post-World War II America. Sergeant Stryker is a violent drunk with a gun—an extraordinarily pathological model of masculinity. What Kinney is not sensitive to is that the efficacy of the Sergeant Stryker model is rooted primarily in the fact of his being an enlisted man. It is well documented that *The Sands of Iwo Jima* was a carefully controlled propaganda film in the service of militarism in general, and the U.S. Marines in particular[11]; so it may seem curious that the filmmakers and the Department of Defense would permit the over-the-top behaviors exhibited by Sergeant Stryker in the film. Of course, those behaviors are not presented as pathological, or even distorted—but they are rank sensitive. A crucial aspect of the military's control over the film was ensuring that the spectator infer that the military can only countenance the Stryker model if it is in the enlisted caste. His belligerence, bloodthirstiness, and drunkenness are virtues in the film, but only in certain very clear contexts—primarily that of turning enlisted men into killers. The film tells the story of a Marine unit from its basic training in New Zealand to its victory on the Pacific island of Iwo Jima, culminating in the famous American flag raising on Mt. Suribachi. Stryker's efficacy in his job, turning his unit into tough soldiers, is specifically related to his rejection of feminine influences.

Indeed, though there are barely five minutes where women are actually *in* the film, the wholesale rejection of women seems to be its motivating energy. The spectator learns early in the film that Stryker's belligerence and alcoholism are exacerbated by the fact that his wife has recently left him, taking "his son" with her (one can, if one were so disposed, even infer that she "caused" his behaviors). Never appearing in the film, Mrs. Stryker nevertheless serves as an important terminus for spectator hatred. Stryker hires a prostitute later in the film, but in a clever twist, does not have sex with her when he finds out that she has a young child in the next room. Though this sequence is designed to win over the spectator to Stryker (implying that he has a heart of gold beneath his gruff exterior), there are two important implications that work toward establishing Stryker as a model enlisted soldier. The first is that Stryker's hiring the prostitute establishes his heterosexuality. In the neurotic economy of war narrative, heterosexuality must be asserted, but only for the purposes of neutralizing homosexual panic. With so many men working in such close proximity, an inevitability in the war narrative, the horrifying specter of homosexuality must be vehemently exorcised. This sort of homosocial policing is a standard feature of most guy-guy relationships, but, as Eve Sedgwick notes, it is particularly heightened within a military context:

> The historical emphasis on enforcement of homophobic rules in the armed services in, for instance, England and the United States supports this analysis. In these institutions, where both men's

> manipulability and their potential for violence are at the highest possible premium, the *pre*scription of the most intimate male bonding and the *pro*scription of (the remarkably cognate) "homosexuality" are both stronger than in civilian society—are, in fact, close to absolute. (*Epistemology of the Closet* 186)

The second implication is that because women present so large a castration threat, that heterosexuality must be deferred—engaging in actual sex presents an unmanageable threat to the soldier's masculinity. More so than the race-baitings, physical beatings, tortures, and humiliations that the soldiers under Stryker's leadership must endure in order to toughen up, the most important key to real soldiery is the rejection of women. This "festival of affects" comes into clearer focus in the novel *From Here to Eternity*, another narrative that concentrates on the lives of enlisted soldiers.

James Jones was an enlisted soldier in the army—he was a combat sergeant in the Pacific theater during World War II—, and many of his novels (*From Here to Eternity* [1951], *The Pistol* [1958], *The Thin Red Line* [1962], and *Whistle* [1978]) reveal, in addition to deeply structured misogyny and homophobia, an anxiety regarding the enlisted rank's relationship with the officer rank. That tension between the officer and enlisted ranks is the motivating energy of *From Here to Eternity*. The primary plot of the novel is a Christ fable, the destruction of Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt. The secondary plot, far more interesting, is the story of a sergeant, Milt Warden, who ventures

outside the boundaries of enlisted rank containment by having an affair with the wife of his commanding officer. This secondary plot provides a model for the attraction/revulsion dynamics associated with the enlisted rank. The novel contrasts Warden's hyperbolic super-soldierness with the snobbery and incompetence of the officers under whom he serves, notably Captain "Dynamite" Holmes, 2nd Lieutenant Culpepper, and Colonel Dilbert—all more interested in adultery, promotion, booze, and golf than in anything else. But unlike narratives that present the bad officer only as a symptom which the text "treats" (e.g., *Men of Honor*, *A Few Good Men*, *The Caine Mutiny*, *Attack!*, *Paths of Glory*), Jones is not interested in rehabilitating an officer class he so clearly detests (bearing witness, perhaps, to his own experiences as a sergeant in World War II). Rather, Jones ensures in *From Here to Eternity* that certain officer traits do not infect the enlisted rank: literacy, thoughtfulness, negotiation. In *From Here to Eternity*, these characteristics are poisonous, not because they are beyond the grasp of enlisted soldiers, but rather because they are not manly. For Jones the conventional traits of the enlisted rank—stupidity, bloodlust, poverty, whoremongering, gambling, and drunkenness—are crucial elements in its *efficacy*.

The greatest danger of all is woman.[12] If there is an overriding theme to *From Here to Eternity*, it is that femininity represents the largest threat to real manhood, therefore to be avoided at all costs except under the strict confinements of prostitution. For Jones, a man faces a challenge in the attainment of real masculinity: he must fuck women, but simultaneously avoid

the feminine taint. Jones' critique of the officer class therefore centers on its ostensible effeminacy, a theme played out in the affair between Sergeant Warden and Karen Holmes, the wife of Warden's commanding officer (whose effeminate first name, Dana, functions as a "clue" in the text).

Like the drunken enlisted man, the love triangle is one of the enduring conventions of war narrative, present in an unusually large number of novels and films.[13] Inasmuch as war narrative articulates power dynamics among men, a convenient mode of expressing that dynamic is microcosmically, i.e., "between men." In the case of *From Here to Eternity*, Karen Holmes is the conduit in the power relationship between Sergeant Warden and Captain Holmes. Her *presence*, such as it is, serves merely to facilitate what Sedgwick calls the "play of emulation and identification" (*Between Men* 23) between the two men, a metonymic dramatization of the class tensions between the officer and enlisted castes.

Karen Holmes' presence in the novel is a cruel canard, her value related exclusively to her function as the exchange between Warden and Holmes. "The woman," says Lévi-Strauss, "figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners" (115). Unfortunately for Jones, who as a novelist seems ill equipped to deal with relationships across gender boundaries, that exchange must be articulated as heterosexual sex, which Jones sees as a threat to Warden's masculinity. This anxiety plays out in Chapter 9 of the novel where

Karen (significantly *before* their sexual union takes place) hides Warden in her closet so her nine-year-old son, Dana Junior, won't discover them:

> After a while she made herself get up and go to open the closet door, sick with the humiliation of this unjust degradation of herself and Warden whom she could hardly face.
>
> "I think you'd better go," pulling back the door. "It was the boy. He's gone now and. . ." She stopped, amazed, the words trailing off forgotten.
>
> Warden sat crosslegged on the pile of his uniform in the cramped space, the skirts of several dresses draped over his head like a crazy turban. (122)

There is a double signification to this passage. Not only does it express the threat that Karen's femininity presents to Warden's masculinity, but it also implies and foreshadows the danger that officer-ness presents to Warden's super-soldierness.[14] This demasculinization threat materializes as a code[15], comically reminiscent of the "broken fingers" sequence in Balzac's *Sarrasine*, famously analyzed by Barthes in *S/Z*[16]. Several days after consummating his affair with Karen, Warden mysteriously throws a pair of scissors over his shoulder: "He picked them up, and laid them, with a full inch of one point broken off, on Holmes's desk" (157). These broken scissors articulate the threat to Warden's masculinity at the hands of the woman, and Warden's subsequent gesture to hand it back to its rightful owner, the effeminate officer. It is a threat

symptomatized to orient the reader toward the policing strategy of the novel: to ensure that Sergeant Warden stays in his proper position, the enlisted rank. This latter aspect becomes clearer later in the novel when Warden considers applying for an officer commission—not because he's a competent soldier (the narrator says, "his acceptance for a commission [. . .] was a foregone conclusion" [586]), but rather to satisfy Karen Holmes, who will not marry him unless he's an officer.

Warden targets Karen as a conquest because he despises her husband, the incompetent officer, Captain Holmes. Not surprisingly, the "sex" between the man and the woman is poisonous, being formulated in the language of domination and sadomasochism. Jones seems to invest Warden with a hyperbolic masculinity and virility—at one point Karen gushes, "Oh, I never knew it could be like this" (125). However, Jones overloads the affair with castration and class anxieties, symptoms that Jones ultimately displaces onto the figure of Karen. Though the affair is certainly about the "play of emulation and identification" between the sergeant and the captain, the woman must nevertheless bear the burden of that play's weight. Sedgwick argues that the homosocial/homoerotic element of the love triangle predetermines the marginalization of the woman. Because identity politics of masculinity are based primarily on (homo)sexual *pro*scriptions[17], actual heterosexual sex never addresses that issue—in the case of *From Here to Eternity*, it never quite conceals the fact that the *real* relationship is between the two men. This dynamic plays

out in that Warden's affair with Karen is always *in relation* to her husband, an incongruous affair that the novel has from the outset policed.

Sergeant Warden, of course, rejects the officer commission, thus facilitating his breakup with Karen (and with Captain Holmes). But because Jones has overloaded the affair with so many anxieties, the reader has little choice but to breathe a big sigh of relief at this development. Karen was not the point of the affair—Captain Holmes, and the class he represented, was. Warden's rejection of that class repositions him to his proper realm, removes Karen physically from the narrative, thus restoring epistemological order to the text.

Jones' treatment of Karen Holmes in *From Here to Eternity* is, to borrow a term from Sedgwick, "virulently misogynistic." That should come as no surprise. What is surprising, however, is her presence to begin with. Most war narrative manages the feminine threat by completely excluding women. Susan Jeffords says, "The defining feature of American war narratives is that they are a 'man's story' from which women are generally excluded" (49). Jones includes women in his novel, and even invests Karen Holmes with a certain amount of intelligence and independence (the word *moxie* comes to mind)—dialogic elements that threaten to spin out of control unless she's removed from the text—but because his chief aim is to tell a "man's story," that inclusion serves only to reinforce their subordination in the masculine realm. Perhaps Jones' most disingenuous gesture in the novel is to enlist Karen Holmes into an agreement

with the novel's misogynistic project. At one point, she says to Warden, "Apparently that's what I always do to men. I touch them and they all start to crumble" (592). It is a fetishist's disavowal, cleverly projected, as in a pornographic film, onto the object of the fetish.

The "dissociation of sensibility" between the artist and the narrative is an important dynamic with respect to enlisted rank representation: it is a dynamic repeated in almost all war narrative where the narrative is conscious of the enlisted rank's occupying a completely different space than the officer rank. Any sort of "attraction" to the enlisted rank is directly related to its negativity and difference, features crucial to its currency in cultural consciousness. Those features—hyper-masculinity, violence, dangerousness, crudity, illiteracy, drunkenness—*must* be present in order to justify the enlisted rank's existence in material culture. Culture may in fact *impose* those exaggerated features onto the enlisted rank as a strategy of forestallment: the bottom line for militaries, their "business," is that they must kill people; therefore there must exist a space for that killing's resultant anxiety.

The enlisted rank thus exists as a type of ideological "space." The important consideration here is that narrative reserves that space for a specific type of man, the killer. This presents a double bind for the enlisted rank: insofar as it is tasked explicitly with the killing of other human beings, that task excludes it from occupying a certain social position in culture. With respect to *The Royal Tannebaums*, had Henry Sherman's son been a Navy seaman, wearing his white

"Donald Duck" uniform would not have created the same social effect as did the officer uniform. Culture simply does not *value* the enlisted rank. This double bind serves the interest of the officer caste, which remains aloof and untainted by the fact of warfare, killing, irrespective of the officer rank's material participation in that killing.

