NATION, NOSTALGIA AND MASCULINITY: CLINTON/SPIELBERG/HANKS

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This dissertation focuses on masculinity in discourses of nostalgia and nation in popular films and texts of the late 20th century's millennial period—the "Bill Clinton years," from 1992-2001. As the 1990s progressed, masculinity crises and millennial anxieties intersected with an increasing fixation on nostalgic popular histories of World War II. The representative masculine figures proffered in Steven Spielberg films and Tom Hanks roles had critical relationships to cultural crises surrounding race, reproduction and sexuality. Nostalgic narratives emerged as way to fortify the American nation-state and resolve its social problems. The WWII cultural trend, through the specter of tributes to a dying generation, used nostalgic texts and images to create imaginary American landscapes that centered as much on contemporary masculinity and the political and social perspective of the Boomer generation as it did on the prior one. The conceit of Clinton's masculinity is used as the figural link between the male bodies represented in such popular 1990s films as *Amistad, Saving Private Ryan* and *The Green Mile*. Additional chapters focus on Tom Hanks' star persona, the notion of boyhood, and the nexus between pop cultural imagery and representations of nostalgia.

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on masculinity in discourses of nostalgia and nation in popular films and texts of the late 20th century's millennial period—the "Bill Clinton years," from 1992-2001. The Clinton years are popularly characterized (most recently by Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign) as a peaceful era that repaired Republican damage and launched a flourishing domestic and global economy. Clinton's 1992 win was supposed to re-energize the Democrats and atone for the liberalism that many party bigwigs held responsible for their streak of presidential losses since 1968—aside from Carter's ineffective stint. When Clinton accepted the nomination in 1992 he claimed to offer a choice that was not "conservative or liberal . . . not even Republican or Democrat. It is new" (Wadden 12). As a New Democrat, Clinton was expected to concentrate on the pains and problems of the "forgotten" middle class whose interests had been eclipsed for decades by their party's "bleeding heart" focus on social inequality, minority groups, and hot button issues like gay rights and abortion. The failure of democratic liberalism (to win presidencies) secured Middle America and its *mainstream,* rather than minority citizens as the new focal point. This democratic shift away from a liberal agenda was one of the ways that ordinary white males, and their seemingly neglected interests, retained center position on the political and cultural stage in the 1990s. The loss of several Democratic seats in the 1994 election was attributed in part to "angry white males" whose needs had been ignored due to Clinton's purported focus on minorities.

Though the forgotten middle class contained a populace of diverse citizens, white males emerged in cultural representations as one of its significant contingents. Without histories of

discrimination or adversity, white middle class males lacked the "victim" status that secured political mobilization in the 1990s "culture wars." Instead the era opened white males to overt political and cultural acknowledgement of a privilege that previously had gone unquestioned. Carol J. Clover argued in 1993: "the white male is the great unmarked or default category of western culture, the one that never needed to define itself, the standard against which other categories have calculated their difference" (145). Clover made this argument about the character D-FENS (Michael Douglas) in the neo-noir film *Falling Down* (Joel Schumacher, 1993), an emblematic 1990s white male anxiety film. D-FENS goes on a defensive rampage throughout the city where he confronts (and harasses) minorities and women though he sees himself as the actual "victim"—one the audience is encouraged to identify with. Though a vigilante criminal, he becomes sympathetic due to his victimization: by city traffic, by his mid-level corporate position, by being sold a fast-food burger that fails to resemble its advertised image, and most of all, by his wife who divorced him because he expressed anger. The default white male is the central facet of the 1990s American nation, first as embodied by the leadership figure of Clinton, and second, in the ways he was "imagined" to relate to the collective nation.

As Clover points out, by the early 1990s, white males were rebelling against their normative interpellation, as average, standard, healthy, powerful and privileged. Their imagined suffering was in response to the "guilt," shame, and anxiety that the culture wars ignited. With limited "identity" in accusations as oppressor, white males became the oppressed. In the popular fantasies of the 1990s, white males are victims—in that sense, their bodies and their masculinity become central in representations of their corporeal, as well as psychological, victimhood. Clinton's representational status aligned two ideological emblems: the American head-of-state and the archetypal white male Boomer, to become the symbolic embodiment for the nation-state.

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Clinton's new "sensitivity," portrayed him as the ultimate good guy in popular representation: empathetic, feminist, fair to minorities and a "victim" of conservatives, as well as the press.

Like all eras, the 1990s had its widespread instances of masculinity in "crisis." Anxieties over the impending millennium occurred alongside the decade's culture wars, including public discussions that questioned race, class, gender and sexuality and often rose to levels of panic in the media. Inaugurated in 1960s counterculture movements and honed in the academy's canon debates in the 1970s and 1980s, the culture wars entered the mainstream in the 1990s. They brought to the surface conflicts over "identity" that attempted resolution through multicultural acceptance and political correctness. These conversations on "diversity" were often expressed in a paranoid way by right-wing idealists, as cultural "progress" doomed to cause social decline or conflict by upsetting "tradition." Increasingly in the public sphere, suffering became a measure of social value, with public groups contending for narratives of adversity and heroism. Possible ideological change was taken as a threat to social order because the "special interests" of marginalized groups were often demonized and entangled with millennial paranoia and alarm over impending "disasters" such as Y2K (Harding 17). The nation was gripped with the contemporary experience of a culture at war (whether real or imaginary): AIDS/HIV and contagion, the presidential impeachment, the O.J. uproar, Gulf War Syndrome, domestic terrorism (WTC, Oklahoma City, Atlanta Olympics, abortion clinics, the "Uni-bomber," school shootings, hate crimes, etc.), along with race riots and sex scandals. These domestic "wars" occurred amidst, and allegedly due to, the heated contestations of identity politics. Social politics over identity and public acknowledgement of discriminatory histories emerged in popular representations that reflected the frenzy in both culture and politics.

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Film a nd popul ar m edia e ngaged i n representations t hat reflected and/or engaged the nation's i lls. T hese r esponses often posed the w hite m ale body as t he centr al si te on which to symbolize s ocial s truggle a nd di splay c ultural vi olence. P opular c ulture texts i magined "new" traumas particular to the white male, in a series of popular films focusing on the perils of middle-class status, consumerism, corporate life and sexuality. *Indecent Proposal* (Adrian Lyne, 1993) and *In the Company of Men* (Neil L aBute, 1997) eac h depicted romance as sexua lized competition be tween men—failure to s core s exually a ligned w ith m onetary loss a nd c orporate demotion. *Glengarry Glen Ross* (James Foley, 1992), starring an ensemble all-male cast, was an early 1990s e xample of t he w hite A merican business m an i n c risis. *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 19 99) a nd *Fight Club* (David F incher, 1999) further r epresented the " trauma" of corporate e mployment, a nd t he r ebellion i t i nspires. *The Truman Show*, (Peter W eir, 1998) presented a fantasy where the quotidian minutiae of an average white male, an Everyman, was the s ubject of a gl obally popul ar t elevision s how, one i n w hich t he s ubject w as e xploited a nd victimized, but none theless h eroic and i nteresting. T hese traumas a nd pr oblems were c oded, often w ithout i rony, a s r esulting i n r age-worthy i nspirations f or pol itical revolution t hrough violent means, equating consumer and corporate harassment with racial suffering and civil rights violation. D -FENS's c orporeal a nd e motional e xcess i n *Falling Down* became a major representative strategy that highlighted aspects of white masculinity and its anxieties in relation to non-white others and their differences. Such corporeal politics had significant uses in popular culture and focused on r e-imagining masculinity and re-working its relationship to race, gender, class, and sexuality—all the d iverse a nd "liberal" is sues tha t w ere troub ling its nor mally dominant hegemony.

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The film texts of Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks dealt with masculinity's problematic status in the 1990s through significant deployments of the white male within narratives that engaged with discourses of nostalgia, another element in 1990s cultural discourse. White male paranoia, especially around the middle class family and the loss of "home" was fundamental in Spielberg films, beginning with *Duel* (1971) and continuing to *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). One of Spielberg's stylistic signatures was a fixation with the wonders and anxieties of the white male in suburbia—an imagined locale that represented the terrain of America as traditional, sentimental, and threatened. Part of the Spielberg aesthetic blended "wonder" with masculinity, so that depictions of men occurred through a constructed lens that manufactured a childlike viewpoint with an aura of adventure and innocence.

Spielberg films of the 1990s set-up a diegesis that "imagined" the nation, one in which Hanks sometimes took the starring, emblematic role, as in their joint project *Saving Private Ryan*. Hanks' star text consolidated into the quintessential "Everyman" in the 1990s. After a series of moderately popular comedic roles in the 1980s (e.g. *Splash, Nothing in Common, Turner and Hooch, Bachelor Party* and *Joe vs. the Volcano*), Hanks developed into the biggest male box office draw of the 1990s. He became profoundly popular by playing an "ordinary" man in a sentimental, mythologized past: one of the Jim Crow South (*The Green Mile*, 1999), the Normandy invasion (*Saving Private Ryan*, 1998), and middle America from the 1950s through 1990s (*Forrest Gump*, 1994). Spielberg and Hanks are linked not only through their publicized friendship and joint productions, but also through the shared ideologies of their popular films that are invested in the America of the "normal" white male in nostalgic narratives that affirm conservative national values. While *Falling Down* depicted a hyperbolic representation of male victimhood, Spielberg films and Hanks roles deployed a version that *disguised* itself as

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innocuous a nd charismatic, that hid w hite m ale r age, crisis, and fantasies of vic timization, beneath of a veneer of ordinary decency. Using subtle and manipulative formal strategies, these films r ehearsed narratives t hat a llowed victim status t o be appr opriated by white males. Their nostalgic discourse lent itself to a strategy that could reconstruct historical time and place and in doing s o r ework t he hi story of w hite m asculinity. T hough t hese f ilms, a nd most H ollywood productions, reconfirmed dominant, conservative ideology, Spielberg and Hanks were presented by popular media as socially conscious, politically active, and *progressive* emissaries of decency and morality. Their media status as liberals, made their films seem beyond reproach, creating a popularity that foregrounded their probable good intentions, and eclipsed critical examinations of their work based on race, gender and sexuality.

Certainly, there is little c ritical s ignificance t o merely pointing out the c onservative ideology within the Spielberg and Hanks oeuvres. My work aims to go beyond mere ideological readings b y e xposing t he c omplex i nterconnections be tween *nostalgia* and *masculinity* in the Spielberg a nd H anks t exts di scussed be low. This c inematic nos talgia of ten e ngaged i n a discourse that represented the male body in relation to notions of home, birth and origins. These notions ha ve a c omplex r elationship t o t he imagination of na tion. I n or der t o situate t his complexity more concretely, I examine nostalgic discourse in relation to the *presidential body* as a r epresentative w hite male, the "d efault" category, within t he soc ial a nd historical cont exts of the 1990s culture w ars. T he pr esidential bod y e ntangled w ith popu lar representations of masculinity bot h t o c reate a nd di srupt t he f antasy of na tion. U nderstanding the int ricate architecture of national fantasy is crucial because it governs the often grave lived experience of most citizens, while presenting bogus renditions of it that *masquerade* as "real." My dissertation, in simplest t erms, examines nos talgic di scourse i n S pielberg's a nd H ank's f ilms o f t he 1990s

because this discourse exemplified a central facet of masculinity and its positioning in codes of American nationalism.

Using Benedict Anderson's oft-cited formulation, I understand nationalism to be the camaraderie and values shared between disparate communities living within the same national boundaries. Though separated by vast spaces, these populations form bonds based on "imagined" connections—usually the ideological beliefs that culture holds to be natural and true. In agreement with Anderson, I recognize that nationalism reifies the nation-state; it forms and contains the nation's borders, building them through ideologies. The nation is recognized by Anderson as a fantasy, not only due to the imaginary bonds between its tenuously related citizenry, but because ideology itself is a fantasy, disguised as natural, and ruled by laws that are "self-evident." However, the culture wars inaugurated a "popular" "sense of plural and discontinuous histories that . . . challenged ideas about the singularity of American experience" (Grainge 2003, 3). Clinton was integral to formations of the American nation as experienced in such modes of representation as campaign materials, popular media, and political discourse. Clinton's own continuously contradictory "identity" was shaped by nostalgic representations and tales of adverse personal history and "suffering." These "fantasized" narratives appropriated notions of heroism. In tandem with Clinton's constant fluid and paradoxical identity, was a political and cultural fixation on his corporeality and sexuality.

The presidential office, and the person in that office, is the emblematic representative for the citizenry, the nation and the body politic. Visions of the presidency become part of Anderson's "imagined communities" in the way they bridge gaps between public and private bodies and collective and individual bodies in displays of nation. The presidential body relates to ideas about the collective body politic. I look at the "imagination" of this body as it is inevitably

connected to the actual Clinton—whose political "character" operated culturally in a similar way as any star text. In that sense, Clinton played the role of "First Boomer," what Eric Lott named the "imaginary force of his presidential persona" which led his particular generation in addition to the nation as a whole. His friends and financial contributors, Spielberg and Hanks, were also prominent Boomers who gained political and cultural influence through their publicized relationships with Clinton (103).

Spielberg had a close, public friendship with Clinton and made enormous financial contributions to the Democratic Party. He also directed "socially conscious" films beginning with *The Color Purple* (1985), and continuing with *Schindler's List* (1993), and *Amistad* (1997), films that intended to teach his wide, primarily white audience about the histories of oppression. Though these efforts were acclaimed by the mainstream press and did well on award circuits, scholarly attention focused on their "abuse" of history by using sentimentality and nostalgia to re-imagine historic traumas in ways that were immensely pleasurable for the captive audience. *Schindler's List* was criticized for its spectacular rendition of atrocity, reformulation of historical truth, and erotic portrayal of female Jews (Bertov 50). In a similar way, *Amistad* was criticized for eroticizing the male and female bodies of suffering Africans while its plot focused on the epic moral struggle between white males in power.