The actual history of combat implies a *resistance* to killing, a history that challenges the legitimacy of narrative convention. The most famous incident was the World War I Christmas cease-fire in 1914. In *An Intimate History of Killing*, Joanna Bourke notes that during and after World War I, a large percentage of soldiers were in fact reluctant to kill:

> No amount of military training could deal with volunteers, conscripts, and even Regular servicemen who simply lacked that 'offensive spirit'. During the First World War, it was commonly believed that only 10 percent of soldiers could be called brave, and many military commentators deplored the 'live and let live' principle in which servicemen on both sides came to agreements not to shoot if the other side restrained themselves too. (61)

It was thus the officer rank's responsibility to inspire that killer instinct into the enlisted rank. For example, Robert Cole, the officer in charge of the United States 502nd Parachute Infantry in World War II, noted that during combat, "Not one man in twenty-five voluntarily used his weapon [. . .] I walked up and down the line yelling 'God damn it! Start shooting!' But it did very little good. They fired

only while I watched them."[18] This historical phenomenon is not easily translated to narrative, which has a tendency to crumble beneath the weight of convention. Nevertheless, that reluctance to kill extends power to the officer rank in two measurable ways: it can modulate killing without suffering any associated taint, and it can impose "cowardice" onto the enlisted rank in the absence of killing. So many negative "divestments" fix the enlisted rank into its socio-ideological position. Narrative enforces that fixation, ensuring that those who occupy that space must remain in it, lest they threaten the immunity of the officer class.

A peculiar side effect of the negative representational trajectory of the enlisted rank is that the enlisted rank actually colludes with it. That rank, treated with such unconscionable contempt in wars—and in the narratives that describe those wars—becomes a key player in the legitimation of that oppressive system. The enlisted rank is simultaneously demonized and infantilized (they are usually referred to as "our boys" by the both the military establishment and its media functionaries). Veterans' organizations, such as the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, whose membership is overwhelmingly former-enlisted, rather than challenging that *praxis* instead become key players in its perpetuation. Alfred Vagts says that ex-soldiers play a key role in mass militarization because they can be recruited in the romanticization of military affairs:

> [High ranking officers] ascertained that the ex-soldiers, who felt the urge to combine on the basis of their common experiences in the armies, would not be the type to oppose military service and institutions. Once the men had left the service, much as they might have grumbled under it, they seemed glad to romanticize the soldiers' life. (356)

In military fictions, the officer functions as the perfectly equipped empowerment for capital insofar as he legitimates—and simultaneously surrogates—the twin systems of class and economic domination. Within the context of film, that empowerment is doubled because of the phenomenon of spectacle, or to borrow a term from Mulvey, "scopophilia." The doubling element is the officer uniform, the visual symptom of officer rank fetishization. Christian Metz says, "the fetish represents by synecdoche the whole body of the object as desirable" (*Psychoanalysis and Cinema* 75).

Figure 1
U.S. Navy Officer Uniforms 1899[19]

Figure 2
Still from the CBS Television program *JAG* (2003)

As one can see in Figures 1 and 2, the officer uniform is itself a spectacle, a wildly over-the-top adornment that seeks, because it is literally attached to the officer, to link its wearer with all that is good. I would like to suggest that the officer uniform is so obviously a fetish—both as a material object and as a feature in fictions—that, because of its gaudiness, it (here Žižek comes to mind) seems to appear as *not* a fetish. A crucial aspect of the efficacy of military propaganda (and to be certain the propaganda film) is that it asserts that the synecdoche is reversed: it is the officer who is what Christian Metz would call the "good object," and the uniform is its effect. In order for the propaganda film to have currency, it must have something in/about it that attracts the spectator, that is, the thing about cinema that "give[s] the spectator the 'spontaneous' desire to visit the cinema and pay for his ticket" (*Psychoanalysis and Cinema* 7-8). The most visual example of the fetishization of the officer rank is its visual component, the officer uniform. Nowhere is that fetishization more obvious than in the U.S. Navy, where there is a stark contrast between the gaudy officer uniform and the humble, even comical, enlisted uniform (see Figure 3).

Fig. 3
World War I Recruiting Poster (ca. 1919) [20]

That discrepancy is strategic, a contrast that plays right into the hands of mainstream filmmakers who are quick to identify with the beautiful officer.

Navy movies, for whatever reason, are particularly adept at this sort of class management. Mainstream filmmakers disguise this policing phenomenon under the shroud of nostalgia. Any degree of self-consciousness or discomfort regarding the legitimacy of rank separation hopefully dissolves in the nostalgic object, the function of which, according to Žižek, is "precisely to conceal the antinomy between eye and gaze" (*Looking Awry* 114). Surely the observant

spectator would notice the profound socioeconomic (and literal) distance between the officers and the enlisted men: *but it's in the past*. Rather than using the medium of film to interrogate the past, the filmmakers, seduced by nostalgia, instead use the past to rehabilitate the present, to legitimate that socioeconomic distance. Disturbing examples can be found in two contemporary submarine movies, *U-571* (Jonathan Mostow, 2000) and *K-19* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2002). These films' militaristic and elitist projects are somewhat concealed because the time of the story is in the past: *U-571*'s in World War II and *K-19*'s in the Cold War. In both films, the submarine crews address and solve some sort of problem, but embedded in each respective superplot is a subplot that articulates the officer triumphing over an incompetent enlisted problem.

Though the basic plot of *U-571* is of an American submarine's capture of a German U-Boat, the narrative element—the "story"—describes the coming-of-age of a good officer.[21] The crucial action in the film occurs when the American submarine's captain dies, and the crew looks around desperately for someone to lead them. Initially, they choose the elderly Chief Henry Klough (played by Harvey Keitel) rather than the young executive officer, Lieutenant Andrew Tyler (played by Matthew McConaughey), to take command of the boat. This thoroughly sensible option (the Chief is experienced and competent; the young officer is inexperienced and incompetent) is thwarted by both the Chief and *the film*. Klough's rejection of leadership (not quite convincing) is more effectively

reinforced by the fetishistic mechanism of the film rather than by the machinations of the screenplay. Klough says to Tyler,

> This is the Navy, where a commanding officer is a mighty and terrible thing—a man to be feared and respected. All knowing, all powerful. Don't you dare say what you said to those boys back there—'I don't know.' Those three words will kill a crew, dead as a depth charge. You're the skipper now, and the skipper always knows what to do, whether he does or not.

The director, Jonathan Mostow (also the screenwriter), here imposes a World War II propaganda film bathos on this scene in order to render the spectator incredulous. It is a gambit that fails, so Mostow defaults to the most rudimentary and manipulative cinematic technique to engineer the spectator's sympathy towards the officer: Tyler is beautiful and young; Klough is ugly and old. There seems to be no question but that the spectator, long accustomed and conditioned to this cinematic semiology, will agree with the film's class management: no mainstream film can bear the burden of physical ugliness. This semiology has backed the spectator into a rhetorical corner—no closure for the film exists other than that Tyler will take the mantle of power.

K-19 is, even by Hollywood standards, one of the more disingenuous treatments of the enlisted rank. Because it is an American film of a Russian submarine, the filmmakers concentrate on the relationship between two officers, Alexei Vostrikov (Harrison Ford) and the man he replaces as ship's captain,

Mikhail Polenin (Liam Neeson). This relationship is apparently devised to neutralize any Cold War-era anxieties American audiences might feel regarding a movie about Russians, "officer and gentleman" considerations apparently overriding other ideological concerns.

The K-19 was an actual Russian nuclear submarine that suffered a reactor emergency in 1961. Eight sailors died in that incident, all voluntarily sacrificing their lives by going into the reactor compartment to repair a coolant leak.[22] The first man to go into the reactor compartment was a 22-year-old lieutenant, Boris Korchilov, who was followed by seven enlisted men. That poignant fact is a burden the film *K-19* cannot bear. It reverses the historical order of events in order to integrate a "redemption" sub-plot, having the reactor officer, Vadim Radtchenko (Peter Sarsgaard), conquer his cowardice in order to save the submarine. Seeing the repair crew, vomiting from their exposure to radiation, exit the reactor compartment earlier, Radtchenko became too frightened to enter when it was his turn. When the repair fails later, Radtchenko summons up his courage and enters the compartment to fix the botched repair of the enlisted sailors. The film overdrives this officer element in two ways. First, it shows Radtchenko stay in the compartment three times longer than his enlisted subordinates—thereby underlining his superiority to them physically, technically, and morally. And then, finally and most absurdly, *Captain Vostrikov* enters the reactor compartment, completely unprotected, to check on Radtchenko's progress. Radtchenko, like the seven sailors before him, dies from

radiation poisoning, but Vostrikov suffers no ill effects from exposure (except for a nasty cough), thereby underlining the film's sensitivity to degrees of rank.

Captain Vostrikov's presence in the reactor compartment provides a model for mainstream cinema's cooperation and collusion with American culture's obsession with military affairs. It makes no difference that such a thing could never happen "in the real world." His imperviousness to the effects of radiation mirrors the officer rank's immunity to evaluation and interpretation in the arena of war narrative. Nostalgia, with its distancing and displacing effects, has immunized him.

The most obvious complication regarding officer rank fetishization is that persistent convention, the bad officer. The convention is so persistent, in fact, that it's tempting to say that most military fictions contain bad officers. But those officers rarely—if ever—function as critiques of the officer/enlisted division. They are merely straw men that the texts knock over in order to further legitimate that division. In narratives such as *From Here to Eternity*[23], *Men of Honor*, *Attack!*, *Williwaw*, *The Caine Mutiny*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *Mr. Roberts*, *Catch-22*, and *A Few Good Men*, the bad officer plays a central role in the plot. But in almost every case, those texts, self-consciously realizing the destabilization threat presented by the bad officer, neutralize him by means of the host of good officers, or the one good officer. In this way, the status quo is not threatened, and the legitimacy of the rank division is further reinforced.

The model for the ostensibly anti-officer text is Stanley Kubrick's 1957 film, *Paths of Glory*. In the film, the officers are presented as self-serving, vain, despicable men who do not hesitate—for the specific purpose of furthering their own military careers—to sacrifice their own men. This would appear on the surface as an indictment of the rank system: the overwhelming majority of men whom they sacrifice are the enlisted soldiers suffering in the trenches. The indictment, however, is only of bad officers: the real hero of *Paths of Glory* is a young officer, Colonel Dax (played by Kirk Douglas), who is not only a brave soldier but also a keen lawyer. The film articulates its hatred of the enlisted caste by addressing it in relation to the virtuous officer.

In the film, two corrupt French generals (General Broulard, played by Adolphe Menjou; and General Mireau, played by George Macready) devise a scheme to further their professional careers: an attack on the front lines of an impregnable fortress called "The Ant Hill." Command of the endeavor falls to Colonel Dax. He at first hesitates to carry out the order—knowing that it is a suicide mission. But when his masculinity is questioned (General Mireau suggests that he lacks the courage to sacrifice his men), he acquiesces:

> Mireau: If a commanding officer lacks countenance, what can we expect of his men? Naturally, I don't want to relieve you, but I must have your enthusiastic support. Not once have you said that your men can take The Ant Hill.

> Colonel Dax: We'll take the Ant Hill. If any soldiers in the world can take it, we'll take The Ant Hill.

The mission, of course, fails, and the unit retreats. Viewing the retreat from a safe distance, the enraged Mireau orders an artillery attack on his own retreating soldiers, an order that is refused.

It was this order to fire on friendly forces that prompted Francois Truffaut to call the film unrealistic. Subscribing fully to the officer fetish, Truffaut cannot believe that an officer could be so "cowardly and cynical" as to order an artillery barrage on his own soldiers:

> The film's weakness—what keeps it from being an irrefutable indictment—is a certain lack of psychological credibility in the "villains'" behavior. There were, certainly, during World War I, a number of similar "war crimes," barrages aimed at our own troops out of error and ignorance and confusion rather than from personal ambition. (117)

Truffaut is here perhaps betraying a certain amount of defensiveness: French authorities prohibited Kubrick from filming it in France (it was filmed in Germany), and the film was barred from French theaters for 20 years because of its negative portrayal of French officers. To placate the general's anger, three enlisted men from the unit are chosen by lots to stand trial for cowardice. Dax defends the soldiers in their ensuing trial, but it is a kangaroo court, and the men are sentenced to death in front of a firing squad.

Kubrick is especially elitist in his representation of these enlisted soldiers. Kubrick attempts to balance the officers (two bad, one good) with the privates (two bad, one good), but his representational strategy heightens the intellectual and social gulf between the ranks. The privates appear as tropes rather than as people. While this representational flaw is perhaps even truer in Kubrick's representation of the two bad officers, the appearance of the one good officer more than offsets the bad. There is no offsetting private, though it actually appears as if Kubrick wants to balance Dax with an enlisted doppelganger, Private Arnaud (Joe Turkel). But as in most war cinema, the film cannot bear the burden of the enlisted rank having similar stature as the officer. The "good" private, trying to keep a stiff upper lip, collapses under the pressure of his death sentence, the film thereby oreinscribing his inferiority to Dax, "proving" the verdict of the kangaroo court. The private, especially in comparison to the officer, *does not count*. He is a cipher. This narrative, as in most narratives including the bad officer, simply cannot bear the burden of that bad officer: can the text bear the destabilization threatened by the disappearance of the fetish? For *Paths of Glory*, there *must* be a Colonel Dax to counterbalance the bad officers. Conversely, the text can *certainly* bear, because of his many negative divestments, the burden of the bad private.

Kubrick's representational strategy reaches its apex in the film's final sequence. At a bar where the enlisted soldiers are boozing up before being sent back to the front, the saloon manager brings onstage a young German girl as

"entertainment." At first, the crude, drunk soldiers leer and curse at the girl, but when she breaks nervously into a German song, the soldiers become "tamed," even humming along to the song. Kubrick highlights these soldiers' negativity by showing quick facial close-ups, a strategy perhaps designed to elicit pathos from the spectator. However, the soldiers seem less men than overarching caricatures of the lower class—drunk, dirty, and stupid. The effect seems rather to stress the soldiers' expendability, as if the camera were seeing the scene from the perspective of the Generals who had earlier ordered their deaths. Hearing the ruckus from outside the saloon (he certainly wouldn't be inside the saloon), Colonel Dax starts to break it up, but pauses and decides to let the soldiers have their fun. This sort of *noblesse oblige* exposes any sort of egalitarian agenda the film may have earlier projected as a sham. Its caveat—its disavowal—is that the officer must be a good officer. *Paths of Glory* in its policing function is ultimately indistinguishable from a propaganda film such as *In Which We Serve*. Both films subscribe to the notion of "officers and men," as if they were two separate species.

Correlative to the thematic policing of social groups that is one of the key features of war narrative is the deeper-structured phenomenon of *epistemological* social management. Because of the economic dynamics of society, narrative itself is resistant to a critique of social hierarchies; as these dynamics pertain to military narrative, the relative legitimacy of social rank is always present in the officer—he is the constant reminder of hierarchical desire. Within American

culture, the officer rank is perhaps too heavily invested with virtue. This becomes clear when one compares police narratives with military narratives. As Miller has noted, the police in fiction are *prima facie* incompetent: that incompetence is a crucial element inasmuch as it is the narrative itself that polices and restores order. One can gauge this effect in police narratives, both in fictional and even so-called "True Crime" narratives. Even in the scenario where a detective manages to solve the crime, he or she operates outside of the boundaries of the regular police machinery. Dirty Harry's real victories are not over transgressive criminals, but rather over the girly-men bureaucrats in San Francisco who rely too heavily on the effeminate expedients of negotiation and due process. The effective real-man detective must be an outsider, moreover one who does not hesitate in the exploitation of violence to effect epistemological order.

No such analog exists in the military fiction. The military officer, unlike the police officer, is an *insider*. Most war narrative suggests that the military superstructure is basically good, an *a priori* that renders rank structure particularly resistant to critique or interpretation. Unlike the detective who must work against *the system* to solve the crime, the military officer already operates within a system of virtue and competence, those features being pre-connoted within the superstructure of war narrative. As a matter of *praxis*, the conventions of competence are reversed in the military narrative: in the detective fiction, the system is populated by incompetent bureaucrats; but in the war fiction, the

system is populated by the virtuous—it is the bad apples that have to be weeded out. In the detective novel, the bad apple is the only one who can crack the case.

Miller asserts that the police in narrative are confined to an epistemological "ghetto." This is because the police's "intrusiveness posits a world whose normality has been hitherto defined as a matter of *not needing* the police" (3). On the other hand, the military officer—that other uniform wearer—exists in a world that desperately desires his presence. It is a desire on a larger scale than the intrusive policeman's beat. Like the policeman, the military officer exists "to serve and to protect," but those things he serves and protects are less definable and therefore more easily engineered to serve the purposes of capital—things like "liberty" and "freedom," words that are, like "leadership," attractive and hypnotizing primarily because they have no real meaning. As a result, the military officer, because of his fetishistic investments, has evolved into an agent operating completely without impediments in American culture—his claim to work as a servant of society a clever, insidious disavowal that further loosens the constraints of public scrutiny.

Notes

[1] Patrick M. Regan uses this term to great effectiveness in *Organizing Societies for War: The Process and Consequences of Societal Militarization* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994) as a substitute for "The Military-Industrial Complex." See, especially, Chapter 5, "Societal Symbols and Societal Militarization."

[2] Miller speaks of "The policing power that never passes for such." D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) 17.

[3] For an in-depth analysis of the Sergeant Stryker trope, see Katherine Kinney, *Friendly Fire: American Images of the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): "John Wayne is the model by which young American men accept duty and responsibility" (12).

[4] Kaja Silverman explores this anxiety in "Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity" in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: Routledge, 1990): 110-127.

[5] The "normal prototype of fetishes is a man's penis." Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism" in *The Complete Psychological Works* vol. 21 (London: Hogarth, 1991) 157.

[6] This is not to say that the war novel *resists* that visual strategy, e.g., "He was perhaps nineteen, small and gaunt, with a face blackened half by stubble and half by grease, and covered with pimples. Long, coarse black hair fell over his tiny squinting eyes. He wore no hat. He was addressed by the other sailors as 'Horrible.'" Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1951) 82.

[7] James Jones, *From Here to Eternity* (New York: Signet, 1951) 77.

[8] A secondary consideration is that this sort of incongruity directly articulates Jones' frustrations as an intellectual enlisted soldier during World War II: he was likely subordinate to many corporals and sergeants whom he considered stupid.

[9] "[G]ambler, fixer, blackmarketeer, who ran Fort Baxter in Kansas, hoodwinking the dim nominal commander, Paul Ford's Colonel Hall, and twisting Hall's wife around his finger." Philip French, "Soldier of Misfortune." *The Guardian Unlimited* <http: //film.guardian.co.uk/ News_Story/ Critic_Review/ Observer_Film_of_the_week/0,4267,1001697,00.html>. The television program

was also made into a shockingly bad film starring Steve Martin (1995, dir. Jonathan Lynn).

[10] E.g., in Daniel Lang's *Casualties of War* (New York: Pocket Books, 1989), the four enlisted soldiers convicted of the kidnap, rape, and murder of a Vietnamese teenager received the following sentences: life, 15 years, 10 years, and eight years. Those soldiers' sentences were later reduced to a *combined* 11 years.

[11] In addition to Kinney's *Friendly Fire*, see Garry Wills, *The Politics of Celebrity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); Lawrence Suid, *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002); Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Stephen Vaughn, "Political Censorship During the Cold War," in *Movie Censorship and American Culture*, ed. Francis G. Couvares (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); and Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[12] True not just in *From Here to Eternity*, but also in *The Thin Red Line* wherein Private Witt is undone as a soldier because of his obsession over his Dear John letter.

[13] E.g., *Crash Dive*, *Wings*, *The Finest Hour*, *Pearl Harbor*, *Swing Shift*, *Air Cadet*, *Peasants in Distress*, *Enemy at the Gates*, *Star Wars*, *All the Brothers Were Valiant*, *Who Goes There?*, *Casablanca*, *Submarine*, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, *What Price Glory, Hell's Angels*, *Today We Live*, *Hanover Street*, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. This theme reaches its fullest articulation in the 1992 film, *A Midnight Clear*, where six soldiers "share" the girl.

[14] If there were one trump card that the enlisted rank had over the officer rank as a convention, it was its mythological sexual virility. The conflation of sexual virility and soldier competence is crucial to the construction of the enlisted rank as a fixed position. But the officer rank is resilient, having managed in the post-World War II discursive space to co-opt that virility, simultaneously handing off erectile dysfunction (to go with all its other dysfunctions) to the enlisted rank (see *The Men*, *Coming Home*, and *Born on the Fourth of July*) as a reciprocal assertion of rhetorical power. As a result, a film like *Pearl Harbor* can "correct" the incongruous class dynamics of cuckoldry in *From Here to Eternity* by seizing that sexual virility aspect from the enlisted rank.

[15] Lucien Dallenbach, in *Mirror in the Text*, classifies this sort of device as *mise en abyme du chose*, i.e., an object that serves as a clue to the meaning of the text.

[16] Viz., "a man must know [. . .] not to cry out when he is hiding in a closet and the maid breaks two of his fingers as she shuts the door on them" (*Sarrasine* 223-24). Barthes: "As for the castrato himself, we would be wrong to place him of necessity among the castrated: he is the blind and mobile flaw in this system; he moves back and forth between active and passive: castrated, he castrates" (*S/Z* 36).

[17] "[T]he men who were more or less firmly placed on the proscribed end of the homosocial spectrum have also been united powerfully by proscription and have worked powerfully to claim and create a difference—a difference beyond proscription." Sedgwick 202.

[18] Qtd. in S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Washington: Infantry Journal, 1947) 72. See also George Juskalian, "Why Didn't They Shoot More?" *Army Combat Forces Journal* 5.2 (1954).

[19] http://pre1900prints.com/USMilitaryHistory/USnavyuniformsB1899.htm

[20] http://memory.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3g10000/3g10000/3g10000/3g10030v.jpg.

[21] Cf. *The Dawn Patrol*, *The Road to Glory*, *Crash Dive*, *Glory*, *The Caine Mutiny*, *In Harm's Way*, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, *A Few Good Men*.

[22] The eight men who died were Boris Korchilov and Seamen Savkin, Kharitonov, Kashenkov, Ordochkin, Starkov, Ryzhkov and Penkov. Typical for official military discourse is that the seven enlisted men who died do not warrant having their first names added to the official record. See <mailman.mcmaster.ca/mailman/private/cdn-nucl-l/0207.gz/msg00091.html>.

[23] I'm speaking here of the film version of *From Here to Eternity* (1953), which "corrects" Jones' novel by having only one bad officer, Captain Holmes. The Department of Defense, uncomfortable with the novel's depiction of officers, refused to offer the film support and access unless the anti-officer elements were removed. As a result, all the other incompetent officers in the novel appear in the film as reinscriptions of the standard World War II propaganda officer: stalwart, intrepid, faultless. Jones' critique of the officer rank reaches its apex in the novel where Holmes' incompetence is rewarded with a promotion to the rank of Major. In the film, Holmes is stripped of his commission—it was the only condition under which the War Department would permit the presentation of a bad officer. See Lawrence H. Suid, *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002): "The

Army's image clearly benefited from the removal of Holmes rather than simply his humiliation" (147).