After his Best Actor Oscar awards for portraying an AIDS victim in *Philadelphia* (1993) and a virtuoso citizen-hero in *Forrest Gump* (1994), Hanks gained a reputation as the exemplary American male. As an "ordinary" guy with average looks, often asexual even in romantic comedies, he played a heroic astronaut in *Apollo 13* (1995), and did turns as lovable, but ruthless and chauvinistic capitalists in *A League of Their Own* (1992), *That Thing You Do!* (1996), and *You've Got Mail* (1998). A large public contributor to the Democratic Party, Hanks had a

friendship with Clinton that enabled social overnight stays at the White House, in addition to formal political service at awards ceremonies and the WWII Memorial groundbreaking. Hanks continued to gain public influence as a political impresario throughout the decade, always making controversy safe and profitable in films with such explosive themes as women's rights, homosexuality, the death penalty, Vietnam, and corporate takeover. In his Oscar acceptance speech for *Philadelphia*, through tears, he fashioned connections between the sacrifice of gay Americans and the dissimilar activism of wearing red ribbons for AIDS awareness. Further he aligned gay experience with the "tolerance" of the Philadelphians who wrote the Constitution, eclipsing their intolerance for homosexuals, women, and blacks.

When Spielberg and Hanks collaborated on the WWII drama *Saving Private Ryan*, they did so amidst a public media climate in which they stood as exemplary "historians," socially aware Democrats, and politically liberal activists with unsurpassed box office potential in both domestic and global markets. They were representative white American males, who told stories about other such males through nostalgic forays into America's past. As the 1990s progressed, the masculinity "crisis" and millennial anxieties intersected with an ever-increasing fixation on nostalgic history, namely that of World War II, and the fantasized greatness of that generation's military feats, post-war accomplishments, and lifestyle.

The masculine images proffered in Spielberg films and Hanks roles had critical relationships to the nexus of race, reproduction, and sexuality, through interfaces with nostalgia as a way to fortify the American nation-state and resolve its social problems. In so doing, they made central the experience of the male body in modes of pleasure, but also in pain, illness, victimhood, or trauma. The Spielberg and Hanks films of the 1990s (especially *Saving Private Ryan)* usually returned to what Freud saw as a human *"need to restore an earlier state of things"*

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(69). They did so by idealizing the ideology, "achievement," and experience of the lives of the Boomers' parents who came to be known by 1998, generously and dubiously, as "The Greatest Generation." The WWII cultural trend, through the specter of tributes to a dying generation, used nostalgic texts and images to create imaginary American landscapes that centered as much on contemporary masculinity and the political and social perspective of the Boomer generation as it did on the prior one. As Paul Grainge argues, American memory entwines with "hegemonic struggles fought and figured around the negotiation of America's national past" (2003,3).

Ultimately, I analyze the texts of Spielberg and Hanks, but I also use the conceit of Clinton's masculinity as the figural link between the male body and national nostalgia in the 1990s. Representations of Clinton's white masculinity were highly contradictory as he tried to meet the needs of the "forgotten middle class," *and* attempted to advocate for gays, women and blacks, while appeasing a conservative congress and coping with the legion of average white males, himself included, suddenly in "crisis." Brenton J. Malin notes that Clinton was characterized by a collection of constantly shifting contradictions: "sensitive and tough, impotent and highly sexualized, Oxford educated and dirt poor" (146). His political embodiment enabled contrasting representations that cast him as "black" and white, liberal and conservative, strong and weak, down-to-earth and elite. Similarly, Clinton's political actions courted incongruity with policies that both supported women, minorities and families (Family Leave Act, increased abortion rights, minority appointees to cabinet seats, increased minimum wage) and hindered them (severe welfare cuts, three strikes crime initiative, loss of health care reform, "failure" of Don't-Ask-Don't Tell and the Race Initiative). Clinton's contradictory masculinity posed him both as a strong defender of family values, and as a womanizing philanderer. In military matters, he was seen as a draft-dodging weakling who failed in Somalia (1993) and botched WWII

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anniversary commemorations, while his "successful" military interventions in Bosnia (1995) and Kosovo (1999) were largely ignored in the national mindset. Clinton's symbolic image as head-of-state showed him as the strong *and* empathetic leader of the free world.

Increasingly in his second term, he was seen as an uncontained and "leaking" hypersexualized body whose private erotic life became public in extreme corporeal detail. During his two presidential campaigns, Clinton was also positioned as both a traditional candidate who could restore the glory of a nostalgic past, and as the prodigal Boomer who brought down WWII veterans George Bush (1992) and Bob Dole (1996) and would guide the nation into a prosperous and technological future. Usually, Clinton's actions were viewed through the guiding lens of his masculinity's relationship to other white males. Even though white liberal Boomer males, with Clinton as their leader, publicly committed themselves to social progress and acceptance of diversity, the "specter of identity politics," especially gay rights, women's issues and race consciousness, haunted them. In its various representational deployments, Clinton's masculinity moved simultaneously into the nostalgic past and forward to a utopian, multicultural, global future. In contrast to Clinton's image of fractious masculinity, those images proffered by cultural architects Spielberg and Hanks offered antidotal masculine possibilities of comfort, security and gratification albeit within scenes of often violent conflict.

While every era or decade is fraught with both crisis and nostalgia, the 1990s were peculiar in the way these two forces were fashioned around issues of family values, multiculturalism, diversity, political correctness, and liberalism. The perceived threats to American masculinity and its patriarchal family values were exacerbated by media coverage of such issues as gays in the military, AIDS/HIV, feminism, affirmative action, gay rights, abortion, sexual harassment, and a continued focus on the fantasized "deviance" of black males. While this

may seem like a mire of divergent "crises," the issues coalesce in clear ways in my analyses of the hugely popular nineties films of Spielberg (*Saving Private Ryan, Amistad*) and Hanks (*Forrest Gump, Philadelphia, Saving Private Ryan, Apollo 13, You've Got Mail, The Green Mile*) that bring the cultural and political forces surrounding masculinity and nostalgia into focus. Clinton, Spielberg and Hanks each receive a chapter of consideration within this dissertation. Then a synoptic chapter brings together the previous material in an analysis of WWII nostalgia and masculinity through a reading of *Saving Private Ryan,* by which I link together the three men. In addition to three chapters' focus on a single figure, I underscore the important cultural and political forces that govern that figure's context within the larger national milieu. This allows for an understanding of the political and national nature of dominant masculinity and its influences at the turn to the 21st century. I see the American nation's response to the tragedy of 9/11 as indelibly linked not just to the events of that day, but to the nostalgic narrative "garden" that had been planted in culture and politics in the years before.

This dissertation brings together diverse scholarship in the disciplines of film studies, cultural studies, communication, and political science and, in doing so, offers a critique of popular culture texts and their increasing influence on the politics of nation in ways specific to the millennial moment in the U.S. In its broadest sense, my dissertation draws upon the findings of three different scholarly works in its aim to link together the forces of masculinity, nostalgia and representations of corporeal pleasure and pain in articulations of nation. First, it is influenced by Susan Jefford's *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (1993), because it provides a template for my analysis of the relationship between presidential politics and popular culture representation. In her work on the 1980s, Jeffords argues that Hollywood films and political culture obsessed over similar national plots and reflected these through the symbolic

body and star text of Ronald Reagan. Jeffords explains how popular Hollywood texts presented masculine heroes, idealizations of whiteness via the "hard body," exaggerated musculature that characterized male stars and American militarism during the 1980s. My dissertation uses a similar template to understand the work of popular film in the 1990s as a support for and mirror of nationalist doctrine, since "the very idea of a nation is itself dependent on this visual realm" (6).

Second, my work is influenced by Brenton J. Malin's *American Masculinity under Clinton: Popular Media and the "Crisis of Masculinity"* (2005), a comprehensive study of Clinton's paradoxical masculinity that straddled multiple representations as it was reflected by popular films and T.V. shows of the period. While Malin persuasively covers Clinton's influence on national notions of masculine crisis and its multiple related issues, he does not exclusively focus on the male body or mention Spielberg and Hanks specifically. Thus, my dissertation analyzes an unexamined offshoot of his topic in the popular film of the 1990s.

Third, my dissertation is influenced by Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001) that lays out a theory of nostalgic emotion that conceives it as a modern condition and a nation-making act. She discusses nostalgia as it relates to representations of historical memory, fantasies of an invented past, and as a force that consolidates and manages the nation. Nostalgia allows for the remaking of history in the present tense as an experiential assemblage of memories (either real or imagined), making available the transference of lived experiences to audiences who lack the originary experience. In the context of the American 1990s, nostalgia allowed for the reconstruction of history and most importantly, for the appropriation of the lived experiences of "others." Though nostalgic narratives provide intense satisfaction, they often do so via journeys to moments of trauma, victimhood, and hurt, straddling the seeming contradictions between

pleasure and pain endemic to both longing and suffering. Boym explains that nostalgia, though an ailment of the heart and a fantasy of the mind, is also located in the body and displayed through a variety of psychosomatic symptoms that eroticize the pleasure and anguish of longing for the "lost" past. Through nostalgia, the problem of loss is overcome by processes that make the immaterial material. Boym differentiates between pre-modern nostalgia, and the contemporary form that resists the convention of "progressive" time, privileging instead the fantasies of historical erasure, reenactments, and shifts. Boym notes that nostalgia collapses conventions of time and space by offering a "sideways" form of time, an offshoot beyond chronology's stricture. Boym avoids the notions of America as anti-historical or ahistorical, and instead offers theories that resist the notion of nostalgia as "empty" history by citing examples of nostalgic materiality, or "souvenirization," and its effects on lived experience. These tendencies are at work in the political and cultural nostalgia of the 1990s and its representative texts.

The films of Spielberg and the dramatic roles of Hanks forged national narratives of nostalgia that depicted bodies in pain—(from war, AIDS, illness, and oppression) bodies that allowed for vicarious and appropriative consumption of the political "power" of suffering. My interest in bodies in pain intersects with my concern with representations of white masculinity because the latter is constituted via the suffering of others. This constitution is particular to 1990s culture because white male identity was fraught with a publicized stigma of oppressor, leading to the resultant "white guilt." In the 1990s, a victimized history seemed to be a way for white males to avoid this guilt and simultaneously garner respect as well as an "identity" that was perpetually youthful within middle age. Boomers used this identity to remain politically prominent.

The obsession with WWII culture occurred multi-generationally and across widespread media. The neo-swing dance movement in youth subcultures of the 1990s was one intense

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version. This cultish subculture engaged in extreme recreations of "imaginary" white swing culture (1935-45) in order to live within the "more 'positive' codes of social behavior and values they believe[d] were common during that era" (Usner 89). This trend betrayed a lack of interest in the discriminatory history of this era. Neo-swing demonstrated 1990s nostalgia as present tense "playing" with the past, in order to forge a distinct identity for white culture's under thirty members.

In *Love & Theft*, Eric Lott deconstructs the historic connections between adoration for African-American culture and the simultaneous "theft" of it by whites. Lott explains that the part this "imitation" plays in the constitution of nation cannot be overestimated as it formulates white "indigeneity" through cultural forgery. Though nostalgia seems to long for an idyllic past, the 1990s version interwove the ideal quality with imaginations of oppression that expressed the special relationship between whites and oppressed groups. In *The Green Mile* and *Amistad*, the white male lead is particularly attuned to understanding racial suffering and is able to present its "trauma" to a larger white community/audience. Because such films engage within nostalgic discourse, they offer a palpable means of appropriating experience, not only through its observance, but in the imagined symbolic transfer of black bodily experience to the white body. In *Amistad,* this occurs through analogous representations that compare the African's imprisonment to the white lead's generational conflict with the older white establishment. In *The Green Mile,* the conceit of a "magic" masculine power makes parallel the corporeality of black and white bodies, and allows for the pleasure of miscegenation via nostalgic taboo. These are just two examples of a cultural tendency that occurred repeatedly and in many different texts I examine in the dissertation: photographs, advertisements, fashion spreads, campaign materials, popular books, and the films of Hanks and Spielberg.

The w hite male body, t hrough experience a nd e ngagement w ith hi storical t rauma "imagined" t he e xperience of s uffering in t he 1990s . N ostalgic f orays e nabled this c ultural development. I n this w ay, nostalgia di verged from a strictly postmodern form (as theorized by Frederic Jameson) where empty representation without historical referent performs a simulacrum of history. In l ine w ith the a lternate theories of B oym, P aul Grainge, S usan S tewart, S usannah Radstone, and others, I read 1990s nostalgia as having significant political animus, affecting the lived experience of the populace, a nd their "imagined" communities within political and public spheres. Because of the enormous popularity of nostalgic depictions, multiple audiences enjoyed the pleasu rable suf fering of t he bodies r epresented; t heir view ing pract ices *disguised* as responsible thinking and vi ewing of t he s uffering of ve terans, A IDS vi ctims, a nd oppr essed blacks. White males were always the central figures in these nostalgic forays.

The male body is a key to understanding the fantasy of nation, and Lott observes it is a fairly r ecent phe nomenon t hat " the pr esident's body be come[s] vi rtually our o nly s eeming connection to the nation-state" (104). He cites the cultural obsession with Kennedy's virility and Eisenhower's "flaccidity" as earlier examples of public fixation with the male presidential body. Yet, he argues t hat this i nterest c onnects to f antasies of r oyal b lood, corporeal p urity, a nd the lineages of m onarchies. D uring t he 1996 c ampaign, a B ritish publ ishing hous e m anned by a n American traced the royal lineage of Clinton and Dole, and Clinton was found to ha ve far more royal b lood, l inked to t he 11 [th] century m onarch H enry I II. T he publ ishing di rector m ade t he fatuous claim that "since Washington" whichever candidate has had the most royal blood wins, and Dole ha d only the "merest drop" (100). Of course, monarchic rule i s inextricably ba sed on patriarchy—both institutions unde rpinned by a nxieties a bout the pol itical c ontrol of race, c lass, gender a nd s exuality. T he f ixation on C linton's c orporeality a nd na tional f antasies a bout i ts

purity (royal blood) and *im*purity (sexual deviance) is related to what Boym theorizes as the "historic emotion of nostalgia." This emotion, a contemporary condition, flattens temporal distance and allows connections to time past, to the earlier state of things, when masculinity was reified by the fantasy of the contained purity of white masculine corporeality, whether in the kingships of pre-modern England, or in the historic playgrounds that Spielberg and Hanks return to in the 1990s: the 1930s pastoral South, valorous WWII battlefields, or middle America in the 1950s. Whereever nostalgia is located, it *longs* to produce the vivid, visceral memory of that which never happened. But nonetheless, history that "never happened" forms a politically material lived experience that defies its status as "imagined."

Nostalgia links to the body somatically through the physical symptoms that mark it as an illness. In nostalgic representation the body itself becomes a "historic location," a fantasized surface which embodies and enacts cultural and political anxieties. In the films I analyze, these anxieties manifest in the male body. Therefore, in my examination of Spielberg's and Hanks' films about historical America, understanding the male body is central, and the presidential body is the foundation, the default category of masculinity, from which national fantasies and anxieties emanate. As Lott warns "imagining the president has apparently become the chief way we come to grips with our relation to the state apparatus" (100).

Chapter One sets up the conceptual parameters of nostalgia and explains my understanding of "nostalgic discourse," and its relationship to nation and the public sphere. This chapter also describes the historical context of the Clinton years through a discussion of the "culture wars." These "wars" called into question traditional masculinity and inspired disparate social groups to vie for status and a legitimate identity. I explicate the trope of "war" in civilian life through an examination of khaki pant advertisements. Chapters Two, Three, and Four each focus on the figures of Clinton, Spielberg, and Hanks respectively, concentrating on their public, celebrity personas as they relate to masculinity, nation and nostalgic discourse.

Chapter Two presents analyses of the two primary modes through which the American public came to understand Bill Clinton: via sexuality and empathy. First, this chapter examines visual representations of Clinton's sexuality to show how they used nostalgic discourse to construct the imagination of the presidential body. Second, I examine Clinton's "politics of empathy" as these politics attempted to include and unite a collective sense of the nation and secure a sense of intimacy. A brief discussion of the presidential body and the national body politic explores how they each constitute through empathetic affect and imaginations of the sexual and the intimate. Clinton's sexuality and empathy had important crosscurrents with both Spielberg and Hanks.

Chapter Three examines Steven Spielberg's auteur text through the register of boyhood, a signature imprint that drives the director's popular biographical narrative. Next, I examine the blockbuster's potential ties to nostalgia and nation through its construction of spectators as like "boys," a positioning somewhat dependent on Spielberg's film language. The final part of this chapter examines the figure of the "man-boy" in *Amistad* to illuminate the relationship between

national "innocence" and tropes of boyhood, especially the influence of the figure of the Boy Scout.

Chapter Four considers how the Hanks star text attained it idealized masculine status in the 1990s. I examine his significant film roles that were able to alleviate white masculine anxiety and smooth over social strife. Hanks became a celebrated version of Everyman, one that was persistently boyish and beloved by the national citizenry due to his perpetual innocence, decency and ordinary qualities. Often asexual, Hanks offered both a contrast to Clinton's masculinity and at other times, seemed to embody a similar imagination of sexual aggression. Hanks' corporeality is a central issue in this chapter's analysis. This chapter examines the concept of "nice" masculinity within compulsory romance to further distill understandings of "average" masculinity in the 1990s. I also look at how Hanks' became an influential and politicized figure.

Chapter Five seeks to unite the previous material through valences between Clinton, Spielberg, and Hanks and the phenomenon of WWII fascination and commemoration in the 1990s. Imaginations of WWII became a site of cultural projection around issues of masculinity and citizenship. Referencing previous discussions on boyhood, the Everyman, and empathy, this chapter fashions an unlikely reading of *Saving Private Ryan*'s "metastasizing" masculinity. I discuss the collapses and confusions between WWII commemoration and "memorials" for fetal "combat" used by the pro-life movement during the 1990s. Strangely, *Saving Private Ryan* and the pro-life movement used similar visual registers for representing death and loss. Since the film uses a combat setting to obsess over maternal origins, I argue that its narrative trajectory offers a means for its male protagonist to rework and rewrite his own history, creating a "new" guiltless, childlike self.

Chapter Six offers conclusions on the previous material by presenting examples of white masculine appropriations of the black male body. Through an analysis of *The Green Mile*, I discuss Clinton's racial politics and stance on the death penalty. *The Green Mile* is also useful because it re-engages Spielberg thematics around boyhood, magic and affect. Additionally, it stars the celebrated Everyman Hanks—an increasingly idealized citizen who, in this film, performs violent and aggressive acts. I argue that his previous film roles allow him to exude innocence and ordinariness that disguise more insidious characteristics of his white masculinity. The film employs nostalgic discourse that fashions the Old South as a "contemporary" reflection of the national epicenter. My Afterword briefly reconsiders WWII commemoration's intersection with negotiating national shame.

1.1   INTRODUCTION TO PRELUDES

American culture constitutes and maintains itself through visual imagery. This communication occurs through iconic images that are miniature emblems of national experience, ideology and history. By definition, an icon renders instant, recognizable and seemingly unchallenged meaning. In this way, iconography becomes crucial imagery for national discourse. This dissertation takes as its focus an aspect of national discourse in America and its use of iconic and emblematic images, but I resist the notion that these emblems are static, easy reads.

I begin each of this dissertation's chapters with a visual "*Prelude*," consisting of two images. I think of these *Preludes* as a "Gallery of American Icons" and they operate as an overture to the concerns, propositions and theories in the section of the dissertation that they

introduce. In their fashioning of a gallery, these twinned emblems form a set of images that mirror each other, and also that reflect the framework for the material that follows.

As a whole, this dissertation takes as its historical concern the years from 1992-2001, the period of Bill Clinton's campaigns and presidency with a brief examination of its aftermath in the conclusion. The Clinton years were a time of cultural preoccupation with and rampant consumption of nostalgia for WWII and the surrounding periods. However, the various recreations of this period in such cultural forms as film, advertising, music, television and fashion constructed an invented landscape of historical memory. Less a revision of history, these popular images totalized an anachronistic American imaginary of the 20th century built out of nostalgic cultural fragments. These visual fragments mark a productive entry point into the American public sphere where representations are infinite. My selections are idiosyncratic and keyed to my arguments and agenda. However, they also seek to construct a narrative, and to expose the ways that the public sphere becomes constituted through visual imagery that is both random and narratilogical.

Each pair of images in the *Preludes* reflects the tension between an earlier era of the century and its reproduction at or around the millennial moment. The iconic images in my assembled "gallery," when placed side by side, compose a productive ideological juxtaposition. Close readings of the images clarify my concerns and the points to follow in each chapter and in the dissertation as a whole.

I am inspired in part, by Lauren Berlant's *The Queen of America goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*, which examined the "private" representation of public life during the Reagan years. Her concluding chapter, "Outtakes from the Citizenship Museum," is a collection of images that emblematized her theories: magazine covers, paper dolls, a mural, a

cartoon, s nap s hots, a dvertisements, publ ic service a nnouncements a nd a s hopping ba g. Appearing without comment, the images suggested the visual landscape of the public sphere and most of all, asserted that it is textual.

My dissertation, at its heart, reaffirms the prominence of the visual realm in discourses of nation. S ut J hally ha s s uggested t hat A mericans vi ew 3500 a dvertising i mages pe r da y, amounting to visual clutter and pollution in the public sphere. However, intermingled with these advertisements i s a n a dditional a rray of ot her t ypes of i magery: a rt, phot ographs, a nd vi sual media in public and private spheres that collide with written text in such a way that everyday life occurs alongside, within and against a vortex of visual imagery. Everyday life is a visual realm, beyond nor mative s ightings: the s ky, a w all, t he s pace i n one 's v iew poi nt. T hese s paces a re often adorned with, and constructed from mediated imagery that exists as clutter or background, but which can also be consumed by choice: television, print media, films—each form containing infinite variations of imagery, interacting in individual modes, creating a collective milieu with individually c onsumed narratives, or ders a nd meanings. I ndividual pe rspective a nd poi nts of view l oll o ver t he co llective cu lture, as i f ea ch idiosyncratic vi ew marks a ca mera's f rame, choosing where to focus, with what perspective, and for what length of time. The *Preludes* offer a gl impse a t t he publ ic s phere of i mages. T heir j uxtapositions of i mages f rom dispa rate t ime periods offer an example of nostalgic discourse as a bridge between epochs.

2.0   CULTURE WAR AND NINETIES NOSTALGIA

2.1   *PRELUDE I:* NATIONALIZING THE "GREATEST" PICTURE AND GENERATION

Written in 2003, Mab Segrest's "Rebirths of a U.S. Nation" explains how the American South enacts a symbolic transplant, to the nation as a whole, of social, cultural and political mores of Southern ideology. Segrest observes that the South represents a mythology of American origins and the fantasy of its pure traits. Audiences engage in nostalgia for the "simple" codes of the Southern social system. The myth allows the representation to enlarge to code the entire U.S.: the South becomes a microcosm for "natural" race and gender coding. This transfer allows the South to become geographically (and ideologically) central, and in doing so also makes central the primary modes of Southern American nationalism: the interconnection of gender and race with industrialism and capitalism via the slave trade, its after effects, and its endless historical residue (31).

Segrest goes on to explain that the South does the "dirty work" for the nation as a whole by illuminating, expressing and reproducing repressed, pernicious policies on race and gender. Segrest argues that D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) actually performs a cultural rebirth of the nation-state. In her reading, *The Birth of a Nation* makes visible through its birth metaphor, the "utility" of women in "birthing," or re-making the state. This remaking uses the

simplistic binary between white and black and good and evil through its deployment of the key players: white women, black males and soldiers. The characters are like parts of a larger body, illustrating their utility in the maintenance of the larger body as a whole. Birthing the nation-state requires the victimization of white women, the racist depiction of black men and, in tandem, the redeeming glory of slain white soldiers, "a brutally patriarchal notion" (36). The visual metaphors employed in *The Birth of a Nation* obscure the interworking of the machinery of the larger ideology and allow audiences to dote upon, enjoy, and laud the film (35).

By 1947 (Figure 1.) the film had achieved the stature of "The Greatest Picture of all Time," at least as emblazoned upon the marquee of the aptly named Republic Theater in New York City. The phrase "under God" was not yet added to the Pledge of Allegiance, the addition occurred in 1954, but the phrase "and to the republic" resonates with this image and the lit-up theater, as the figures beneath the marquee represent citizens *underneath* the awning of the republic for which they stand. The sign emblematizes the nation as a whole, rather than one insular place and moment. This transfer from specific location (New York City) to larger myth (the South) marks one way a singular image becomes iconic. Beneath the Republic marquee, members from the NAACP protest against the film's "race hatred," and though to any audience (of any era) that prejudice should be obvious, in this image the protesters and their signs are illegible and tangential. The mammoth marquee and its message seems to act as a title to the heterosexual couple who stroll beneath.

Though the marquee advertises the film, within the diegetic composition of the photograph, the banner becomes an advertisement and title for the figures in the photograph as well. "THE BIRTH OF A NATION," titles the film, but also the photo itself, signifying the separation, the segregation, between the two primary factions: those who protest and those who

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are una ffected. I n t he f oreground, a l one man w alks s ideways, he ading " off-screen." A heterosexual couple, arm in arm, walk in the center, balanced beside the protesters. The couple who stroll past unfettered by the protesters, represent the ideal audience to enter the Republic, view the film and birth the nation. The photo also casts the act of movie-going, spectatorship itself, and the consumption of American images as integral to such a birthing.

Separate from the reference to D.W. Griffith's film, this image from the Library of Congress collection, appropriates that title as self-referential, rebirthing the ideologies of the nation-state at this time in history, 1947. It does so alongside the diminutive protesters who are eclipsed in the composition both by the large sign and by the couple. The canted angle of the composition enhances the spectacle of the marquee and its emblazoned advertisement by showing the minimal space taken up by the protest within the frame. Their signs appear futile beneath the overwhelming banner, and the whole group balances against just the duo. The ideologies of the film and its race hatred, were still strong in the nation as a whole. The composition of the photograph emphasizes this ideology.

More than a half million African-American soldiers were deployed in WWII, but they fought in segregated infantries often with less training and equipment than their white equivalents and the majority were relegated to service positions in support of white troops. Though they aided in the overthrow of the Nazi regime's racist ideology, once home, American prejudice was alive and firmly in place. Truman integrated the armed services in 1948, but troops who fought in Korea were still segregated until 1953. Black soldiers and veterans were virtually absent from popular representations of World War II.[1] The "we just saved the world" American

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[1] See: Adams, Michael. C.C. *The Best War Ever: America and World War II.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994.

attitude after World War II was in fact, a segregated pride, localized to white American heterosexual men, and by extension, their wives. The protest pictured in the photo, and in the media of the era, received scant publicity. The "ideology" of the "picture" that depicts the "birthing" of the nation becomes "the Greatest" in this rendition. Tagging something as "the greatest" turns out to be, as in this image, a decidedly American practice, fully in line with the unquestioned, imprecise ideologies within the Griffith film and within the larger nation-state it represents. The photo visually renders compulsory (reproductive) heterosexuality, the practice of overlooking racism and protest, and the claiming of these two practices as greatness. Marjorie Garber theorizes that the ideology of "greatness" disregards history and context. She argues that the more anxious the nation, the more pressure it places on "naturalizing" greatness (259). To name an object as great is to "decontextualize," engaging in a fantasy of control (258). Greatness thwarts questions or inquiry. While it purports to be beyond the ideological, to surpass it, in actuality, greatness fortifies the ideological through its presumption of its impeccability.

By 1999, Tom Brokaw's *Greatest Generation* book series had settled atop bestseller lists and bedside and coffee tables across the nation. The Republic theater image may look familiar because it resembles so many of the nostalgic photographs of the post-war period that were making the rounds in Brokaw's books, in calendars and stationary, and in other outlets at that time, especially in the book's cover photo. The image depicts two sets of legs pressed close to suggest romance, (that of a soldier returning home and a woman in heels), with the flag graphic on top—a patriotic triptych if there ever was one.[2] The photo, cropping out any signifiers of

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pp.9

[2] The original photo (see below) used for *The Greatest Generation* book cover, owned by Corbis-Bettman images, describes the scene as depicting a farewell in 1942, rather than my assumed homecoming, and shows a soldier and "his girl and his dog," (the dog cropped out of the cover), before military embarkation at a Washington D.C. locale. Apparently, guns were part of the gear present at goodbyes and embarkations.

identity, op erates i n t andem w ith t he c ompulsive c entrality of white he gemony. These t wo individuals do not need faces for us to know that they are white. In a cryptically absurdist trace, the ba ck dr op t o t his c ouple i ncludes w hat ap pear t o be a j eep tire, military duffle and *rifle*. Though the image signals the homecoming of a male soldier after the war, one cannot help but wonder unde r w hat c ircumstances a nd i n w hat locations he el-clad w omen c ould ha ve gr eeted these guys as they leapt from their jeeps and dropped down their guns. As in the 1947 photo, the emblematic post-war man and woman are represented by romance and formal everyday wear, a look that 1990s fashion adopted with its nostalgic trends and especially the hegemony of khakis as an essential base for *any* outfit .