CHAPTER IV

WAR NARRATIVE AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL INCAPACITY

Wherever a despot and his army pass,
doctors, priests, scribes, and officials are part
of the procession.
—Deleuze and Guattari

All real Americans love the sting of battle.
—George S. Patton

Any film that portrays the military as
negative is not realistic.
—Philip Strub

A phenomenon vexing Marxist theorists in the last twenty or so years is the decline in the "popularity" of Marxist literary theory, as if the validity of the method had passed its "sell by" date. In 1995 Terry Eagleton said, "Marxism is at present enduring the most grievous crisis of its fraught career—a crisis which involves nothing less than the question of its survival" ("Marxist Literary Theory" 246). This crisis in the American academy coincides with other phenomena: the increasing gap between the rich (now richer than even Thorstein Veblen could have imagined) and the poor, the dissolution of populist labor movements, the unconscionable exploitation of third world labor, and the reactionary seizure of mainstream media. These are virulent phenomena, it seems to me, that bear witness to the crucial necessity of Marxist analysis. The desire that has produced those disturbing phenomena materializes as symptoms

in culture, culture being the site, according to Eagleton, "where power is crystallized and submission bred" ("Marxist Literary Theory" 251). The power dynamics displayed in the American war narrative—especially in the post World War-II era—project the persistence and durability of the systems of domination at work in society. What I wish to suggest in this chapter is that the American war narrative provides a compelling gauge of the degree to which entrenched systems of power are immunized from threat. It is the rare artist who can disencumber him- or herself from the fetishization practices that empower militarism, those practices functioning as compelling attractions in war narrative.

This chapter will examine the persistence and irresistibility of war narrative. Why are we still attracted to the war story? What about it seduces us, often betrays our better judgment? Why, in spite of our knowledge that *war is bad*, are we nevertheless obsessed with war? Though there are certain visceral "thrills" associated with war stories—the dog fights, flying bullets, explosions, and threats of impending death—I'd like to suggest that class and patriarchal desires to a large degree produce the *plaisir* of the war narrative, *plaisir* equally seductive to both artist and reader/spectator.

Though it is incongruous to juxtapose the chauvinistic, chest-thumping propaganda of the television program *Jag* with a "great" novel such as *V.*, as I did in Chapter II, both "texts" nevertheless take themselves seriously as narratives, and both suffer from similar representational problems. Both lean heavily on the expedients of convention to effect a narrative currency. Both *V.*

and *Jag* present the drunk, stupid enlisted man as an instantly recognizable figure. But surely there is a difference between *Jag* and *V.*, a difference extending beyond the ideological desire those texts expose and that we as readers/ spectators impose on them.

In the monologic *Jag*, the dissonant, dissident voice is "permitted" (such as, for example, that of an Islamic fundamentalist as he tortures an American officer), but only as a complication to be quickly and efficiently neutralized—as Bakhtin says, "decided in advance." The monologic narrative, says D.A. Miller, is "always speaking a master-voice that corrects, overrides, subordinates, or sublates all other voices it allows to speak" (*The Novel and the Police* 55). In a dialogic text such as *V.*, on the other hand, the dissident voice flourishes, often as self-critique, often as parody and self-parody. To be fair to Pynchon, an author who exploits all the ambiguous/ambivalent trajectories of dialogism, can the reader be certain the conventional device in *V.* exists to reinforce the legitimacy of the convention, or rather to expose how conventional narrative practices engage in a type of rhetorical extortion? In other words, to satirize the sort of rhetorical practice openly endorsed/embraced by *Jag*?

But the problem is that invoking convention, even for the purpose of subversion, rings a certain bell that, once struck, cannot be unrung. Satire and parody may increase the *jouissance* of the text, but they do not neutralize connotation. They may bear witness to narrative's diagnostic power, but do they *merely* bear witness to that power? "Why," asks Žižek, "in spite of its

interpretation, does the symptom not dissolve itself; why does it persist?" (*The Sublime Object of Ideology* 74). The answer (beyond the subtle joke that nothing dissolves *itself*), it seems, is that the symptom is kept on a sort of life-support system by desire. In her essay "Desire in Narrative," Teresa de Lauretis suggests that the desire underpinning many narratives is a yearning for patriarchal order, a phenomenon easily measured in historical texts, whose "value [. . .] is conferred by the historian's desire for a moral order underlying the aesthetic aspect of historical representation" (128). Because war fictions so closely simulate "real events" (e.g., *Jag*'s diligence in incorporating Afghanistan and Iraq subplots into their stories), their embedded patriarchal codes aren't so difficult to decode. That desire, in addition to its patriarchal "work," tends to incapacitate narrative trends toward a democratization of power, a *praxis* that can be gauged in the war narrative.

Viewing the novel as a historico-political force, Bakhtin had high hopes that the novel's exploitation of language along the entire ideological spectrum would literally redirect power via a process of "refraction":

> The prose writer makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve his own new intentions, to serve a second master. Therefore the intentions of the prose writer are refracted, and refracted *at different angles*, depending on the degree to which the refracted, heteroglot languages he deals with are socio-ideologically alien, already

> embodied and already objectivized. (“Discourse in the Novel” 299-300)

Bakhtin recognized the Pandora’s box potential of the novel, that the dissonant voice can be disruptive on a real political level. However, even insofar as the dialogic narrative hyperextends and distorts conventional figures, dialogism is no guarantee that power will be subverted, that the putative intent of the narrative can be countenanced or—as we will see—even materialize.

In the case of most war narrative, the putative intent is always the same, anti-war. Almost all war narratives profess an anti-war project. Unfortunately, that profession is often a sham: few of them are legitimately anti-war—irrespective of any dialogic elements present in the text. James Jones provides an over-the-top example of this complication in his dedication in *The Thin Red Line*:

> This book is cheerfully dedicated to those greatest and most heroic of all human endeavors, WAR and WARFARE; may they never cease to give us the pleasure, excitement and adrenal stimulation that we need, or provide us with the heroes, the presidents and leaders, the monuments and museums which we erect to them in the name of PEACE.

Having come across this *non sequitur*, can the reader reasonably expect an *anti*-war narrative to follow, that any dialogic element in the novel has a chance to override Jones’ bellicose master-voice?

The superstructure of narrative itself often becomes an unmanageable hurdle for the artist wishing to tell an anti-war story, a phenomenon attesting to the incapacitating power of militarism. As Ross Chambers says in *Story and Situation,* "narrative does have powers greater than those claimed for it by the narrator and that these are powers of seduction" (211). The structural drama that plays out in many anti-war narratives is that the author becomes seduced by the mechanism of war narrative, and the anti-war project dissolves. Seduction itself can be gauged because of the way the artist perceives his mode of production and his productivity in relation to culture. Gramsci asserts in "The Intellectuals" that the legitimate intellectual is the one who resists his own cooption into hegemony by recognizing the State as "the biggest plutocratic organism" (315). War narrative for the most part provides a cautionary tale for how willingly artists surrender to narrative seduction. It is the rare filmmaker or novelist who perceives himself in the way Gramsci prescribed the artist "role"; instead, these artists perceive themselves in exactly the same terms as the military officer perceives himself: at best (or worst) the cream of the cultural crop, at worst (or best) a servant of society.

As I have done in the previous chapters, I will provide a European example of war narrative as a way of introducing a crucial issue in American war discourse. The American rank system follows a European model, and as such is fraught with European-style class anxieties. As Alfred Vagts demonstrates in *A History of Militarism*, the feudal aristocracy's appropriation of the European

officer system not only created a cult of exclusion, but also stigmatized soldiers from the lower classes. It was an appropriation whose psychic effects—both *for* the officer class and *against* the enlisted class—extended far beyond military circles. In simplest terms, culture conferred honor on the officers, but not on the rank and file soldiers.

Those class vectors, as it turns out, can be very a seductive arrangement to the artist who more often than not identifies with the glamorous officer rather than the simple private. As a result, the seductiveness of the officer rank itself materializes in many war narratives. For example, Jean Renoir's 1937 film *Grand Illusion* is considered by many critics one of the classics of anti-war cinema, but it is a film that wholeheartedly subscribes to officer fetishization. However much Renoir manages to avoid the primary seduction of war narrative (the glorification of war itself), he nevertheless subscribes to certain aristocratic notions of officership, a *trace* that appears in practically all subsequent war film, *especially* American war film. *Grand Illusion* is populated almost exclusively by officers, as the key characters in the film are officer prisoners of war segregated into officer-only *stalags*. The tension in the film arises from the socioeconomic disparity between the aristocratic officers (Captains de Boeldieu and von Rauffenstein) and the bourgeois officers (Lieutenants Marechal and Rosenthal). No enlisted rank appears at all, except for the incompetent German prison guards. Though Renoir appears to interrogate that disparity, he nevertheless reinforces its legitimacy. For example, in one sequence, the two aristocrats, von

Rauffenstein (the *stalag* warden) and de Boeldieu (a French POW) discuss the possibility that the Great War will eliminate the European aristocracy:

> Boeldieu: May I ask you something? Why do you make an exception for me by inviting me to your quarters?
>
> Rauffenstein *in close up*: Why? Because your name is Boeldieu, career officer in the French army, and my name is Rauffenstein, career officer in the imperial German army.
>
> Boeldieu *in close up*: But. . . all my friends are officers, too.
>
> Rauffenstein *disdainfully*: You call Maréchal and Rosenthal. . . officers?
>
> Boeldieu: They are very good soldiers.
>
> Rauffenstein *with contempt*: Yes! . . . The charming legacy of the French Revolution.
>
> Boeldieu *smiling*: I am afraid we can do nothing to turn back the clock.
>
> Rauffenstein: I do not know who is going to win this war, but I know one thing: the end of it, whatever it may be, will be the end of the Rauffensteins and the Boeldieus.
>
> Boeldieu: But perhaps there is no more need for us.
>
> Rauffenstein: And don't you find that is a great pity?
>
> Boeldieu: Perhaps!

de Boeldieu, perhaps speaking for Renoir, says that he will welcome the change. Are we then to interpret that the aristocracy will give way to a bourgeois economy? If so, it is a disturbingly elitist bourgeois economy: the gap between the aristocrat officer and the bourgeois officer is, within military circles, a purely social one (a fact underlined within the film: the bourgeois Rosenthal, heir of a Jewish banking family, has bought up the chateaux that the de Boeldieu family can no longer afford). Moreover, that gap is meaningless outside the context of rank: whether the officers are bourgeois or aristocrat is entirely without meaning to the private who has to wash their clothes. The gap between officer and enlisted ranks is social *and* economic, perhaps too large a hurdle for Renoir to manage.

Ultimately, Renoir treats the enlisted rank somewhat akin to the way Merchant/Ivory films treat the servants: barely visible, and certainly not factored within his compartmentalized economic critique. The advantage, if it can be called such, with a Merchant/Ivory film is that the servants are present as a sort of *mise en scene* that exposes the surreptitious class fantasies at play—the democratic gestures in the film, e.g., the community of officers from various socioeconomic backgrounds[1], are a sham. With respect to Renoir, the absence of the enlisted rank problematizes any egalitarian project with the film: the officer cannot surrogate a commoner. By film's end, Renoir validates both ends of the officer spectrum: de Boeldieu, in an over-the-top act of *noblesse oblige*, sacrifices his life so that Marechal and Rosenthal can escape the *stalag*. And Marechal, in a

parallel act of nobility, conquers his anti-semitism so that he and Rosenthal can cross the Swiss border together.

The problem posed by *Grand Illusion* is its ambivalent politics: does it celebrate a transition to a bourgeois economy (signified by Marechal and Rosenthal's successful escape across the Swiss border)? Or does it Eliot-like yearn for a time when civilization was more ordered, more "civilized"? Renoir himself says of the film: "In 1914, men's spirits had not yet been warped by totalitarian religions and racism. In certain ways, that world war was still a war of formal people, of educated people" (8). Both Truffaut and Bazin asserted, coincidentally using the same word, that Renoir demands in the film that the traditional class system must "subsist[2]." Renoir seems in *Grand Illusion* to articulate a conservative weldschaaft inherited from the nineteenth-century Romantics, for whom, as Erich Auerbach says bitterly, "the fulfillment of beautiful possibilities lies entirely in the flowering of aristocratic cultures" (395). Though a French film, *Grand Illusion* provides a blueprint for the sort of officer-only utopia that one sees in much American World War II propaganda film and post-war narratives such as *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*[3], *Apollo 13*, *The Right Stuff*, and *Top Gun*, narratives which forestall class anxieties by altogether excluding the subaltern ranks.