A gl ance b ack a t the 1947 phot o a llows t he i mage t o r epresent (though i n a n ironic manner) the "greatest" generation even before they had been named so. But their entertainment, their gr eatest pi cture, had be en c hosen a nd t itled. L ooking a t t he 1 947 pi cture t hrough t he vantage of the 1990s f uses t he i deologies that c onnect the t wo t ime pe riods. T his f usion i s achieved and allowed via a nos talgic mode of l ooking. In this case, nostalgia facilitates the re-crafting of pa st scene, t he r e-ordering that col lapses t he d istance be tween the t wo moments, allowing a m ore i mmediate f raternity. T he he terosexual pos t-war c ouple w ho stroll pa st th e protesters in 1947, s eem to i gnore the signs of racism and or ganized social protest. They fulfill the title above them and the one to come in the time ahead. Ostensibly, they go home and "give birth" t o t he na tion. I n 1947 t he boo mers w ere e ither i n d iapers, i n ut ero, or a gl eam i n t heir parents' e yes. In 1999, t hese "children" pa id tribute t o "the gr eatest," their pa rents. In fact, the greatest accomplishment of the post-war folk seems to have been "giving birth" to the particular nation-state that was in full swing in the 1990s. Southern ideologies were back in full force, but

as usual, their influence, and the protests against them, were overshadowed by other ideological obsessions and distractions that glazed white populations with the veneer of political correctness and social awareness.

Ward Sutton's cartoon, first published in the *Village Voice* circa 1999, perfectly illuminates all that was crass, overblown and ridiculous about the late-century WWII tributes. Regardless of their inanity or the dubious notion and title of "the greatest," this distinction was powerful and significant because it fortified and helped shape dominant ideologies of the 1990s surrounding the politics of race, reproduction and sexuality as they related to masculinity and national discourse.

Sutton's cartoon aptly denigrates the sentiment and simplicity of the book series, as well as its political agenda, in its parody of "new books by Tom Brokaw" whose journalistic dignity and authority get skewered in the caricature of his familiar pose that signifies earnest integrity as seen on the back cover of *The Greatest Generation*.

The cartoon does important work by surfacing the ideologies bundled within the nostalgia for this generation and their era. The imagined book cover in the second panel points to the Southern ideals that underlie post-war racism—over a decade before the Civil Rights movement gained national prominence. In the post-war period representations of "Women and Coloreds," the Southern ideologies woven throughout *The Birth of a Nation,* had morphed, but were still undergirding the patriarchal patriotism of the dominant ideology. Racism and strong gender differentiation were key to political and cultural nationalism. The racism and sexism of "The Greatest Generation," is not excused; it is fundamentally denied and overlooked in Brokaw's tomes—an updated example of the apparent disregard for the protest from the 1947 image.[5] Sutton's faux book title also suggests that "The Greatest Generation" is populated by white men

and concerns issues of white masculinity. The stories of women and minorities usually indicate their supplementary role to male achievement. However, as this dissertation asserts, and as Segrest has already argued, women and black males are integral to American nation-making, less as singular citizens than as essential parts in the ideological body of the larger whole.

The fourth book (and fifth panel) in Sutton's cartoon represents not only the politics, dynamics and anxieties about sexuality that were prominent in the late 1990s, but links these to the nostalgia and the fantasy of *becoming* the father. This fantasy occurs through a representation of sexuality fundamental to both masculinity and nationalist discourses in the late 20th century. The fifth panel is arguably the most unpleasant to mainstream audiences, though the racism in panels two and three directly refers to offensive behaviors and histories. The fifth panel does the "dirty work" for the more crucial issue, sexual prowess and shame. Referencing masturbation outdoes racism—it is more embarrassing—which topples a hierarchy of shame that privileges sexual mechanics over race and gender oppression. In that sense, Sutton's library of "imaginary" books operates in much the same way as a national text, such as Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, that colonizes the mainstream media landscape—merging disparate ideologies and histories with sexual, racial and gender politics in a mode that entangles their interrelationships without adequately illuminating them. Sutton's *Greatest Generation*-lite, hints about social problems, without making their mire obvious. This entanglement obfuscates white masculinity as key to the interworking of oppression. Racist "history," cold war paranoia, and sexual fantasy sit alongside the controversy over the WWII Memorial which was eventually built in 2005—and Tom Hanks (the author of the forward in Sutton's book cover) did prove integral to its creation. He did so partly via the fantasy of panel five, in a cultural transubstantiation where he *became* a WWII veteran first on a film screen, and then in the public eye. Of course, in one sense, the "Greatest

Generation" hurrah seems to disable any potential "greatness" for the generations to follow. This dilemma is assuaged through symbolic representations that allow for appropriating the "greatness" and its defining experiences from those receiving the death bed tribute, as the WWII generation was dying at a rate of millions per year in the 1990s.

Separately, the 1947 Republic Theater photograph and Sutton's cartoon, though in vastly different forms, each display the crucial features of American nationalism even within their forty year separation; but viewing the images in tandem illuminates the post-war period, and what its "rebirth" meant for dominant ideology and popular culture in the 1990s. What these two juxtaposed images illuminate is that national discourse displays itself through bodily metaphors. In the first figure, heterosexual union is depicted amidst the metaphor of production: reproducing the nation inhabits birth metaphors, and societal racism intertwines with birth as a part of the process. As Jane Gaines argues in "Rebirthing Nations," racism is a philosophy of history, part and parcel to a nation's understanding of itself. She writes:

> Racism . . . provides an *explanation*. If the destiny of a
>
> people is obscured to them, racism promises to make that destiny
>
> visible; if the cause of the success or failure of its campaigns is
>
> unclear, racism makes it clear. Racism offers an explanation of the
>
> success or failure of the nation . . . and it is knowingly a
>
> philosophy of history that begins with the secret processes of the
>
> body. (309)

In Sutton's cartoon, the secret process brought to the fore is the metaphor of masturbation as transformative, as enabling the experience of the veteran. This *desire* to experience history shares space with Sutton's overt presentation of imaginary history books on racism. His joke, in

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fact, articulates the way that appropriation of experience often occurs through the erotics of the body in national popular discourse.

Finally, the juxtaposition of images makes visible the symbolic processes of the body as its imagery guides the continual making and remaking of the nation-state. In the first photo, the body uses the metaphor of birth, in the second onanism. Significantly, as my trajectory will prove, the birth of a nation does occur through such symbolic processes.

2.1.1 Culture War and the Generation "Gap:" Fashioning Uniformity in the Body Politic

> You see . . . a man . . . wearing a dark-blue suit, an expensive shirt with subtle stripes, a red tie, red suspenders, wing tips. His hair is moussed and combed back; he is carrying a copy of the *Financial Times*; he looks well fed. People like him exasperated you . . . a few years back . . . and now you realize you've practically forgotten they ever existed—just as you've forgotten the man wearing aviator glasses, wide lapels, and sideburns and singing "Stayin' Alive" in falsetto ten years before him, and the guy with the American flag sewn upside down on the seat of his bell-bottoms ten years before *him*. There is something almost touching about this person with the red suspenders, striding so confidently and purposefully through a world no longer impressed by his confidence or enslaved by his purposes. "Wait a second," you almost want to say. "You're in the wrong decade. You need a new uniform." But what uniform will you tell him to get?

"Save the Zeitgeist" *The New Yorker,* August 1993

Without byline, the excerpt above appeared as the opening editorial essay in *The New Yorker*. The anonymous author conjures the standard menswear "uniform" of the three decades preceding the 1990s. Though claiming to have "forgotten" these types, the writer signals the ordinary, everyday fashions of the times in addition to invoking iconic "costumes" from films like *Wall Street* (1987), *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), and *Easy Rider* (1969). "Save the Zeitgeist" argues for the problem with the 1990s: "[they] just don't seem to be coming together in the focused and vigorous way one likes to see in a decade" (9). The writer argues that the 1990s zeitgeist, its cultural and temporal spirit, remains elusive because of its alignment with the

Clinton Administration tha t " hasn't m anaged to get it together:" " Culture be gins in the atmosphere; it feeds off aura and suggestiveness. If it waits for these things to emanate from the Clinton W hite H ouse, i t may be w aiting un til the ye ar 200 0" (10). T he c olumnist ha d waited about e ight months, t he l ength of t ime Clinton ha d be en i n of fice be fore t his l ament w as published. The essay b lames t he twinned lack of f ocus i n t he W hite House and in American culture on ideologies of "plurality" and "multiculturalism" that were doomed to failure because of the di fficulties a nd i mpossibilities of the ir "implementation" (10). The w riter n eed not have worried.

The White House *was* "emanating" culture, and its "aura" *had* seeped into the burgeoning 1990s z eitgeist, a pparent i n t he v ery pages t hat prec eded t he l ament. This *New Yorker* issue featured t he f irst i mages f rom t he famous " Who w ore K hakis?" G ap ad c ampaign t hat us ed pictures of iconic "legends" from the past to respond to that very question. The answer to "Who wore kha kis" ga ve the 1990s i ts "uniform," a nd of fered n ostalgic images of m ass a ppeal that held t he pr omise o f a "collective" individuality. Such a c ollective i ndividuality w as one of t he modes t he Clinton A dministration us ed bot h to i nvoke di versity a nd to que ll i ts divisiveness within a de sign for a un ited na tional f ront that was sens itive t o r ace, class and ge nder issues. During the 1990s, ideas about national identity were interwoven with the identity politics of the culture wars. These "wars" took place in America's public sphere—a space that was increasingly marked by nostalgic discourse as the decade wore on.

This chapter focuses on nostalgic discourse in America during the 1990s within its social milieu of culture "wars." Within the domestic imaginary of a cu lture at w ar, nostalgic imagery arose as a means to fashion both national and individual identity. This chapter explores nostalgic discourse t hat i nterrelated with cultural con cerns about the White House and its pr esident. The

coalition be tween na tion a nd nos talgia hi ghlights the p erceived c onnections a nd di visions
between national identities that rely on both individuality and collectivity. I examine discourses
of collective nationhood as a means to cope with what I explain as the "trauma" of culture wars.
The culture wars manifested conflict horizontally—across a terrain that pitted minorities, women
and ga ys a gainst t he traditional i deology r epresented by w hite (moral) m asculinity. T hese
conflicts also manifested vertically, as white masculinity engaged in conflicts across generational
lines. In t hat s ense, e ach pa rt of t his c hapter (and t he di ssertation a s a whole) e xamines w hite
masculinity within its representations in generational conflict: between Gen-X, the Boomers, and
the quickly dying WWII "Greatest Generation." Each group would use and benefit from cultural
and pol itical nos talgic t exts i n a lternate w ays. T his c hapter outlines a t heory of no stalgia a nd
nostalgic discourse, sets up the context of the culture wars during the 1990s, and illuminates the
trope of "war" through an examination of khaki pant advertisements.

2.1.1.1 Nostalgic Acts and the Public Sphere

In *The Sexual Politics of Time*, Susannah Radstone points out that "nostalgia is diversely
understood and interpreted, both in its relationship to the present and in its political implications"
(112). In recent years, studies of nostalgia have occurred in such diverse disciplines as sociology,
psychology, hi story, a nd w ithin cultural s tudies t hat ut ilize the pos tmodern. W hile nos talgia is
key t o m any di scussions of m emory, hi story, a nd c ommemoration, generalizations a bout i ts
definition a nd f unction, ha ve r isked bot h ove r-simplification a nd di scordant c ontestation. T he
term i s al most al ways abstruse an d incomplete, but ne vertheless us eful. This cha pter sec tion
provides an overview of significant thinking about nostalgia and also clarifies my use of what I
term "nostalgic discourse" throughout the dissertation.

Radstone attests that criticisms of contemporary nostalgia (usually as part of postmodern theory) can be as vague as the divergent uses and theories of nostalgia itself. Contemporary forms of nostalgia often locate within various "crises" of identity that may be propelled by the intersection between visual technologies and desire for "authentic" experience (132). Due to the relative absence of a history of nostalgia theories, Radstone aims to point out the primary ways that it has functioned in scholarly thought since the 1970s. As a broad term, nostalgia has been criticized as both an aspect of postmodern commodity culture and as a sentimental emotion—a facet of the psychological. At the same time, it has been theorized as a "universal" emotion, part of the human condition that no one escapes. Others have found it "protean" and useful for understanding "social and political desires," because it serves as a "vehicle for knowledge" (116). As part of the recent scholarly interest in memory, nostalgia has been critiqued as "aggressive" and "denigrating" toward whatever object it represents (116). Radstone finds that while nostalgia has been considered a "ubiquitous" aspect of contemporary culture, many discussions ahistoricize its origins, almost itself a nostalgic act. My aim is to avoid thinking of nostalgia in negative or positive terms—as either a "universal" human form of memorial, or a sentimentalized consumer product. Most scholars and historians agree that nostalgia has crucial resonances in both visual culture and in articulations of the nation-state. These features make nostalgia impossible to ignore in considerations of late 20th century American film. Though my sketching out of ideas about nostalgia in this dissertation risks a continuation of the problems Radstone outlined, to disregard nostalgia would overlook a central aspect of U.S. history during the Clinton years.

Nostalgic discourses help to make sense of social spaces such as the "public sphere." Additionally, nostalgia can be understood as an aesthetic aspect of narrative. Nostalgic narrative

space, which functions similarly to diegetic logic, offers one mode for considerations of film and culture that avoid vagaries and ahistoricizing. Recently, Pam Cook's *Screening the Past* (2005), and Vera D ika's *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film*[3] (2003) e ach c onsider nostalgia as it relates to cinematic representation. Cook finds that history itself is often infused with fantasy which creates a b lurring between fact and fantasy. She describes a d evaluation of the historian in culture accompanied by a positioning of "nostalgic spectators" that has resulted in the loss of the "authority of history" and the raising up of memory in its place (3). Rather than lamenting t his r ecent i nversion, C ook s uggests t hat i t a llows a " challenging di mension" t o emerge a round nos talgia. S he e xplains that hi story (valued) a nd no stalgia (devalued) c an be bridged by the "fantasies" or "recreations" of memory. She writes:

> This formulation . . . a voids the common hierarchy in which some 'inauthentic' forms of memory a re r elegated a nd de valued in or der to shore up no tions of history 'proper.' Ins tead, it re cognizes tha t th e thr ee t erms [history, nostalgia, memory] a re c onnected: w here hi story s uppresses t he e lement of di savowal or fantasy in its r e-presentation of t he pa st, nos talgia f oregrounds t hose e lements, and in effect lays bare the processes at the heart of remembrance. (3-4)

Nostalgia can make history more honest, but in doing so, it often supplies a story that is quite d ifferent f rom t he "ori ginal." Yet, this d ifference, or distance, can sometimes expos e a "dimension" that arrives at, or exposes, ideological structures and aspects of nation (inextricable from so me representations of hi story). F or instance, sections of my w ork a nalyze "historical" films t hat do not na rrate f acts of t he pa st as much as t hey expose p olitical e lements of th e present. Fantasy re-enactments use a narrativized nostalgia t hat both i magines and creates t he

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[3] Dika's work examines nostalgia as a cinematic "style" that recycles motifs, narratives, and aesthetics of prior films that arrange in "new" forms.

present nation. Radstone's work ultimately focuses on sexual difference and nostalgia. Importantly, she finds that it may be a "form" that has been misread as melancholic when it actually deploys a "masculine defense against loss" (159).

Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia*, traces the cultural implications of nostalgia as both a private act and a public text. Boym's theory of nostalgia draws upon multiple histories and sources as she fashions a concept that allows for nuanced ways to understand nostalgia in cultural representations of the past and in social practices of the present. Etymologically, nostalgia breaks down into *nostos*, to "return home," and *algia*, "longing," but Boym notes that this longing returns to a home that "no longer exists or has never existed" (xiii). However, though this "home" is imagined, it still has a register of materiality as a *location*. The location "home" often indicates a space of nation, origins and even birth. Nostalgia longs for a return to the pure beginning of oneself. Boym's theorization disrupts understandings of temporal continuity so that the *return* to the lost home becomes a literal re-turn—instead of a backward glance, it is a move that turns to the *side* of the present. Boym characterizes nostalgic returns as "sideways" moves that interrupt conventional chronology and rework the modern conception that time is irreversible (13). Nostalgia allows temporal manipulations that arrest and destroy normal markers of time, making available new memories of vividly imagined events. By nature, nostalgia engages with temporal and spatial fantasies as it seeks to go back to what may never have existed. Nostalgia imagines a newly designed space and reorders and manipulates the history of what occurred there via romance, sadness and emotional extremes. Nostalgia trades the linear and the accurate for the fantastical and the haphazard, and it does so through intense emotions.

According to Boym, nostalgia originated as a medical condition in the 17th century—as a set of physical symptoms brought on by the melancholy of intensive longing whereby the afflicted lost touch with present time (3). This "disease" was quickly recognized as contagious and epidemic, transferring to society at large, especially within the ranks of soldiers fighting abroad and longing for home (4). In this sense, nostalgia was thought to demonstrate patriotism as a: "'democratic' disease that threatened to affect soldiers and sailors displaced far from home as well as many country people who began to move to the cities." Nostalgia connected the individual sufferer to the public collective through its threat of contagion. Nostalgia also arose during the industrial shifts of early modernism and the political shift to nationalism in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Strikingly, Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* locates the origins of nationalism within the same period and within the advent of print-capitalism at a similar moment within the modern transition. According to Anderson, print-capitalism allowed vernacular language to predominate over religious language (such as Latin) causing a collective, popular discourse to emerge. Print media permitted readers separated by vast distances to develop a common communication through popular consumption of the same texts. Anderson theorizes that they were able to "imagine" connected communities due to their shared consumption in spite of vast spatial separation. Popular media helped to close the spatial and cultural gap between diverse citizenry and enable the symbolic connection of nationalism. Boym theorizes that nostalgia spread in a similar mode—one that sanctioned the alteration of conventional notions of time and space, but also fortified a "teleology of progress" and "its narrative of temporal progression and spatial expansion" (10).

Previous to the Enlightenment, space was conceived in relation to the human body with distances such as "at arm's length" or number of "feet." Colonial expansion changed "local" understanding of space into "universal" conceptions through cartography and its mapping (and colonizing) of new territory. Colonialism fostered radical reconceptions of both time and history with its ideology that social order could be drastically changed and revolutionized. Likewise, industrialization offered a different conception of time, aligning it with numbers, statistics, and schedules. According to Boym, time literally became money through industrialization's tandem shift to capitalism. Time was rigid, irreversible and progressive, while space was perceived as malleable. While the idea of progress became a global narrative about continual advancement, notions about space conceptualized it as "shrinking" to the realm of private individual experience, such as a reading a widely published book or consuming public media. Vast spatial differences shrunk to exemplify the individual experience and simultaneously expanded to include the collective (10). These changing conceptions of time and space engendered the formations of both nation and nostalgia—especially since the home returned to through nostalgia, in whatever mode this fantasy took, was usually a return to the homeland, the nation.

I have brought together the thinking of Boym and Anderson to briefly illustrate the connections between nation and nostalgia during the advent of modernity and industrialization. Roland Robertson in "After Nostalgia" (1990) also finds that nostalgia arose during the formation of the nation-state.[4] Nostalgia "homogenized" ethnic and cultural diversity. Nostalgic discourses helped to secure a strong sense of nation, standardizing citizens "whose loyalties to the nation would be challenged by extra-societal allegiances" (49). Nostalgia managed difference and through its strong affective nature it could produce imaginary bonds across diverse citizenry

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[4] For Robertson, this epoch occurs between 1750 and 1920, organizing "nationalism" for modern countries. Pp.49.

during t he modern pe riod's t ransition. H owever, m y c oncern i s w ith t he i nterstices be tween nation and nostalgia a t the t urn of the 20th century i n the U .S. N ostalgia c ontinues to a ttach to purviews of t he na tional, t he t emporal, a nd t he s patial, but i t doe s s o in w ays pe culiar t o t he political and cultural circumstances of the 1990s American zeitgeist. Nostalgia enables nation to be e xperienced pr ivately, a long a n a ffective i ndex t hat makes c ollective c onnection a n individualized e motion. In t he 1990s, this p rivate e xperience t ied t o n ation, bu t a lso t o pr ivate meanings that were personally felt—especially dur ing an e ra when personal i dentity ha d strong political value.

Nostalgia a nd na tion i nterlink i n t he w ays t hat e ach r epresents a nd relies upon t ime (history) and space (location). However, nostalgia harnesses concepts of nation in two additional ways. The first is through the body a nd its a ffliction of l onging, and the s econd is through the formal qualities of popular media. In my introduction, drawing on Boym, I argued that the body itself becomes a historic location because it is often the representational site for narratives about history and because it is the location for emotions and their display. As Boym explains, nostalgia was first re alized a s a physical c ondition that d isplayed its symptoms o f e motional longing on and t hrough t he body. I n i ts e arly manifestations, nos talgia w as a ssociated w ith phys ical suffering: ps ychosomatic s ymptoms, hypochondria and a sceticism. N ostalgics us ed the body t o perform t he bi ttersweet l onging of nos talgia b y e nduring its p ain and f eeding on t hat pa in's productive pleasures. Boym describes this nostalgia as "a form of deep mourning that performs a labor of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future" (55). Like the work of mourning endemic to trauma, the pain of nostalgia *re-turns* to the past in a playful way.

Susan Stewart in *On Longing*, explains that the social disease of nostalgia exhibits as the desire for desire, represented by "a kind of ache," a physical yearning (ix). This ache is located in the body, but it also connects to the second way that nation and nostalgia connect: via popular media. Stewart notes how such longing lends itself to the study of narrative. She writes, "By the narrative process of nostalgic reconstruction the present is denied and the past takes on an authenticity of being, an authenticity which, ironically, it can achieve only through narrative" (28). In popular media, especially film, "narrative refers to the strategies, codes and conventions . . . employed to organize a story" (Hayward 2000, 256). Narrative permeates vast cultural and political forms of media so that its imprint becomes naturalized and seems both authentic and real, despite its construction and adherence to pattern. Like the repeated compulsion of Freudian fort/da, narrative engages in play, in its oscillations between conflict and resolution, horror and relief, romance and postponement. Narrative in popular media recreates longing, its deferral and interruption, its denouement and its repetition.

Anderson argues that the concept of nation begins with the development of print media. Stewart theorizes that "the printed text is cinematic before the invention of cinema. The adjustable speed of narration, the manipulatability of the visual, turns the reader into a spectator enveloped by, yet clearly separated from, the time and space of the text" (9). Nostalgic memories and fantasies also operate via a narration guided by a visual register. Nation formation continues to flourish in the late 20th century's culture industry and in the public sphere's saturation with visual media. Nostalgia harnesses the popular media "communities" of nation through its attention to spacio-temporal manipulation, visual imagery, and repetitive narrative structure.

Many critics, notably Frederic Jameson, locate late century nostalgia within theories of the postmodern, and cast its visual media as excessive, accelerated and repetitive. Jameson

theorizes the nostalgic tendency as peculiar to the postmodern condition that elides historicism because contemporary experience is trivial and fragmented. The postmodern argument finds culture saturated with visual media such as film, television, and digitization that signal the simulacra—a public landscape of icons, clichés and logos that replicate experience, but do not represent it. The aesthetic of advertisements and blockbusters become part of a glossy celebration of celebrity and nostalgic history that uses spectator recognition of narrative structure as a means to construct "hip" consumer awareness. However, this awareness is absent of specific referent or materiality. Rather it exists as a swirl of associations around celebrity, consumption and desire that relies on recognition of style and iconic connotation, but provides spectators with repeated encounters with cliché. Boym also explains that "pop" nostalgia is different from more serious forms: "American popular culture prefers a technopastoral or a techno-fairy tale to a mournful elegy" (33). She goes on to cite "armchair" and "ersatz" nostalgia, both forms lack "lived experience or collective historical memory" (38). Scholars often discount late century American popular media, the subject of this dissertation, for using nostalgia as commodity, in the service of consumption. The popular works I will discuss here shortly always have a market value, and when infused with nostalgia they "sell" the past offering a simulation of lived experience and an imitation of memory.

However, I mean to put pressure on the postmodern theory of nostalgia. Certainly, popular media in the U.S. occupies a commodity culture and engages with low taste, mass appeal and propaganda. Nostalgia, in my understanding, always invokes recreation, so I am loathe to fault American versions for being *more* empty than more "responsible" recreations of history that exist beyond a market system—if there are any. But neither is my point to defend contemporary American media as particularly "worthy." Rather, my intention is to offer a theory

of nostalgia that builds upon Boym's which finds the "construction of heritage" within nostalgia to be both inextricable from nation-forming and endemic to lived experience.

Nostalgia is a conceptual tool: a mode of reading and way of seeing. In addition to being a social disease, an imaginary reenactment, and method of mourning, nostalgia itself is a text and an application. As a text, nostalgia always has a narrative drive and an aesthetic form. It is crucial to read nostalgia as a text because such a mode offers a palpable tool for understanding the negotiations between nation and body, the collective and the individual, and the public sphere and lived experience. Nostalgia bridges the seemingly vast divide between public space and the *privately felt* experience of living in that space. I use the term "nostalgic discourse" to refer to manifestations of nostalgia as acts and as texts. I also maintain that while nostalgia is privately felt, it is publically displayed. Nostalgic discourse is a characteristic of the public sphere that helps in understanding how this sphere engages with and constitutes privacy.

In *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, Lauren Berlant explains how the public sphere in America becomes *intimate*: "the U.S. present tense renders citizenship as a condition of social membership produced by personal acts and values, especially acts originating in or directed toward the family sphere" (5). Writing about the Reagan era, she argues that public communities are recast as narrow spaces occurring in domestic zones and through traditionally private acts: childbirth, parenting, raising children, shopping, etc. Berlant argues that the Reagan era inaugurated a new sense of family and the notion of traditional domestic life as performing national acts of citizenship. However, this "new" public sphere became populated with "virtual citizens—fetuses, children, real and imaginary immigrants—persons that, paradoxically [could not . . .] act as citizens," but whose representations, were circulating in the mass media (5). Berlant critiques national ideas about citizenship, but she makes crucial arguments about images,

mass m edia, a nd t he f antasies of na tion t hat i nvolve b oth " public-sphere na rratives" an d "concrete experiences of quotidian life" (10).

My notion of the public sphere and its relation to the nation builds on Berlant's argument. The public sphere is composed through narrative, but in my focus, these narratives are primarily in visual form. Of course, I recognize that the postmodern sense of this visual zone reads it as driven by c apitalism and over-saturated with visual memes. However, rather than reading these visual texts as "empty" or "inauthentic," in my theory, nostalgia-as-a-text provides the *route* for understanding t he m odus ope randi of t he pub lic s phere a nd i ts vi sual z one. E xamining t he complexities of nos talgia i n i ts A merican popu lar f orm pr ovides a ke y to unde rstanding t he relationship between nation and lived experience.

Because nostalgia is pervasively a construction of an "imagination," it gives connective and narrative drive to cultural fantasy. Nostalgia becomes a na rrative drive because its nature is to recreate a temporal order. In that sense, it is a plot and one with political tendencies. Because nostalgia i s i nextricable f rom na rrative a nd f unctions a s a t ext, I f ind i t us eful t o t hink of nostalgia as a *narrative space*. I f t he publ ic s phere i s textual a nd vi sual, i t c an function w ith diegetic r ules a nd l ogics—it m ust if a na rrative drive is be ing imposed. L ife w ithin the publ ic sphere is gu ided by a narrative d rive, endemic to reading, t hat orde rs or makes sens e of visua l clutter. Nostalgic discourses, through their visual codes, display a purely ideological realm. M y concern is in extending t he not ion of a na rrative s pace to include o r to be gui ded by multiple texts, tha t may share a s imilar "story," or pl ot, but e xist in di fferent media forms. One wa y to make locations such as the "public sphere" and "culture" specific is to examine the visual texts that share meanings as they populate this realm. I recognize that not only are there multifarious texts i n the public s phere, but t hey are c onsumed in random or der by diverse s pectators w ith

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disparate perspectives. The public visual realm is a vortex in flux. However, it is easily recognized as an ideological zone subject to conventional beliefs and meanings about race, class, gender, sexualities and ethnicities.