How is it that so many novels wind up glamorizing the very thing they wish to condemn, the very thing—war—that should be condemned the most? Perhaps because of its many ideological, libidinal, social, and economic

investments, the war narrative has effectively managed that potential for "refraction." War narrative seems uniquely resistant to the threat presented by dialogism and heteroglossia. Though the war narrative may desire to condemn warfare, it is often compelled due to problematics associated with genre to contradict that project. The novel as a political force, after all, has not ushered in a glorious age of peace, so how has it participated in peace's counteraction? This is not a problem associated with heteroglossia but rather with the ideological pressures weighing on the genre of war narrative. Though literary theorists in the post World War II age point to a postmodern practice of dissidence wherein marginalized groups seize certain narrative platforms to articulate a counteraction, a phenomenon Susan Ruben Suleiman calls "postmodern resistance" (and which Eagleton calls the "subversion thesis"), we shouldn't neglect how well immunized hegemony is from that resistance. The war narrative bears witness to that immunity insofar as it gauges how efficiently hegemony coopts forms of resistance to reassert its dominance. Twentieth-century war films and novels offer a compelling lesson about that strategy of cooption. The early twentieth-century novel theorists Bakhtin and Lukács saw the novel as perhaps the most effective form of political insurgency, but even they recognized that as a genre, the novel was easy prey for the reaction. Lukács says, "[T]he novel is the most hazardous genre" because it can be seized by forms whose "superficial likeness can almost lead to the caricature being

mistaken for the real thing" (73). These "caricatures" not only attempt to defuse forms of resistance, but also empower the machinery of domination.

It seems highly unlikely that in a relatively benign novel such as *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, Sloan Wilson desires to buttress the powers of hegemony, but inasmuch as he does not interrogate the programs that contribute to that reinforcement (one of the more pressing is, as I hope to have demonstrated in Chapter II, his insistence on presenting the military officer as a person deserving higher status in *and* out of the military), he legitimates the class distinctions presented in the novel. What should be clear from these complications is how careful the democratic artist must be in order to participate in a liberatory process. What the anti-war artist must understand is that in order to effect an anti-war statement, he or she *must* work against the will of the state.

In his famous essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,"Althusser asserts that many art forms are "a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in words'" (133). In the war narrative's relative incapacity to interrogate the state's machinery of repression—indeed it may be a crucial cog in that machinery, often with the full endorsement of the artist (see, for example, the works of Tom Clancy, W.E.B. Griffin, and [believe it or not] Oliver North, whose works are the "caricatures" Lukács warns against)—the genre may almost preclude anything but its participation in repression and domination, thus

becoming a participant in what Althusser calls "surplus value extortion" (137). It is tempting then to conclude that the state is too powerful a force—it has absorbed the anti-war narrative into its machinery[4]. But that is not true. There are, to be sure, legitimately anti-war narratives. First World War texts such as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfriend Sassoon are *real* condemnations of war. Their efficacy, however, is rooted, not so much in their articulation that war is bad, but rather in their resistance to the fetishisms usually present in war narrative. Their realism centers in that fact of warfare too often elided in the fetishistic discourse of war: the deliberate, strategic killing of human beings.

The state distorts that fact by reformulating it in two special ways. First, it presents warfare as a historical inevitability that it has no control over. This sort of artful dodge can be seen in the official discourse on warfare. In 1898, President William McKinley said America's participation in the Spanish-American War happened because "the march of events rules and overrules human actions."[5] He was thereby able to displace his culpability in America's colonial expansion onto the ethereal agent of "destiny," a strategy of displacement that has become a favored rhetorical strategy for many subsequent American Presidents. Second, the state capitalizes on certain nebulous investments related to warfare to enlist the populace into participation—heroism, glory, courage, honor, sacrifice, and duty. But we mustn't infer from this particular reformulation that the state needs coercion to spur its people to

war: society's inclination toward war has been fostered by centuries of narratives bearing witness to the glory and desirability of war. Perhaps the most reliable indicator of how fetishism may be the controlling impetus for American-style warmaking is that war is always "avowed" as the state's last option even though empirical evidence since the Korean War suggests that war may be the state's first option.

A side effect of the durability and persistence of the conventional war narrative tropes is that they push to the margins the affects that the anti-war artist must interrogate. The drunk, illiterate sergeant as a trope endures because its currency is desire (we want his divested, caricatured condition to appear "natural"), and also that the trope is seemingly based on reality, even though that reality is no more "real" than the lazy Negro or the inscrutable Chinaman (tropes that have clearer political strategies). Though the conventional device, as D.A. Miller suggests (see Chapter III), serves primarily to immunize certain aspects of the narrative project from analysis, on a macrocosmic level the persistent trope as a cultural practice participates in immunizing dominant culture from the democratization of power. What should be clear from historical analysis, though it certainly is not, is the eugenicist agenda of warmaking, effected through a strategic maintenance of marginalized groups (i.e., that the prejudices about "them" are really true) and the subsequent tactical expenditure of their lives during war[6]. Though the artist may express a desire to end warfare in general, or a war in particular, his or her participation in conventional

representational practices reifies the power of the dominant/dominating cultural institutions—the institutions that have the most to lose in the absence of war.

The attraction of the stereotype, particularly the negative—or divested, in the case of the enlisted man—stereotype, is its comforting fixity. As Homi Bhabha argues in his essay, “The Other Question,” the fixity of stereotypes “connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition” (66). The war narrative presents that disorder and degeneracy, but the reader/spectator delights in that presentation because he or she knows that the narrative can (and will) regulate it. With respect to conventional representations of the enlisted rank—in and out of war narrative—its comically hyperbolic negativity functions as a political expedient: ensuring that any anxiety about war, the military, and militarism is channeled toward the “correct” ideological terminus.

The separation of ranks into officer and enlisted compartments is completely nonsensical except for its ingenuity. One would think that, at least in a democracy, military rank would be contingent exclusively on merit. It seems reasonable that a sergeant with 22 years of service would be the one barking orders to a 22 year-old lieutenant fresh out of West Point. But that scenario does not exist in the military—the lieutenant has the sort of authority and mystical/magical power beyond the reach, but not beyond the comprehension, of the sergeant, characteristics that increase with each increment in rank. By the time that high school quarterback achieves the rank of general or admiral, he is

as close to being a god that one can be in American culture. The ingenuity of this system, above and beyond the mystical aura, is that the psychological divestments of the enlisted rank operate as a type of cultural "sign" that redirects cultural dysphoria about warfare away from the military *in general* and onto the enlisted rank *in specific*. Lawrence Suid's encyclopedic history of American war cinema, *Guts and Glory*, provides dozens of examples of the Department of Defense's unwillingness to provide support to films that show officers in a negative light. The Department of Defense understands the profound impact that film has on American culture, and subsequently that a negative portrayal of officers threatens the aura and immunity of the officer caste. Inasmuch as there is no aura, only divestments, associated with the enlisted rank, the Department of Defense does not care whether the sergeant is portrayed negatively. Or, more accurately, that the Department of Defense tries to ensure, so as to capitalize on the film industry's economy of fetishism, that any negative portrayal *must* be by the enlisted rank.

While my project is *not* to reverse the trajectories of enlisted and officer representation, I still think it important to assert that the primary strategy of the conventional tropes in war narrative is to deflect warfare dysphoria away from the rank, in the persons of the high ranking officers who are "in charge," that *wages war*. Narrative practices have actually subscribed to and colluded with the belief that the upper echelons of the officer rank may function as a *deterrent* to

war, a phenomenon that has no basis in reality but nevertheless has an enduring currency.

As it is now, those representational strategies (officer = good / enlisted man = bad) are entrenched in the political unconscious. Why, it seems reasonable to ask, *is* there an officer/enlisted distinction in militaries—particularly in militaries of democratic states? Why is it that almost no artist interrogates that archaic system? Perhaps there is too strong a trace of class anxieties holding over from the New Model Army and the French Revolution, systems wherein soldiers from the lower castes seized a power up to that time denied them, a power to be sure often abused. But those anxieties arise primarily from the *historical fact* of their having power more so than of their uses and abuses of that power. Insofar as the Western aristocratic nobility monopolized the officer rank for centuries, those novel redistributions of military power always carried with them the taint of illegitimacy. Montesquieu articulated this anxiety in the eighteenth century:

> All is lost if the lucrative profession of the trader should succeed by its riches in ever becoming an honored profession. . . A disgust then seizes all the other estates, honor loses all its esteem, the slow and natural means of distinguishing oneself do not apply any longer, and the government is stricken in principle.[7]

Were the bourgeois to poison the officer rank, one of the last markers of *real* nobility, then nobility itself would lose its luster. The American model of

officership implies a nobility of the soul: it is only via merit that an American can obtain a commission[8], a clever system that fetishistically disavows antiquated notions of nobility. The germane consideration here is that irrespective of the *relative* legitimacy of officership, there is no quality for the enlisted rank to compensate for its cultural divestment.

To be sure, there are novels that *gesture* towards an interrogation of the immunity of the officer rank[9]. But the fetishization of the officer rank is a powerful epistemological seduction, and thereby prompts the narrative to compensate for that interrogation. A compelling example can be found in Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), a work that weakly attempts to expose certain negative elements of the officer rank. It is a novel that *almost* challenges the legitimacy of the rank division. Unlike James Jones, whose depiction of the officer rank centers on his belief that it is effeminate, Mailer's critique focuses on the officer rank's socioeconomic prerogative: he presents all but one officer as reactionary, elitist, and contemptuous of their subordinates. It is perhaps Mailer's contempt of the officer rank that motivates the narrative, but as in *Paths of Glory*, that suggestion of officer critique creates a narrative vacuum that necessitates a compensatory "good" officer, one who counterbalances the bad. It is this compensatory strategy in the novel that bears witness to its investment in the fetishistic economy of war narrative.

The representative bad officer in *The Naked and the Dead* is General Cummings, a reactionary bully. Similar to the generals in *Paths of Glory*,

Cummings' effectiveness as a military commander is directly proportional to his contempt for his enlisted subordinates (what the American military seems to regard as good officership, according to "Army Professionalism, The Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century" [see Chapter II]). The novel is a fictional account of the American army's attack of "Anopopei," an island in the Pacific, during World War II—a thinly disguised Guadalcanal. The crucial campaign in the novel involves an attack behind enemy lines, an attack whose efficacy centers on its placing its soldiers in an untenable position, a position ensuring a large number of casualties. The sensible alternative is to attack the enemy's frontline with the American army's overwhelming numerical majority, but Cummings rejects that option because the rear attack has a certain "psychological soundness": "The men who would land at Botoi would be in the enemy rear without any safe way to retreat, and their only security would be to drive ahead and meet their own troops. They would *have* to advance" (326). Cummings perceives his unconscionable contempt for the enlisted rank as a crucial necessity for successful fighting, saying at one point, "The Army functions best when you're frightened of the man above you, and contemptuous of your subordinates" (152).

Chapter 8 of the novel, wherein the officers enjoy a beach party (as enlisted soldiers guard the perimeter), crystallizes the officer critique:

> "Oh, I have to tell you this," Dove was saying now. "We had a party once at Fischler's place in the Wardman Park Hotel,

> Lieutenant Commander Fischler, an old sidekick of my brother's at Cornell, hell of a swell fellow and knew a lot of VIPs, that's how he got the room in Wardman Park, but he gave this party, and in the middle of it he started wandering around pouring a couple of drops of liquor in everybody's hair. Good for dandruff, he kept saying. Oh, it was wonderful." Dove giggled remembering it.
>
> Hearn stared at Dove. Lieutenant (sg) Dove, USNR. A Cornell man, a Deke, a perfect asshole. He was six feet two and weighed about a hundred and sixty pounds, with straight ash-blond hair cut close, and a clean pleasant vacuous face. He looked more like a Harvard clubman, varsity crew. (204)

Though the point of this scene seems to be to spotlight the absurd affectations of the officers, that point is too heavy a burden for the narrative to bear: there must be a "good" officer to counteract the bad. Standing in sharp relief to these absurd officers is the "good" character, not surprisingly an officer, Lieutenant Hearn, whose moral superiority is effected by his self-consciousness: he has the decency to feel contempt for his snobby colleagues and guilt about the socioeconomic gulf between himself and his enlisted subordinates. Hearn is, like Captain Kinross in *In Which We Serve* and Colonel Dax in *Paths of Glory*, the sort of super officer whose pseudo-liberal sensitivities putatively neutralize any anxiety about officership, about the fact(or) of the officer/enlisted division.