To think of this zone as narrative space is one way to *stabilize* the vortex and allow the zone to be read cohesively. However, the random, chaotic order in which these images are consumed negates the structured system of meanings on which narratives rely. Yet, the conception of nostalgia-as-text engenders the possibility of reading these texts and locating a narrative within the chaotic swirl. Nostalgia provokes the logic underlying a seemingly random pattern to appear. Paul Grainge in "Mediating Memory," argues a similar theme about the "multifarious images and texts that circulate in the contemporary cultural terrain . . . [they] reconfigure cultural references and textual traces within the semiotic array" (208). I see the semiotic array as extending not necessarily beyond the screen as extra-diegetic components, but as separate frames linked by narrative meaning that connects them as one diegetic universe. Nostalgia, becomes a *procedure* dependent upon a spectator's reading. In this procedural mode, nostalgia becomes a way of seeing. Nostalgia may be an intrinsic aspect of many texts, but it is a spectator's recognition of temporal discord and their affective response of longing that completes a nostalgic text.

To illustrate my argument, I will explain the narrative that binds John Kennedy and Bill Clinton and that began with their auspicious meeting in 1963, when Clinton the teenager shook hands with the sitting president. The moment exists in the visual public sphere of America because it was recorded by a hand-held movie camera and replayed in slow motion in Clinton's

1992 bi ographical c ampaign vi deo *The Man from Hope.*[5] The vi sual m oment f ashions a

narrative and a   *logic.* Citizens c reate a st   ory where p residential candidates meet t heir

primogenitors as i f pre ordained. The t wo shake ha nds and f ate seal s. If one saw t his f ootage

before Clinton's adulthood and national political career, the moment would have been irrelevant

and vi sually uni nteresting a s t he f ootage m ostly c overs the ba ck of K ennedy's he ad a nd a

smiling, unr ecognizable t een s hot i n gr ainy bl ack-and-white. With know ledge, how ever va gue,

of C linton's c ampaign a nd K ennedy's l ost po tential, the i mage be comes na rratilogical a nd

ideological. N ostalgia as a con ceptual p rocedure bot h al lows t his p rocess and i lluminates i ts

method. The moment uses a nostalgic discourse that constructs a narrative space that "returns" to

"home," cr eates private affect, and organizes a na rrative space. In this instance, the longing for

home br oadens t o c ontain s imply a n or iginary location, a lmost l ike the i maginary monarchical

lineage E ric L ott t heorized i n the introduction. T he f antasy of K ennedy's " Camelot" can now

include Bill Clinton through its use of a nostalgic discourse that imagines origins.

To illustrate this idea further, Robert McNeely's 1993 photograph of Bill Clinton and Ted

Kennedy at the Kennedy Library and museum (Figure 3.) presents an example of a nostalgic text

with narrative space. The image demonstrates how nostalgia operates as an enclosed structure of

meaning that bridges individual experience with larger concepts around nation and history. The

image "superimposes" multiple narratives that extend to stories and facts beyond the frame, but

that remain part of its diegetic structure.

McNeely w as D irector of   Photographic O perations a t t he White H ouse f rom the

beginning of C linton's first term unt il 1998. H e shot exclusively in bl ack-and-white film c iting

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[5] *The Man from Hope* premiered at the Democratic National Convention in 1992 and was distributed among major
donors with a preliminary message asking them to share it with others. My Chapter Two *Prelude* analyzes the short
film in relation to the aesthetic strategies of *Forrest Gump*.

its "historical permanence" and remarking somewhat unconvincingly that he uses it solely because it lasts longer than color film, a suspicious claim when there are countless ways to digitize, copy, save and store images. Black-and-white film infuses imagery with historic realism, even as it de-saturates the image of the color that resembles the actual world. The black-and-white aesthetic has a "portal" quality that allows viewers to experience history in a way that is instantly more emotional than color. Monochrome imagery causes an "affective nostalgia" (Grainge 147).

The image depicts an early moment in Clinton's presidency that sutures his relation to the Kennedy mystique. On the opposite page McNeely captures an impromptu meeting between Clinton, Jackie Kennedy Onassis and the two adult children: Caroline and John Jr. Clinton seems to "complete" the family, not just as the father, but as the "resurrection" of JFK's presidential potential. The image was taken at the John F. Kennedy Jr. Memorial Museum in Boston in 1993, but published in 2000, at the end of the Clinton era and after the tragic deaths of Jackie and John Jr.—a fact that aids in the nostalgic procedure of viewing the image. The images appear in the coffee table book *The Clinton Years*, a heavy, glossy photography book, that functions as a souvenir of the Clinton presidency. The photos encompass 1993-1998, but leave off before the scandal and impeachment that marked Clinton's final years as president. Through the omission of photographs from this period, the book revises the story of Clinton's presidency and depicts highly stylized compositions of substantive moments from the earlier years. In the book's introduction, McNeely notes that the book and images are more about the presidency as a facet of American culture, than they are about Clinton as a man.

The image in question certainly suggests "narrative" about the presidency, one that infuses with affective nostalgia. The nostalgia exists within the composition and will inspire

nostalgia related to nation in ideal viewers—viewers privy to the identities, facts and popular narratives of the figures represented. It is an image that can only be read with a nostalgic gaze. Without knowledge of JFK and the history of Kennedy iconicity in America, the image's meaning is gibberish, and the frame's logic collapses.

The image depicts Clinton and Ted Kennedy in profile before a brick wall that displays a seemingly authentic campaign poster "Kennedy for President." Though they stand in a museum, the brick suggests an external outpost during JFK's campaign. The red, white and blue block stripes of the poster's base fade to gray, black and white in monochrome format. The actual poster uses the patriotic colors with Kennedy's smiling face in black-and-white. The text beneath reads "Leadership for the 60s," although in the McNeely photograph Ted Kennedy stands before the written temporal marker. The image reads only, "Leadership for" as if to signal that Kennedy leads his younger brother Ted and Clinton, *or* that they have taken over his leadership.

The image's composition plays with scale and space. Clinton's body is in the foreground bisected at the waist, with Ted Kennedy midscreen, and appearing diminutive in stature next to Clinton. Kennedy's head, though lower than Clinton's and Ted's, is much larger in scale, so oversized. JFK's head, in the background, corresponds to his "Leadership," represented graphically by the printed word. Clinton and Ted stare at a television screen and its distorted image of Kennedy at a podium. Because the televised image is shot from a skewed angle, John Kennedy's image is frozen in a "sideways" deformation. The photographed, televised image remarks upon the arrested action caused by his assassination. The spectator's view of the image is skewed and sideways, while Clinton, with a smiling visage views it straight on. The image highlights the *perspective* of viewers. Ted stares blankly, although a shadow cuts into his forehead and blackens his eye. His nose and hair are an overexposed white, highlighting his age,

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while John Kennedy is youthful and beaming in the poster. In the televised image, he is disfigured, his mouth bleached out and his countenance twisted.

Ted Kennedy's body cancels out the historical marker "the 60s," but that temporal zone remains in tension with the present, distorting temporal perspective in a similar way as the four male bodies represented in the shot. JFK's two faces, one ideal, one distorted and mute, are both the smallest and the largest. These two images "stretch" Kennedy's body, twinning it and giving it its narrative drive, the story of the hope, and the assassination. These "facts" about Kennedy give the image a coherence that links it to other visual texts in the public sphere. The image signals the specter of nation and the presidency, but to do so it relies upon nostalgia: the ability to go back and re-visit the past imbuing it with narrative logic. Kennedy's image is instilled with longing and affect because of the narrative of his tragedy. When Clinton enters the narrative, his image can offer balm to that tragedy. As a souvenir shot of 1993, the photograph displays frozen JFK looking over Clinton, who in turn gazes at the animated, but disfigured JFK. In fact, the book's introduction notes that Kennedy's administration was fond of official "candid" photography to document life at the White House. This image and the live event it documents was one of many images that connected JFK with Clinton as though an imaginary baton was passed between them in the seminal moment of their 1963 meeting. They share screen space and in sharing narrative "structure," were believed to share visions, habits, politics and potentials. Of course, Clinton and his campaign and administration were active constructors of this self-aggrandizing connection.

It is important to consider the circumstances in which this image might be viewed. Most conventionally, it would be seen in 2000, as a "memory" of 1993, (that collapses the distance between the 1990s and "the 60s"). The book in which the image is contained might be perused

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by the kind of consumer likely to "read" such a picture book: in a bookstore, in a living room. The circumstances of this spectator's reading circumvent the notion of a purely closed narrative system. Whatever "narrative" that reader brings, it will require nostalgia in order for the reading to be coherent. Nostalgia is both a play with time and an affective longing. The stronger the longing invoked, the stronger the ideological substance becomes. The reader cannot merely recollect—they must *reconstruct*. The reader may feel renewed grief at the assassination and loss of JFK's "leadership" or recall the hope Clinton represented circa 1993. Certainly, either path, or the range in between or beyond, constitutes a national narrative about the presidency and its history. However, within the image and the histories which spring from it, are physical indications of nostalgia: affect and longing. These are visible in the gazes displayed by Ted Kennedy and Clinton. Clinton looks with casual pleasure and Ted with dark, grim gloom. Nostalgia, as both a feeling and a narrative drive, enable us to read and understand this image. Nostalgic discourse structures the narrative within the frame and allows its easy escape beyond the composition's borders and into the narrative drive of the "imagination" of JFK history.[6]

According to Grainge, mass media images and the narratives they contain resist the narrative closure associated with conventional storytelling. The intertextual nature of historical memory and its representation, combined with the vortex of mass media imagery in the public sphere allows for an ongoing, repetitive, non-closed or final narrative ending. The Clinton/JFK image described above tells multiple stories, but none of them end, they start up again just as

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[6] This image displays one way that the cinematic and the photographic are narrativized and stylized by nostalgia. Nostalgia is a textual form (with a narrative and an aesthetic.) As a text form, nostalgia acts as a bridge between culture (and its politics and ideologies) and the body (*both* in representation and as the location for lived experience.) Jameson's ideas about nostalgia's lack of referent and its response to triviality, do not account for the material consequences nostalgia needs as its *raison d'être*. In my sense of nostalgia, it must evoke longing, desire, amusement, woe, bliss, worry, anxiety, anguish or terror. It must *produce.* It is the means of this production that enables nostalgia to forge its consequences for lived experience. In the image under consideration, Clinton and Ted Kennedy hold the affect that results from a nostalgic narration and historical imagining of the past.

they seem to resolve. This is primary characteristic of the nostalgic text. Boym suggests that nostalgia makes material that which is immaterial. In the vortex of cultural imagery, and in the "belief system" that constitutes ideology, materiality locates in the lived experience of the body. Nostalgia is a narrative bridge between large concepts like "nation" or "president" and individual emotions. Nostalgic emotion produces affect that emerges through symptoms in the body.

2.1.1.2 The 1990s Culture Wars

The Clinton administration's official acts and policies reflected a sense of plurality, multiculturalism, and diversity in its first strategies to politically acknowledge the culture wars and resolve them to "heal" the nation. The nation's culture wars concerned identity politics and contestations over race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. Clinton scholar James L. Guth cites Pat Buchanan's 1992 prime-time speech at the Republican National Convention as the mainstream public's introduction to the term "culture wars" and to its popular definition (204). The term originated in academic discussions, specifically in a 1991 sociology book, *Culture Wars*, that argued that social battles between traditionalists and progressives displaced what were previously religious conflicts focusing on doctrine and morality.[7] This shift, from religious doctrine to ideological "tradition," posed ethnicity (and attendant race, class, and gender issues) against moral orthodoxy. One significant attribute of this ideological divide was its highlighting of the value of personal experience. The personal became expressly political because it became

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[7] The original use of the term seems to derive from James David Hunter's *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America,* 1991.

the material proof of oppression and social problems. Political tug of wars occurred across the narrative histories that displayed the problems. While these histories were complex and legitimately oppressive, owning and claiming such a narrative became a facet of political agency. Groups and individuals vied for these personal narratives and their cultural legitimation.

Almost immediately, the term "culture wars" infiltrated popular media and culture and came to represent the fractious social landscape of identity politics. These politics based within race, class and gender—previously theorized as the "three prongs of oppression," first by counter culture movements in the sixties, and next by academic progressives beginning in the seventies. While academics studied the often invisible and complex interrelationship between social ideologies and political power in popular culture and media, these conflicts were imagined as binary "wars:" progress vs. tradition, Democrat vs. Republican, urban vs. rural, each across a terrain of "family values," "multiculturalism" and "morality."

At the same time that citizens were contesting identities in culture, the Clinton White House was trying to forge its own identity in the political arena. Clinton was famous for connecting with and representing the interests of multiply diverse contingencies across the political spectrum. Despite being a white male, Clinton had the support of women and minorities because he championed their political rights. He was known for using rhetoric in speeches that could appeal to disparate factions simultaneously, making each feel that he was loyal to them and speaking to their core issues (Guth 206). He vowed in the 1992 campaign to support groups who felt neglected by the previous administrations. The White House preached diversity and plurality and Clinton maintained commitment to social issues despite consistent centrist policies and appeasement of a conservative congress. In fact, Clinton's domestic platform was often contradictory and constricted the social progress and agency of the groups he claimed to aid. The

most not orious e xample, t he D on't-ask-Don't-Tell pol icy discussed in de tail i n *Prelude IV*, purportedly s howed s upport f or ga ys a nd l esbians, but onl y those i n t he m ilitary, a nd by m ost accounts the policy hindered rather than helped their cause.

Likewise, C linton's pol icies on r ace w ere of ten unde rmined by hi s a ctual t reatment of minorities, especially i n relation t o c rime a nd t he d eath p enalty. C linton s upported t he "three strikes" crime bill that would give sentences to violent offenders that had no possibility of parole. Most black members of congress opposed that provision because of consensus that the criminal justice system is biased against black men (Wright 229). Though Clinton garnered 82 percent of the black vote in 1992, many in that demographic became frustrated with his policies during the first term, such as making many minority appointments with "safe" or non-controversial people. Sharon D. Wright suggested that C linton was using "symbolic" politics that had only moderate effect on material reality or the lived experience of minorities (226). In any case, he failed to live up to the expectations of his campaign promises. Though he nominated and appointed women and ethnic minorities, these choi ces w ere al most al ways cont ested by conservatives. He appointed to t he S upreme Court J ewish m oderates R uth Bader G insberg a nd n ext S tephen Breyer, who were both c onfirmed, but no t be fore i nciting i re f rom c onservatives de spite the relative moderation of their political views (Guth 208).[8]

Early in his campaign and first term, Clinton aligned his social interests with a religious moral stance that likely st emmed from hi s Southern B aptist he ritage, a lthough he us ed r eligion "universally," r efusing to l imit i t to one de nomination or d octrine a nd persistently linking its

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[8]Clinton appointed Jocelyn Elders to surgeon general, a woman "vocal" on leftist social issues such as the decriminalization of drugs.

values t o a pol itical a genda (204). C linton p reached a commitment t o w omen, ga ys, a nd minorities, but often passed legislative policy that limited their agency and incurred wrath from the r eligious r ight. P erhaps t he most i nfamous e xample of t his w as C linton's P ersonal Responsibility Act tha t related to welfare re form. The A ct e liminated food stamps f or many, demanded stricter re quirements to receive aid, and eliminated a major a id program for families with children. Senator Edward Kennedy called it "legislative child abuse" (Wright 228). The Act satisfied R epublicans, b ut w as w idely c onsidered t o be unduly ha rsh t owards poor women a nd children.

Rather than a ssuaging the c ulture wars, Clinton's a ctions int ensified the ir conflicts, especially because his f irst m ajor pol itical m oves af ter t aking office conc erned gay r ights and abortion, mainstay i ssues for liberals and immoral hot beds for conservatives. Donna Harraway explains tha t C linton's first le gislative a cts w ere not in the c onventional na tional do main of "manly a ction," but i n t he a rena of r eproductive technologies a nd f etal bod ies: " Through embryos a nd f etuses, [Clinton's f irst] or ders had t o do with e ntire f orms of l ife—public, embodied, a nd pe rsonal—for the c itizens of th e s tate" (18 9). Clinton's pr ioritizing of "body" issues de epened the i mportance of i deological st ruggle an d made more cont entious c onflicts between the re ligious traditional r ight and the progressive l eft. "Body" is sues w ere particularly prone to incite ideas about private experiences, and bring them into the public sphere. Sexuality, choice, and private practices were suddenly brought again to the fore, after a Republican era that squelched these i deas be neath r eligion, va lues a nd t radition. C linton made t he body publ ic. Almost i mmediately a fter t aking office C linton be gan t he pr ocess of l ifting c onstraints o n abortion, r eversing R eagan's ex ecutive o rders restricting r esearch on fetal tissue and instead

permitting medical experimentation on this aborted tissue. He also allowed the importation of the controversial abortifacient RU486 and tried to limit pro-life protesters' access to abortion clinics.

Clinton's "body" legislation occurred within the culture wars' binary moral stance. The "Don't-Ask, Don't-Tell" compromise for his platform to allow homosexuals to serve in the military managed to incite indignation from all sides, as liberals considered the compromise a failure and religious groups and military bigwigs deemed the entire issue morally abhorrent. Varying ideologies over corporeal tissue and sexuality, brought issues about reproduction to the public center and coincided in Clinton's policies, in national "wars" over family values, and in conceptions about Clinton as a *body*, himself. Already by 1992, Clinton was known not only for his corpulence and appetite for sugary treats, barbeque and McDonald's burgers, but also for his (alleged) affair with Gennifer Flowers and rumors of countless other rumored "womanizing" incidents especially with Paula Jones, Kathleen Willey, Juannita Broaddrick, and others. His appetite for junk food aligned with public perceptions about his sexual appetite. The sense of Clinton as a specifically corporeal entity with unseemly appetites, coupled with his dedication to liberal policies about the body and helped to fracture and divide a sense of national unity. However, at the same time, Clinton was the face of the nation, representing the collectivity and appealing to its various constituents by seeming to speak for and to *embody* their specific political desires and differences.

Often read as a figure of postmodernity,[9] Clinton embodied the tensions surrounding his dual nature: "black" (because of his popularity with African-Americans) and white, public and private, masculine and feminine, and representing the past and future. Clinton straddled both tradition and progress: "he was, at once, the chief interpreter of our collective memory of the past

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[9] See the anthology *The Postmodern Presidency: Bill Clinton's Legacy in U.S. Politics.* Ed. Steven E. Schier. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh Press, 2000.

(as all presidents are), and a leader trying to take the nation into a new millennium" (Parry-Giles 6). Clinton employed two primary modes for coping with the fractious culture wars over identity within the newly popular public domain of personal experience: the "politics of empathy," and the use of political nostalgia (something we have already seen in the photograph discussed). Both modes interconnected as they sought to bridge the social fissures across the nation and heal seemingly insurmountable social barriers for a nationalist agenda. The politics of empathy is an emotional mode that produces an affective response from the public that can unite divisive and disparate contingencies. Political nostalgia utilizes melodrama and memorial to produce emotions of longing for the past, an idealized homeland, for pure origins, in order to bond together diffuse sentiments, constituents and historical memories. Both modes "warped the line between real and constructed, and between past and future, blurring them increasingly in the service of [Clinton's] personal and political image" (Parry-Giles 6).

In tandem with Clinton's politics of empathy and nostalgia, American culture engaged in a cultural nostalgia of its own distinct to the 1990s that serviced identity politics, collectively and individually. Concepts of historical trauma and pain always attached to these politics, as minority and disenfranchised groups (e.g. gays, blacks, women, Native Americans, Latinos, etc.) sought equality and ideological revision that acknowledged the genocidal and discriminatory history of the American nation. Nostalgic discourse re-emerged as a narrative form that curbed this revisionism even as it engaged in it. These revisions of national American history seemed to present accurate representations, though they were highly constructed fantasies, that often "got away" from accuracy and reconfigured dominant hegemony, such as with a text like *Dances With Wolves* (Kevin Costner, 1990), that was popularly thought to be fair to Native Americans. Nineties nostalgia sought to bridge difference and present a united national front that elevated

diversity and multicultural ide ntity, a llowing all c itizens, including Bill C linton, access to a suddenly va luable pe rsonal hi story t hat of ten c onnected to e xperiences of oppr ession. T he culture w ars cr eated a place of so cial, cul tural and political w ar t hat ci tizens co uld combat through personal, individual choices and styles. This nostalgic discourse created an imagination of "war" and trends emerged that obsessed with all things military.

2.1.1.3 *Who Wore Khakis?*

In August 1993 The Gap ran a series of "teaser" advertisements in *Newsweek, The New Yorker*, a nd *Time:* magazines w ith an expected audience of i nformed middle t o upper cl ass Boomers w ith a n i nterest i n pol itics, c ulture, a nd s tylishly i nconspicuous c onsumption. P aul David Grainge, in "Advertising the Archive," notes that advertising images "promote structures of de sire and i nform e conomies of t aste, [and] t hey c an a lso l egitimate forms of a uthority and power" (138). H e further a rgues t hat a dvertising e ngages i n ne gotiations of na tion—especially when these images us e a nos talgic, monochrome aest hetic. The blac k-and-white f orm s ignals authenticity, an idyllic past, *and* good taste. *The New Yorker* especially, was and remains an elite publication that boasts a readership with discerning tastes.[10]

The New Yorker teaser ads appe ared in black r ectangles in t he na rrow columns on t he page's edge s, usually reserved for bus iness ca rd si zed advertisements f or obs cure r esorts and deluxe um brellas. "Who w ore K hakis?" w as p rinted i n white i nside the s mall bl ack r ectangles placed intermittently throughout the issue, repeatedly asking the question as the reader browsed

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[10] Christian L ander l ists *The New Yorker* as a magazine w hites r ead t o g ain cu ltural r espect i n his surprisingly exacting book of s atirical l ists: *Stuff White People Like: The Definitive Guide to the Unique Taste of Millions* (2008). He claims that white people love magazines, especially *The New Yorker* because it will make them seem smarter because of all the "big words," and long, complicated articles. He argues that whites subscribe, but do not read their copies, instead letting them pile at the bedside, a f act they can bemoan at parties to gain status. pp. 154-5.

the pages. The following week, the black rectangles continued, with enigmatic answers: "GK wore khakis," "NJ wore khakis," "EH wore khakis." The next issue printed the first three of thirteen images in a six week campaign that would use the archival black-and-white images of celebrated "legends" of the past. The first three were Gene Kelly, Norma Jeane (using Marilyn Monroe's given name) and Ernest Hemingway, each sporting a pair of khakis (Figures 4, 5, 6).[11] Grainge reads this campaign as coding "consumer individuality through—an archival and black-and-white nostalgia" in a time when "memory is a new locus of both cultural identity and commercial style." (140). The ads in their use of the iconic, do signal an indeterminate, postmodern "pastness." But as nostalgic texts, they also narrativize connections between the three figures, so that the three photos together suggest a story. This story is one about the connections between disparate locations and eras, connections forged through pants and fashion that can connect the zones. The story is also one about how fashion know-how makes one "special," legendary and individual. Here, the nostalgic discourse engages with fame as a "home" base—a temporal location for what was always already famous, stylish and pure. However, because these images are supposed to induce imitation, the purchase of khakis, their "narrative" links to the act of buying and wearing the pants. This act (similar to hailing in interpellation) of wearing khakis is a tandem narrative to the story within in the images. Citizens can fantasize they represent the continued legacy of khakis and Hemingway, Norma Jeane, etc. In this sense the structure and organization of *The New Yorker* magazines in which the ad campaign appears forms a system that constructs a narrative of nostalgia, a contemporary experience and its *memory*. Readers are encouraged, week by week, to connect the question with

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[11] The other ten legends in the original campaign were Chet Baker, Sammy Davis Jr., Humphrey Bogart, Amelia Earhart, Jack Kerouac, Pablo Picasso, Steve McQueen, James Dean, Ava Gardner, Rock Hudson and Arthur Miller, the only other living legend besides Kelly.

the written answers and then finally with the images that they will see in the third week. In this sense, they are encouraged to remember past issues in tandem with the present issue in their hands. This narrative tendency extends to the series of images and the three "legends" connected together. This narrative link may account for the public panic over Gene Kelly's inclusion. He was assumed dead, not only because of the use of past tense: GK *wore* khakis, but because he was in the company of legendary suicides. A week after the ads were published, Gene Kelly happily chirped in a *New York Times* reassurance piece that he was alive, well *and* dressed in khakis (Pener).

Related newspaper articles then become a part of the narrative. A week before the images appeared, but after the confounding question and answers, *New York Times* journalist Stephen Elliot, published a piece in the "Style" section revealing the conceit for the campaign and its inspiration: "Kennedy wore khakis." The phrase was proclaimed by an unnamed art director during a brainstorm session. This influential factoid was reported to the *Times* by a Gap publicist who explains the team knew they could never gain licensing for Kennedy's image (and it is unquestioned that they mean the former president when they name "Kennedy") so the team found other suitable emblems. For readers of the *New York Times,* any recalled image of Kennedy in khakis enters the narrative connecting the article with that semiotic array.

Consider the candid shot of Kennedy in a bomber jacket, khakis, blue socks and sunglasses (Figure 7.). The blue socks and deck shoes combine with conventional military attire. Kennedy perfectly combines the civilian with the military in an image of effortless style that recalls his WWII veteran status, in addition to his privileged Ivy League pedigree and yachting lifestyle. Yet, Kennedy's image also always invokes a tragic horror, the family "curse," and the iconic Zapruder visual citation of his death. As icon, JFK can only ever be a nostalgic figure. He

reveals both perfect white masculinity and its obliteration. His ghost haunts The Gap's ad campaign as a sub-plot.

Similarly, the use of Norma Jeane, pre-Marilyn, does not avoid the latter identity, but refers to it through the nostalgic narrative that "flashes back" from that more prominent image to a khaki-wearing younger woman representing pure femininity, beneath and before peroxide, JFK, pills and scandal. As well, the Hemingway image signals the "safari" connotations of his short stories about hunting. Because of Hemingway's age, indicated by the bearded visage of *Papa* Hemingway, the image was likely snapped at his Key West home judging from the palm leaves. But the image also signals other narratives—including Hemingway's suicide by shotgun. While the images suggest an idealized sense of effortless, "casual" style, there also lurks the knowledge of death. This specter is the likely reason for the assumption that Gene Kelly had died. In a sense, he had. Though eighty-one when the ads appeared, the image tethers him to a celebrity moment, its heyday around WWII and the post-war period, that no longer exists, but that can be returned to again and again through consumption. Gene Kelly is dead in a similar way that Marilyn and Hemingway are brought to life. Nostalgic discourse and its temporal play, re-animates through narrative acts, these figures and their stories.

The three images together also signal a generational divide that is central to Gap merchandise. Though the Norma Jeane photo is likely snapped in the early 40s, Gene Kelly's in the mid-50s and Hemingway in the early 60s, the campaign narrative constructs a diegesis where Marilyn is the youngest, Kelly is middle-aged, and Hemingway is the father. This diegetic (as opposed to actual) dating system corresponds to the Gap "philosophy" and also to the "new" Boomer market that the campaign targeted. Marilyn wears the youthful (Gen-x,) androgynous

menswear that was to become stylish for women in the 1990s, and Kelly and Hemingway mark the divide between Boomer's and their parents, "the Greatest."