Mailer compounds that compensatory strategy by hyperbolizing the negativity of the major enlisted character, Sergeant Croft, who is in addition to being a terrific warrior, almost indescribably evil. At various points in the novel he kills a striking coal miner, abandons his pregnant girlfriend, steals the gold teeth from dead soldiers, and murders a Japanese POW who is showing him pictures of his wife and children. Because the enlisted soldier is a priori divested in the American political unconscious, these behaviors do not require any sort of compensation in the novel.

What this ostensibly critical narrative reveals is how resistant the officer caste is to criticism, and, as a correlative effect, how seductive it is to the artist. Lieutenant Hearn is the character that the novel most clearly identifies with. And he is certainly the character Mailer—who, like James Jones, was a sergeant in World War II—most clearly invests with sensibility and humanity.

Though it is an uneasy relationship that *The Naked and the Dead* fosters with the officer rank, that rank is ultimately the bar of legitimacy in the novel. A compelling example occurs in Chapter 12, where an enlisted soldier attempts to secure for himself a "Section 8," a psychological discharge. The soldier, Private Minetta, is shot in the leg during a skirmish and is sent to a field hospital. There he finds out to his dismay that his wound is only a scratch, and that after 48 hours he will be sent back to his unit. However, he does not want to go back into action, so he removes his bandages and reopens his wound. The next day, the doctor re-dresses the wound and gives him another 24 hours of convalescence.

Minetta then devises a scheme where he will act crazy so that he will be sent to a psych ward. But the doctor is not fooled:

> "All right," the doctor began, "let's cut this out, Minetta. You're not going to get away with it."
>
> "Fug you, you wouldn't get the Jap," Minetta screamed.
>
> The doctor shook him. "Minetta, *you're talking to an officer in the U. S. Army*. If you don't answer civilly, I'll have you court-martialed." (306)

This confrontation prompts Minetta to grumble about the unfairness of the officer/enlisted division, thinking to himself, "The goddam officers, they think the whole Army is set up for them to have a good time [. . .] I'm as good as anybody else; why should some sonofabitch give me orders?" (309). Here Minetta articulates the officer/enlisted tension that the novel as a whole desires to address; however, because the novel projects Minetta as a derelict (a projection compounded by his Italian ethnicity), those concerns are, if not de-legitimized, then certainly problematized. The officer perspective here performs the *epistemological* arbitration, that is, it functions as the position of legitimacy. While it would be disingenuous to assert that this passage exposes Mailer's interrogation of rank privilege as fraudulent, it certainly bears witness to the power that rank wields, and perhaps to how poorly equipped Mailer is in this novel to tackle the enduring problem of class difference: *The Naked and the Dead* ultimately submits to the power and aura of rank and privilege. As with James

Jones, Mailer's insistence on projecting the enlisted rank conventionally aligns *The Naked and the Dead* with unproblematic, hagiographic officer-texts, such as the *Master and Commander* series by Patrick O'Brian or *The Killer Angels* by Michael Shiarra, texts which present the virtuous officer as a cast-iron figure beyond the reach of cynicism, beyond the tentacles of interpretation.

If there is any element legitimating the officer critique in *The Naked and the Dead*, it is that Mailer's reformatory officer, Lt. Hearn, is sacrificed. General Cummings penalizes Hearn's humanitarian and sympathetic relationship with the enlisted subordinates (Hearn's *noblesse oblige*) by giving him command of a suicide mission. Hearn, of course, dies in the mission, a textual development suggesting that Mailer's putative critique is "genuine," i.e., that the military machinery may be "beyond" rehabilitation. I bring up this complication to highlight the persistent difference between war film and war novel: in a film version, officer iconography trumps class anxiety (see note 7). In the Hollywood version of *The Naked and the Dead* (1958, dir. Raoul Walsh), Lt. Hearn, played by Cliff Robertson, survives. His narrative death was apparently too large a burden for the film—and by extension the Department of Defense—to bear.

Though it is inaccurate to classify *The Naked and the Dead*, like its close cousin *From Here to Eternity*, an anti-war novel, it nevertheless explores the frustration regarding class in the military. An under-explored phenomenon in war narrative criticism[10] is that those novels were written by novelists from the enlisted rank. Both James Jones and Norman Mailer were Army sergeants in

World War II. As it turns out, many American novels most clearly projecting a legitimate anti-war sentiment were written by novelists whose military service was in the enlisted rank. Those novelists' adroitness is to a large degree informed by their positions as subalterns in the military, a position that strongly modulates their critique. This enlisted novel tradition rises from the groundbreaking novels *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane and *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Remarque, novels narrated from an enlisted perspective (and, in the case of Remarque, written by an enlisted soldier). The American anti-war novels emerging from this tradition are *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow* by Thomas Pynchon, *Slaughterhouse 5* by Kurt Vonnegut, *Battle Cry* by Leon Uris, *Meditations in Green* by Stephen Wright, *The Things They Carried* and *Going After Cacciato* by Tim O'Brien, and *Williwaw* by Gore Vidal. The novelist in this tradition sees himself in a sort of military purgatory: as an intellectual in the subaltern rank, he identifies with the officer psychically, but with the enlisted man physically. For example, the narrator in Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5* (Vonnegut himself) says of a retired officer acquaintance, "He used to ask me sneeringly sometimes why I hadn't been an officer, as though I'd done something wrong" (10). The narrative challenge, then, is to resist the impetus to align the narrative with the elite rank, whose auratic seductions undermine a resistance to warmaking.

In large measure, this subaltern development evokes the analyses of Bakhtin and Lukács, who see the novel's historical role that of subverting

entrenched power systems. Those systems, however, do not cede their power willingly. While a novel from the subaltern perspective may create an epistemological rupture[11], forces within the superstructure of culture work quickly to manage that rupture—ideological damage control, most often effected in war narrative by (quickly) replacing the bad officer with the good. The sharp rise in the subaltern war perspective, beginning with Crane and rising to a peak in Vietnam war novels, parallels the rise in populist labor movements, movements whose power was fueled by a democratic belief that all men really were created equal (an extraordinarily dangerous notion in military ranks). But that rise, like the labor movements, does not develop unimpeded. There is, beginning with the communist paranoia rising after the first World War (a paranoia coinciding with the metastasis of late-capitalism industrial growth) a process of cultural containment that materializes in novels and films, a type of class "correction" that can be traced in pre-World War II mainstream cinema (where we learn that the insouciant rich really do have our best interests at heart). Frederic Jameson notes in *Signatures of the Visible* that in the 1930s "Hollywood's images of domesticity [. . .] suddenly came to be seen, not as 'realism' but as compensatory wish-fulfillment and consolation" (174). And then in the post-World War II war novel, we learn that the officer class, a class transcending class, represents an American aristocracy of the soul. Where despite our discourse on government-by-the-people, our *praxis* reveals at worst a plutocracy, at best a dangerous meritocracy where the "best" of certain

socioeconomic groups are excised from the ghetto and subsequently grafted into dominant culture.

In the Lukácsean "caricature" novel, such as *The Hunt for Red October* by Tom Clancy, one can see how the novelist cannot work fast enough in that alignment. Clancy spends no energy interrogating the problems associated with reaction, nationalism, and xenophobia—for Clancy, those are virtues. The dissident or interrogative novel, however, *desires* to present a strategy of resistance. But the paucity of narrative elements in the war story (rarely is the plot about the nation versus the enemy—usually the story involves internecine rivalries) may work to align the narrative in conventional vectors. The most obvious and persistent story in the American war narrative is the "real" hero triumphing over the "fraudulent" hero. Most often, of course, it is the officer whose aristocracy is in his heart rather than the effete officer whose aristocracy is on paper (i.e., false). However antidotal this narrative strategy may appear, it nonetheless restates the necessity of hierarchy, legitimate now instead of artificial. It bears repeating that this "drama" persists in marginalizing the enlisted rank, a strategy of exclusion that exposes elitist traces in the "otherwise" dissident novel. Both the dissident and the jingoistic novel, therefore, have a tendency to participate in the exclusion of the preterite.

An under-analyzed war narrative that articulates this American version of aristocracy is Gore Vidal's first novel, *Williwaw*, written in 1946. The novel has experienced a renaissance of sorts in the last few years (a new edition from

Abacus appeared in 2003) because of the presence of an openly gay character (Lieutenant Hodges). The interesting aspect of this novel with respect to class considerations is that it is written/narrated from a perspective straddling the enlisted and officer ranks—the warrant officer's. This mid-perspective serves as a helpful gauge for measuring how the American war novel directs its class vectors. Technically, the warrant officer is an "officer," but there is a stigma attached to the rank implying a certain illegitimacy. "Regular" officers sneeringly refer to warrants as "sergeants who eat in the officer's club."[12] Warrant officer therefore is a sort of purgatorial caste located between the enlisted and officer ranks. Gore Vidal himself enlisted in the Army Air Force in World War II, but was promoted to warrant officer at the age of 19, a fact doubtlessly influencing the class tensions present in the novel.

Williwaw provides compelling evidence demonstrating how the American war story often works toward elitism and exclusion. The hero of *Williwaw*, Evans, is a warrant officer who commands an Army Air Force transport boat in Alaska during the last period of World War II. *Williwaw* is war novel only in the sense that its action takes place during the war. A subtext is that the Japanese had abandoned the Aleutian chain long before the novel's action, a *non*-development focusing attention toward the class/masculinity complications that are often refracted in the straightforward war novel. The complication in the novel rises when Evans is ordered to transport a conventional Army officer, Major Barkison, from one small island in the Aleutian chain to another.

Barkison, characterized by the same over-the-top class affectations as the officers in *From Here to Eternity* and *The Naked and the Dead*, demands to be transported to his headquarters despite Evans' warnings that the weather might turn rough on the voyage. Insisting that he "would never have a boat sent out in weather like this unless it were important" (8), Barkison's rank overrules Evans' reticence. Implied in the narrative during the voyage is that there had been no imperative for the voyage other than Barkison's suspicion that he would be promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel upon his arrival. During the voyage, a freak storm known as a "williwaw" severely damages the ship, almost sinking it. Despite a broken mast and a dreadful crash against rocks, the ship survives the voyage and makes it to base. Greeted at the pier by high-ranking officers, Barkison finds out that he has indeed been promoted. He then chastises Evans for embarking on such a dangerous voyage:

> "I'm quite appreciative of what you, ah, did. I'm not quite sure in my mind, however, that it was a wise thing to do, to take a ship out in such bad weather."
>
> Evans was surprised and a little angry. "What do you mean, Major, I mean Colonel?"
>
> "Nothing at all except that some might say, now mind you I don't, but some might say you showed bad judgment." (166)

Though the class tensions of the novel are clearly between Evans, an officer coming from a working class family, and Barkison, a conventional East

coast patrician, the novel shies away from that confrontation (though both Evans and the third-person narrator often satirize Barkison), instead transferring those tensions to two relatively minor characters, Bervick and Duval. Bervick, a sergeant, and Duval, another warrant officer, "play out" the class warfare suggested by Evans and Barkison. Their rivalry correlates to Evans and Barkison's insofar as both pairs project the frustrations of the class difference entrenched in the American military. The drama that unfolds in the Bervick-Duval rivalry is the conventional love triangle, both characters vying for the affections of a prostitute named Olga. When the ship pulls into the port of "Big Harbor,"[13] Bervick rushes off to buy a present, a pillowcase with the words *To My Sweetheart* sewn on it, for Olga. When he goes to the restaurant where she works as a waitress, he finds Duval talking to her. The ensuing confrontation highlights the socioeconomic difference between the two men:

> "What are you doing tonight? Are you going to see this guy?" Bervick asked. Olga flushed and thought a moment. Bervick knew already what she would answer. Olga liked money too well. But, knowing this, he still wanted her.
>
> Olga decided to be angry. "What makes you two think you're so good you can tell me what to do? I think you're both conceited. Maybe I ain't interested in neither of you."

> "Maybe you're right," said Duval. "I guess I'll just pay for some coffee and get on out." Then he opened his wallet and let her see the thick sheaf of bills. Her eyes narrowed.
>
> "What you in such a hurry to go for? My gracious, you'd think I was poison or something?" A customer yelled for food and she went back into the kitchen.
>
> "I'd like to break your back," said Bervick very deliberately, making each word a curse.
>
> "Don't get upset, Sergeant. I just got more than you." (43-44)

Like Karen Holmes in *From Here to Eternity*, Olga's sole function in *Williwaw* is to mark "the play of emulation and identification" between two men, a play that underlines the homoerotic element in the rivalry dynamic. That factor notwithstanding, the Bervick-Duval rivalry exists in the novel primarily to manage the class anxieties suggested in the Evans-Barkison rivalry. Because Evans "performs" the officer fetish in the novel, he is excused from acting on the frustration brought on by the presence of the absurd Major. The novel, as a result, "enlists" Sergeant Bervick, who has been libidino-economically divested by losing the rivalry to Duval, to neutralize that tension. When, late in the novel, Bervick throws a hammer at Duval, causing him to fall overboard, he has done more than exact revenge on the guy who stole his girl: he has in effect taken management of the class tensions presented by Evans and Barkison. However,

that closure of the diegetic complication has reinforced, rather than subverted, the class dynamics aboard the ship. The novel, in the end, protects the immunity of the officer class, "handing off" the epistemological dirty work to the sergeant.

Williwaw's and *The Naked and the Dead*'s politics demonstrate the degree to which the officer perspective, even when it is a *modulated* officer perspective, has a tendency to align war narrative with the will of the state. I believe this phenomenon occurs because of the extraordinary power that culture exerts on narrative production—a *praxis* devastatingly measured by the Frankfurt School. The American military officer, insofar as he surrogates a so-called *legitimate* class system (a system predicated on merit rather than blood), is a cultural insider, a condition insulating him from the subaltern and thereby projecting his attitude toward the subaltern as one of *noblesse oblige*. This is the drama playing out in *The Naked and the Dead*, where the subalterns are inferior to Lieutenant Hearn, and not just in terms of rank. A notable exception to this phenomenon of officer rank seduction is *A History of Militarism*, by Alfred Vagts, a writer who spares no effort in his vitriolic attack on the artificiality of the European/American rank system. Vagts, who was himself an officer in the German army during World War I, is unique in both his resistance to rank seduction and in his understanding of how the two-tiered rank system is a crucial element in the proliferation of militarism. But *A History of Militarism* is a work of historical analysis, not a novel, thus excused from submitting to certain narrative conventions[14]. The seductions inherent in the officer rank tend to direct narrative elements in

conventional trajectories. The best chance, it seems, for war narrative to resist the seductions inherent in the genre—and inherent in rank—is for it to be constructed from an outsider's perspective. "The truest eye," says Homi Bhabha, "may now belong to the migrant's double vision" (5). The great American war novels, I believe, are written from the enlisted rank, if not from the enlisted perspective, and that rank's subaltern position has a tendency to destabilize a genre that is more comfortable working in the service of hegemony.

Most often this narrative destabilization takes the form of parody. What comes immediately to mind is the parade of outrageous officers in the Pynchon canon. *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, for example, present their officers in a willfully exaggerated fashion. Lieutenant Slothrop (whose erections act as homing beacons to V-2 rockets), General Pudding (paying his penance for being incompetent by literally eating the shit of the double agent Katje Borgesius), Major Marvy (one of the more delightfully over-the-top evil characters in all of war literature), and Captain Blicero seem to be designed as cartoonish distortions of conventional officers. However, inasmuch as those characters often work in close narrative proximity to the genocidal General Lothar von Trotha (who appears in both novels), a historical figure responsible for the deaths of 80,000 Herero men, women, and children in 1904 Namibia, Pynchon's distortions don't really seem like distortions at all. Which may be the point entirely. The troubling aspect of Pynchon's rank sensibility, though, is that he is an equal opportunity parodist—the enlisted characters are drawn in similar fashion. The

closest one gets to finding a sympathetic enlisted character in Pynchon is *V.*'s Benny Profane (who is ex-enlisted during the action of *V.*), a typical Pynchonian schlemiel. Profane is a character closer to a conventionally divested subaltern such as Gomer Pyle, Gilligan, or Forrest Gump, and as such aligns with a more state-sanctioned prescription for the enlisted rank. However much one may wish to find an enlisted character in Pynchon who functions as an antidote to the pathological officers Pynchon so gleefully presents, none exists in Pynchon's arsenal, at least not to the degree that Oedipa Maas contrasts against her environment in *The Crying of Lot 49*. However troubling it may be that Pynchon conventionally presents the enlisted rank, those representations seem to be "corrections" to the diseased officer rank only in terms of distortional degree.

In the post-Pynchon culture of the American war novel, one novelist is particularly resistant to the genre's conventional seductions, Tim O'Brien. His two great Vietnam War novels, *Going After Cacciato* (1978) and *The Things They Carried* (1990), spring from O'Brien's experiences as an enlisted soldier. Both are narrated from the foot soldier's perspective, a perspective more commonly associated with divestment, infantilization, and sentimentality. A key aspect of the ideological efficacy of these novels is that O'Brien resists the fetishisms usually associated with war fiction: he is, starting with *Going After Cacciato*[15], immune to the allurements of the officer rank, and, significantly, resists any associated compensation for the enlisted rank. O'Brien's project with the two

novels is to critique the way readers approach the war narrative genre, a reading strategy often comfortable with the ideological alignments of the state.

As an example of this conventional alignment that O'Brien seeks, in no uncertain terms, to expose as completely fraudulent occurs when the first private dies in the shockingly reactionary film, *We Were Soldiers* (2002, dir. Randall Wallace), his last words being, "I'm glad I died for my country." This sort of brazen pathos has always been the nationalistic text's trump card: eliciting sadness from the reader/spectator has a tendency to blunt any anxiety about politics[16]. Furthermore, the sacrifice soldiers make in combat has a tendency to evoke overwhelming feelings of awe and national pride, feelings that historically engender a desire for the platform that produces that sacrifice. The problem is not that we are desensitized to war, as Dalton Trumbo suggests in *Johnny Got his Gun*[17], but rather that we are perhaps too sensitized to it. Acutely aware of these sorts of epistemological hazards, O'Brien's narrator in *The Things They Carried* warns the reader not to look for a "moral" in the war story:

> A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things men have always done. If a story seems moral, do not believe it. If at the end of a war story, you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the

> victim of a very old and terrible lie. There is no rectitude whatsoever. There is no virtue. (76)

O'Brien in this famous passage reveals his remarkable sensitivity to the politics that war narrative is traditionally in the service of, and he announces his resistance to those politics. Like his literary hero, Wilfred Owen, he realizes that war stories conventionally terminate on the worst sort of genocidal lie: *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. In his memoir, *If I Die in a Combat Zone. . . Box me up and Send me Home*, he calls it "an epitaph for the insane" (174). The challenge then for O'Brien is to resist the gravitational pull seemingly inherent in the epistemology of war narrative. Though Pynchon, Heller, and Vonnegut deploy irony and distortion to manage that pull, O'Brien instead utilizes a form of realism mixed with saturating self-consciousness, an admixture given credibility and immediacy due to O'Brien's own experiences as a subaltern in the Vietnam War. O'Brien's project, especially in *The Things They Carried*, brings to mind Jameson's suggestion in *The Political Unconscious* that realism "has as its historic function the systematic undermining and demystification, the secular 'decoding,' of those preexisting inherited traditional or sacred narrative paradigms which are its initial givens" (152).

That divested sensitivity, or what Homi Bhabha would call a "partial presence," materializes in *If I Die* when O'Brien says, "Can the foot soldier teach anything important about war, merely from having been there? I think not. He can tell war stories" (32). Though there has been much analysis of O'Brien

recently[18], very little of it takes notice of O'Brien's enlisted status. It is that subaltern status that to a large degree motivates O'Brien's anti-war project. In *Going After Cacciato* and *The Things They Carried*, officers occupy central roles, but in each novel, O'Brien encodes a critique of the officer rank.

There are three prominent officers in the two novels, Lieutenants Martin and Corson in *Going After Cacciato*, and Lieutenant Cross in *The Things They Carried*. All of them are incompetent, and all of them have the specific diegetic role of killing the men under their command. This homicidal role materializes most obviously in *The Things They Carried*, where Lieutenant Cross's obsession over his girl back home—a girl, it should be noted, completely uninterested in him—indirectly results in the death of one of the soldiers under his command. While O'Brien is careful not to be overtly didactic in his novels, the incompetent officers in his two novels serve as a surprisingly ironic terminus for war dysphoria—an almost unique phenomenon in American war narrative. Unlike the bad officers in texts such as *Paths of Glory*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *Attack!*, *The Caine Mutiny*, or *A Few Good Men*, the bad officers in O'Brien stand uncompensated.

O'Brien's divestment strategy actually culminates with an *anti*-compensation in *Going After Cacciato*. The first officer, Lieutenant Martin, is a by-the-book gung-ho commander who exhibits the sort of "leadership" that is perceived as good officership in officer discourse, that is, someone who treats his subordinates with contempt:

> The lieutenant had been trained in common sense and military strategy. He had read Theucydides and von Clausewitz, and he considered war a means to an end, with a potential for both good and bad, but interest was in effectiveness and not goodness. A soldier's interest is in means, not ends. So the young lieutenant prided himself on his knowledge of tactics and strategy and history, his fluency in German and Spanish, his West Point training, his ability to maximize a unit's potential. (163)

O'Brien crystallizes this leadership pathology in a sub-plot involving the famous Vietnamese tunnels. The by-the-book procedure in the Vietnam War was to inspect the tunnels before blowing them up. Because that practice resulted in an extraordinarily high number of American casualties, the procedure was often adjusted to include merely the "blowing up." Lieutenant Martin always ordered the men to inspect the tunnels first, an insistence that costs the life of two of the unit's soldiers, Frenchie and Bernie. After Frenchie's death, the soldiers refuse to inspect subsequent tunnels. When the unit comes across another tunnel, the tension comes to a head:

> "Sir," Oscar said. "I don't aim to be disagreeable. It's not my nature. But, honest, there's not a man here, not a single soul, who is gonna put hisself down that hole."
>
> Lieutenant Sidney Martin took a notebook from his pocket. "Go down," he said.

"No." Oscar smiled. "I don't believe I will." (232-33)

Lieutenant Martin then writes the name of every soldier in his notebook, all of them refusing to go into the tunnel. Unholstering his .45, he then crawls into the tunnel himself, during which the men decide to kill him. Insisting that every one agree to the "fragging," they all symbolically touch the grenade they will throw into the next tunnel Lieutenant Martin enters. Significantly, so as to avoid the seductive violence of retribution, O'Brien does not "narrate" the fragging: Lieutenant Martin's death is implied by the appearance of his replacement, Lieutenant Corson.

Though Lieutenant Corson's role in the diegesis of *Cacciato* exists primarily in Paul Berlin's fantasized journey from Vietnam to Paris, his significance is that he does not compensate for the divested officer he replaces. Unlike the youthful Martin, Corson is old and tired. If anything, he is Martin twenty years older, with the added disability of chronic dysentery—perhaps a comical vengeance wrought by the enlisted novelist. In O'Brien's fiction, no officer strides in boldly to restore order; furthermore—and just as significantly—no sergeant either, as in *From Here to Eternity*. O'Brien is extraordinarily careful to avoid those conventional elements, knowing as he does the "work" those conventions perform. But there is an honesty to O'Brien's work that problematizes his officer critique. In *Cacciato*, there is a curious incident during the "journey" from Vietnam to Paris involving Lieutenant Corson. Bearing the unbearable burdens of stupidity, laziness, drunkenness, and illness—

divestments conventionally associated with the enlisted rank—Corson finally collapses in Delhi. Before passing out, he orders the men to leave him in Delhi and to abandon their search for Cacciato (Italian for "the hunted"). But they do not obey the orders: citing the axiom that you don't leave a man behind, the soldiers grab Corson by the arms and legs and carry him on their journey. There is an ambiguity to this passage, suggesting that the officer is a burden that the enlisted carry—but also that the agency associated with their carrying implicates them in the insanity of their mission[19].

The image of the enlisted soldiers carrying their incompetent officer through the streets of Delhi works nicely as a crystallization of O'Brien's negotiation with the officer-enlisted problem. While he is explicit in his disdain for the officer class—clearly articulated in the description of Lieutenant Martin, he is careful not to epistemologically compensate with a distorted enlisted antidote (as Jones does in *From Here to Eternity*). In O'Brien's fiction, all are implicated, not the least of whom being the reader, whose motivations for reading war narrative are seriously interrogated.

The great shift in officer iconography occurred, if not in the Vietnam War, then in the Vietnam War narrative. It seems unlikely that a narrative before Vietnam could have countenanced an incompetent officer such as Lieutenant Wolfe from the film *Platoon*—at least to the degree that it would let him *stay* in the narrative. Such an officer might have appeared, for example Lieutenant "Dynamite" Holmes in the film version of *From Here to Eternity*, but only as a

cancer to be excised from the narrative so as to restore narrative health (and to appease the Department of Defense, who provides materials to films only under the condition that the officer class remain untainted[20]).

But the officer rank, as a sort of Foucauldian metonymy of power, has remained resistant to critique. The conventional diegesis in Vietnam War narrative is to criticize the government for its inability to adequately support its military (the implication for Rambo's famous question in *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, "Do we get to win this time?" is that the soldiery was competent enough to win Vietnam, but it was betrayed by a Quisling government), a critique which presents the American military machinery as, ironically, a *victim* of the war. Susan Jeffords suggests in The *Remasculinization of America* that Vietnam, rather than serving as an interrogation of patriarchy and militarism, instead is the site where those phenomena are reasserted. For example, even in the shambolic *Rambo* model of "critique," Richard Crenna's Colonel Trautman remains immune, his aura redirecting the frustration and dysphoria away from the officer rank. Thus the immune officer in the *Rambo* films is indistinguishable from the countercultural officers in *M*A*S*H*, both being excused from taking responsibility for the insane machinery of death.

There is a fantasy we entertain in America that suggests that the Vietnam War changed the way we read war narrative—we cannot, so it is supposed, read war narrative with the same sort of naïve wonder we allegedly did back in the good old days. It seems that only in the post-Vietnam era can a writer like Tim

O'Brien call himself, as he does in *If I Die in a Combat Zone*, a "conscripted Nazi." Though nowadays there seems to be more war narratives that interrogate the conventions of war fiction, the class dynamics remain intact. Since the Vietnam War, there has in fact been an explosion of reactionary war novels and films (a trend exacerbated by the 9/11 tragedy). While we can justly interpret a film such as *The Green Berets* as the most egregious sort of over-arching propaganda film, it actually provides a blueprint for subsequent war narratives, narratives that re-assert, rather than interrogate, the traditions of war fiction. For every one Tim O'Brien, there are a dozen Tom Clancys and W.E.B Griffins, a dozen *Pearl Harbors* and *We Were Soldiers*. With respect to class dynamics, officer fetishism is even more strongly asserted in the Nixon-Reagan-Bush era, though the fetish is often covert. The most common disguise is a hyper-sexualized masculinity that erases any residue of effeminacy from half-century-old conventions. The fetishized officer in postmodern America is still homologous to his World War II counterpart: non-ethnic white Midwesterner. Nowadays he may actually utter a curse word or two and even have sex (with a woman), but these developments are merely improvements on last year's model. Most crucial to the practice of officer fetishism is that the gap between the officer and enlisted castes is still the same. The enlisted caste remains divested and despised, a persistence that exposes culture's hierarchical desire.

In terms of narrative, the American officer has ridden out the storm of Vietnam (and the not insignificant complication of Lieutenant Calley) to appear

in the so-called postmodern world identical to his World War II patriarch. If anything, in the bellicose amnesia of America's post 9/11 zeitgeist, the hagiographic American officer may even be a bolder assertion of his World War II predecessor.

Notes

[1] Viz., the working class Marechal, the actor Carette, the teacher Daste, the aristocrat de Boeldieu, the Jew Rosenthal, and the engineer Modot.

[2] Cf. Andre Bazin, *Jean Renoir* (Paris: Champ Libre, 1971): 238; and Francois Truffaut, "Orvet Mon Amour," *Cahiers du Cinema* 47 (1955): 32.

[3] More specifically *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, wherein the heroes of *Star Wars* are rewarded with officer commissions: Han Solo becomes a captain in *Empire* and then a general in *Jedi*. Luke Skywalker becomes a commander in *Empire*, and then sublimates to the rank of Jedi Knight, a rank that exposes the desire of all military rank.

[4] A compelling example is the long-running television program *M*A*S*H*. Though the show frontloaded its liberal political stance, it participated in the protection of the military rank system by *exclusively* locating virtue in the officer rank. There were only two significant enlisted characters, Radar and Klinger, and they were projected as clearly inferior to the more important characters Captain Pierce, Captain McIntyre, Major Houlihan, Colonel Blake, Captain Hunnicut, Major Burns, Major Winchester, and Colonel Potter. The show simply could not bear the weight of the bad officer, either eliminating them from the show (Burns and Blake) or, in a Dickensian twist, rehabilitating them (Houlihan and Winchester).

[5] Qtd. in Walter Karp, *The Politics of War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) 4.

[6] Minorities and the white working class populate the American military enlisted rank. For a insightful analysis of their sacrifice in the Vietnam War specifically, see Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). Despite the fact that minorities suffered disproportionately in Vietnam and the first Gulf War (see the Department of Defense's Directorate for Information Operations and Reports Race/Ethnicity Summary at http://web1.whs.osd.mil/mmid/casualty/RACE-OMB-WC.pdf), there has been in the conservative press a virulent backlash against the legitimacy of those statistics. See, e.g., Mackubin Thomas Owen, "The Color of Combat: The Minority Disproportion Myth," *National Review Online* 4 October 2002. < http://www.nationalreview.com/owens/owens 100402.asp>.

[7] Qtd. in Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism:Civilian and Military* (New York: Meridian, 1959) 68-69.

[8] Even this notion is a fantasy. Positions at the American military academies are obtained by congressional recommendation: a high school senior writes to his or her state senator and asks for a recommendation. That senator's staff, ostensibly noting the applicant's qualifications, writes the recommendation—most of the time without the senator's ever having interviewed the applicant.

[9] It's crucially important to make the distinction here between war novels and war films. The American security elite exerts a tremendous amount of pressure on the film industry to ensure that the officer rank remains untainted. In 1915, for example, the Department of the Navy refused to lend materials and personnel for the filming of *The Son of Nobody* because it portrayed a Naval Academy graduate unfavorably. The acting secretary of the Navy, W.S. Benson, explained to the Gaumont Company that the Navy would not provide services for a film that placed "naval officers before the public that is very discreditable to them and [that] has no foundation in fact" (qtd. in Lawrence Suid, *Guts and Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film* [Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002] 14). In 1997, Steven Spielberg—wearing a baseball cap with a colonel's rank insignia during filming—was extraordinarily careful in *Saving Private Ryan* to make sure that the enlisted characters performed all negative behaviors in the film.

[10] E.g., Kinney's *Friendly Fire* and Jeffords' *Remasculinization of America* offer brilliant analyses of the patriarchal contract in war narrative, but neither work is concerned with rank as an important element in war narrative's attraction. However insightful and accurate anti-militarism works such as Nelson and Olsen's *Why War?*, Bourke's *An Intimate History of Killing*, and Regan's *Organizing Societies for War* are, none are concerned with how the rank system works as a crucial component of the persistence of militarism.

[11] See, specifically, "The Epic and the Novel" chapter in Lukács's *The Theory of the Novel*. The novel disrupts the epic, whose landscape is "symbolically fixed" and "homogeneous." Lukács suggests that the novel's presentation of an alternate world results in "estrangement."

[12] The socioeconomic difference between the "real" officer and the warrant officer is most dramatically reflected in the pay gap between them. A colonel with 20 years of service will receive a monthly salary of $7,233.00; the warrant officer with the same years of service will receive $3,705.90. Upon retirement, the colonel will receive $5,424.75, the warrant officer $2,779.42. A retiring sergeant with 20 years of service will, by the way, receive $1,712.47. Source: <http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourcesContent/0,13964,32587,00.html>.

[13] Because the novel was published so soon after World War II, censors forced Vidal to change the geographical names in *Williwaw*. Dutch Harbor became "Big Harbor"; Chernowski Bay became "Andrefski Bay." See <http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,12084,1090206,00.html>.

[14] This is not to say that histories resist the seduction of the officer rank. Historians seem as much enamored of the military officer as novelists.

[15] In *If I Die in A Combat Zone*, O'Brien is seduced by officer fetishism. See Chapter Sixteen, where he says, "Like my fictional prewar heroes, Captain Johansen's courage was a model. And just as I could never match Alan Ladd's prowess, nor Captain Vere's intensity of conviction, nor Robert Jordan's resolution to confront his own certain death [. . .], I could not match my captain. Still, I found a living hero, and it was good to learn that human beings sometime embody valor, and that they do not always dissolve at the end of a book or movie reel" (144-45).

[16] A contemporary example of this sort of reactionary pathos occurred in the aftermath of the death of the most famous soldier in the so-called War on Terror, Pat Tillman, a former professional football player who turned down a 3.6 million dollar NFL contract to enlist in the Army. Rather than mourn the senseless death of a young man, the "Patriots For Bush" website said, "Unfortunately Pat Tillman's destiny is that of so many American Heroes, he died today in Afghanistan. He died so that others may breath [sic] free. For that, Pat Tillman will forever remain in my heart at the perfect example of the American Hero. He loved this country so much that he laid down his life in defense of the United States and the Afghan people so they may taste freedom from violent Islamo-Fascist oppression." <http://www.patriotsforbush.com/ 25 April 2004>.

[17] I.e., "Numbers have dehumanized us. Over breakfast coffee we read of 40,000 American dead in Vietnam. Instead of vomiting, we reach for the toast" (iv).

[18] E.g., Mark A. Heberle, *A Trauma Artist:Tim O'Brien and the Fiction of Vietnam* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001); Tobey C. Herzog, *Tim O'Brien* (New York: Twayne, 1997); Steven Kaplan, *Understanding Tim O'Brien* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995); and Timothy J. Lomperis, *'Reading the Wind': The Literature of the Vietnam War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).

[19] Of course, I realize that this "reading' is problematized by the fact that the entire "journey" from Vietnam to France exists only in the mind of Paul Berlin, an enlisted man who dreams up the whole thing while standing watch.

[20] See, especially Lawrence Suid, *Guts and Glory*, and David L. Robb, *Operation Hollywood* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2004).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Art, insofar as it is what film theorist Laura Mulvey calls a "formal preoccupation," projects cultural desire. *The Officer Fetish* seeks to gauge and interrogate that projection within a narrow arena: the American war narrative. Too often, American war narratives are—or become—fascinated with the officer, a figure who enjoys a unique prestige in American culture. American society has, generally speaking, a remarkable aversion to egregious displays of wealth and power. That aversion does not extend to the military officer: Americans in fact demand that officers project an aura of authority, power, virility, and aristocracy. *The Officer Fetish* examines that aura, suggesting that the American cultural investments in the officer rank reveal a deep-rooted anxiety about democratic/egalitarian systems. Fetishism, to paraphrase cultural theorist Henry Krips, is the difference between what we know to be right what we nevertheless do. The military officer stands as a manifestation of fetishism (with its economy of cathexis and disavowal) inasmuch as he enjoys the prestige we as a culture don't want to confess. Furthermore, that prestige reveals a disturbing truth: our investment in the officer rank asserts our desire for domination—both over others, and, more significantly, over ourselves.

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