The Gap was founded in 1969 to satisfy "disaffected youth" by selling the denim that was the favored casual wear of the counter culture, hippies and college students. The store took its name to represent the antipathy its ideal customers had toward the older generation, the "generation gap," and their formal attire for everyday activities. The Gap rebelled against leftover fashions from the fifties, the high heels and mandatory dresses and suits that helped to cloth and code gender ideology. The counter culture movement adopted denim, the material of working class labor, as their "costume," representing a material antagonism to suits. In the seventies and eighties, The Gap continued a modest business and sold denim, sweat suits and casual wear to the youth market. The corporation expanded, but modestly, opening one international store in the eighties. However, by the mid-1990s, The Gap's dominance was secure. It increased franchises (Gap Kids, Baby Gap, Banana Republic, Old Navy) and took hold on the global scene. By the late 1990s, revenue skyrocketed. The corporation could claim to open one new store per day and had grown by 24,000 percent since the mid-1980s.[12] The Gap achieved its success by changing its "casual" attire into what became standard "business" casual and unisex outfits. Khaki became a universal base outfit for *any* age group or identity. The corporation's subsidiaries built on its military mystique: Banana Republic cited colonial history and Old Navy is quite literal in its reference to a military history. However, the Gap's success was limited, with startling exactitude, to the years of Clinton's presidency. After 2000, the corporation's revenues fell and continue to fall, despite efforts to renew interest and find that *je ne sais quoi* of their 1990s success.

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[12] See http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/The-Gap-Inc-Company-History.html, for a comprehensive history of the company.

The Gap, and the style zeitgeist it tapped into was specific to the cultural conditions of the 1990s American nation. The nation's shift after the millennium and the new Bush regime was no longer as engaged with WWII nostalgia. The generational conflicts and the culture wars that marked the 1990s, shifted into alternate terrain. After 9/11, when the U.S. was in engaged in a prominent and "traditional" war, the military style of The Gap had far less allure and was far less nostalgic (as will be discussed in the dissertation's conclusion). The beginnings of the move away from both military-inspired wear and a WWII obsession may have been uttered first in Tyler Durden's (Brad Pitt) ironic and self-conscious statement in *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), "You're not your fucking khakis." Perhaps if Durden had not pointed it out citizens would have remained identified with their khakis. Instead, Durden became the mouthpiece for disaffected white males, and *Fight Club*, the emblematic millennial film on white masculinity.

While khakis indelibly signal a military uniform, they also indicate whiteness. Khakis originated in the 19th century by British colonialists in Punjab, India. The "legend" goes that it was so hot that colonists took to wearing their pajamas during the day in lieu of heavy, red uniforms. Their white pajamas became "stained" by the dust of the earth. "Khaki" was the term for the color of earthy sand, resembling the flesh tones of whiteness. These pants, that originate in order to allow white males to more comfortably adapt to foreign lands (a nostalgic symptom), became the ideal military uniform for such forays away from home. By WWII, (white) flesh-toned khakis became standard uniforms for officers and soldiers on leave (Fahey 148). But why do khakis become the standard pants for seemingly every American in the 1990s? Richard Martin, of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, states that it is because they are "without meaning," "they possess an unusual apparel transcendence . . . feel good non-style . . . no class aspiration, and no age discrimination . . . [they are] without fear of failure or

discrimination" (Fahey 11, 13, 12). He states, their "*color* finds little or no conflict" (emphasis mine, Fahey 12). In fact, Martin describes the default category of whiteness and its idealized identity. Like khakis, whiteness exists as the "unmarked" grouping, perfect, innocuous, benign and pure. Whiteness exists as without fault or color, without interpellation's markers. Khakis mark nostalgic discourse as they "return" to a pure state, a blank template on which to project or display a "new" identity. Though they replaced the red uniforms of colonialists, this replacement is not a part of their narrative. Nostalgia has erased it.

Though the 1990s were fraught with identity crises, khaki pants served as a "uniter." Even "grunge" "slackers" had their own Gap store. In fact, Martin cites both grunge slackers and a man like Kennedy in one invocation of the importance of the pants: "They take on flannel shirts and rugged wear with the equanimity of a politician mingling with everyone in his constituency" (Fahey 12). In that sense, they *campaign*. In doing so, they unite "average white males." Martin's example cites the generational divide among these slackers, and between the presidential body and its average constituent (Fahey 12). In this way, Kurt Cobain and Kennedy become intimately linked. They both wore khakis.

The Gap spokesman boasts that in the chosen images celebrities wear their own pants and are not "digitally retouched" into Gap pants. This choice, rather than indicating the campaign's respect for preserving authenticity, instead suggests the invariability of khakis in general. Across narrative temporal zones, khakis maintain stylistic continuity. As an aspect of American cultural mise-en-scène, they provide diegetic consistency. As signs in the nostalgia text, they make disparate time zones within narrative links coherent. That is how Kennedy, Norma Jeane qua Marilyn, Hemingway and others link together as American. *And* as American tragedies.

Or at least, as "something new that's been around all along." That was how the Docker's brand of Levi-Strauss (originally sold in Gap stores until dropped in the 1980s) phrased it in their competing advertisement in the same *New Yorker* issue that published the images of GK, NJ, and EH. The Docker advertisement was the opening two page spread in that issue, followed by the Table of Contents, followed by the four page Gap spread that sits next to the commentary "Save the Zeitgeist" with which this chapter began. The "Save the Zeitgeist" essay argued about the connections between Clintonian ambiguity and the decade's need for some sort of defining male "uniform." The essay continues a narrative pattern that holds the Dockers ad within the "frame" of competitor Gap (although both ads sell the identical product). Dockers and Levi-Strauss had just begun marketing their newly coined brand name *Authentic Dockers.*

The advertisement depicts a reclining white male wearing a denim shirt and a pair of khakis, an ensemble that would become the ubiquitous " business casual" look in the 1990s. Clinton would sport an identical get-up in his 1995 second biographical campaign video. The Docker ad imitates competitor The Gap with the question that blazes across the reclined man: "What is Authentic?" The written copy beside the man in khakis suggests the narrative of the nostalgic text, "they're a very agreeable step back to a more authentic time." But the copy also mentions their military origins: " A generation ago they made the transition from military uniform to civilian uniform." The khaki fashion movement, makes a similar transition, where military uniform becomes civilian wear. One year before the 50 year anniversary of WWII, commemorations began; and in a time of " peace" under a president without military service experience. Though comparisons between the 1990s and the 1940s were maladroit to say the least, nostalgic texts enabled a similar transition to happen: one that moved from civilian life to a fantasy of "military" life. The 1990s were rampantly nostalgic, but these discourses were

deployed by different groups in variant ways. Citizens longed for a more "authentic" time, but the answer to "What is Authentic?" could not be answered without intensive engagement with a nostalgia that was experienced privately and projected publically. Because the culture wars made personal identity crucial, nostalgia became a mode in which to construct and know that identity—through a journey to one's home, birth or origins that revised this locale as it returned there.

The Gap's "Who work khakis?" ad campaign, was significant enough to inspire an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* a few weeks after its premiere, Christopher Corbett's piece that stated, "Hitler wore khakis." Corbett's essay critiqued the fundamental premise about khaki purity, noting the connections between Gap fashion and fascism. Yes, Kennedy wore them, but so did Hitler, Pol Pot, Jim Jones, and men like Benny Hill. Even still, Corbett had to confess that their crisp, clean quality make them "look good on a leader." Clinton, in the multiple shots of his casual business look, still managed to appear a tad rumpled in his khakis. But this could not forestall the zeitgeist. The civilian war was on.

3.0   BILL CLINTON AND POLITICAL NOSTALGIA

3.1   *PRELUDE II: BOY'S* NATION AND LOST FATHERS

Clinton's o fficial D emocratic no mination bi ography vi deo, *The Man from Hope*,[13] first premiered at the 1992 Democratic National Convention. Its intention was to "introduce" Clinton to the broader American audience and deal with the fears and tensions already present about his persona, including rumors of marital infidelity. The twelve minute film tethered Clinton's life to a sense of a collective, nostalgic, national, past. Using a nostalgic narrative, this film "returned" to t he post-WWII S outh, t o H ope, Arkansas, t he l ocation of C linton's boyhood a nd pr esented this time and space in idealized ways. The film displayed Mab Segrest's theories (mentioned in *Prelude I*) about the South as representative of the center of the nation. Hope became an idyllic American " home," a nd t he f ilm gi ngerly recasts pot entially ne gative biographical de tails in positive terms. As Shawn J. Parry-Giles suggested in *Constructing Clinton*, "the film put forth an intimate di scourse that i nvited a scopophiliac ga ze vi a the m anipulation of f amiliar m edia production practices" (30). P arry-Giles a rgued that the f ilm constructs C linton's m asculinity using a " feminized" s tyle of di scourse—one t hat r elied on m elodrama, s ensation, a nd the production of affect.

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[13] The video was shot and produced by Harry Thomason and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason, close friends of Clinton who were also the successful producers of several television series, such as *Designing Women*, *The Fall Guy* and recently, *Emeril*.

The f ilm o pens w ith a s hot of a bl ack-and-white phot ographic s till t hat de picts a Lilliputian train depot with a sign that reads "Hope." Soft, sentimental piano music trickles in the background. Rather than describing what appears visually as a defunct railroad station, Clinton's voice-over claims t hat h e com es from a "w onderful l ittle small t own" where "everybody knew everybody e lse." T his b egins a m otif w hereby C linton's pe rsonal reflections ge ntly t wist w hat could be pe rceived as n egative (especially with r egard to his c lass and al leged infidelity) into something u nique, s hared, a nd pos itive. T his a ct i s f requently accomplished by be ginning hi s sentences affectionately, with "I remember." The film shoots Clinton with soft lighting, creating a "sens itive" m ood in tandem w ith the m usic and a l amp-lit m ise-en-scène. He i s casu ally dressed, a nd phot ographed w ith a s lightly pink gleam; his delivery comes acr oss as i ntimate, emotional and confessional. The c amera moves sl owly closer as the d etails ge t m ore pe rsonal and pa inful. This ha ppens f irst w hen C linton br ings up t he racial s egregation i n H ope, a pl ace "like a ll S outhern s mall t owns w ere t hen." C linton m entions t hat hi s gr andfather ha d " only a grade s chool e ducation" a nd w as no t "broad-minded," but s till oppos ed s egregation. H owever, this de tail gl azes ove r t he s egregation t hat w as i n pl ace. C linton's i ndication that "everybody knew everybody else," made Hope seem like an integrated, accepting town, rather than the likely opposite. T hough C linton w as bor n i n H ope, the f amily m oved t o H ot S prings, Arkansas, a predominantly white tourist town when he was four years old.

Parry-Giles indicates that *The Man from Hope* differed from previous campaign films by offering " ruminations f rom t he e ntire C linton f amily" a nd by not f ocusing on C linton's pr ior offices or a ccomplishments (31). I n c ontrast, t he f ilm e xposed t he pe rsonal a nd t he pr ivate, employing interviews with Virginia Kelley (Clinton's mother), Hillary (his wife), Roger Clinton (his younger brother), Chelsea, (his young daughter), and Dorothy Rodham (his mother-in-law).

Roger is used to connect Clinton to a larger national history while Virginia, Hillary, Chelsea and Dorothy's commentaries each link Clinton to a "feminine" domain: in Virginia's case to sensation, scandal, and family pain, and in Hillary's case domestic bliss, fatherhood, and the healing of marital discord. The interviews with Virginia and Hillary are intercut with each other to put together Clinton's biographical story from birth to adulthood. Hillary, filmed outdoors and wearing light pink, states that lots of people believe that Clinton was born with "a silver spoon in this mouth" when actually, "there was an outhouse in the backyard." In this instance, Clinton's origins become a narrative about overcoming hardship, the classic American story of "struggling upward." Her comments also seek to deflate classist notions about Clinton's "bumpkin" origins by suggesting the positive aspects of growing up without wealth—a condition shared with most voters. Yet, this "basic" life, links to social stereotypes about poverty: a broken home, alcoholism, and abuse. Virginia mentions the non-traditional aspects of Clinton's home life—a potential political deficit that the nation must come to accept. We learn that Clinton's father died three months before his birth, and Virginia fills in the details with a narrative about going into labor after attending a "prophetic" matinee of *Tomorrow is Forever* (Irving Pichel, 1946). Though the reference is likely lost on most of the national audience, the film is a WWII home front melodrama, a "weepie" about lost fathers. Virginia then describes Clinton's natural attributes of leadership, demonstrated in boyhood: reading about current events and proclaiming ambitions about changing Arkansas. This sequence culminates with Clinton's adolescent trip to Washington D.C. with Boy's Nation where he met and shook hands with President Kennedy, a moment auspiciously recorded by at least two movie cameras each at a different angle. While the moment seems to gesture toward destiny, it is realized via the nostalgic turn to the past: Clinton's

anointment by Kennedy as future president. The image urges voters to fulfill that national imperative.

When Virginia relays additional details about Clinton's childhood, we learn that his stepfather, Roger Clinton Sr., was an alcoholic, but "a good man." Virginia imparts this detail with gravity in her voice as the camera moves closer, indicating the intimate nature of her confession—the kind of history that usually constitutes a family secret, especially when she references Roger Sr.'s abusive nature toward her. However, this aspect becomes a way to shore up ideas about Clinton's masculine strength. Through tag-team editing, Virginia and Clinton, tell the mythic story of Bill's singular confrontation with Roger Sr., who subsequently stopped such behavior. Their rendering is theatrical, but in parts, incongruous. Clinton's stepfather was apparently "laying hands on" Virginia with violence; and yet, when young Bill burst through the door to save her and confront him, the man was on the floor and unable to stand. Much is made of the act of the collapsed man standing to hear what Bill had to say. Though moments before, Roger was roughing up Virginia, he must be helped to his feet. Virginia reports that Bill said, "Daddy, stand up. If you can't stand up I'll help you, but you must be on your feet to hear what I have to say." While the tale paints Bill Clinton as intrepid, it risks exposing darkness and a loveless home. Therefore, Clinton repeats, (referencing his wish to have known more "psychology" back then) that Roger was a "good man" who did not love himself enough. The physical abuse becomes an issue of low self-esteem, an affliction that Clinton did not possess, as his brother attests.

To transition, Clinton's younger half-brother Roger is presented, conveying that Clinton had a leadership role in the family—one that transfers to his leadership ability for the larger nation. Roger claims that when he hears Clinton, on the campaign trail, say "one country," he

recalls his older brother changing his last name to Clinton to be closer to him and their family. Rhetorically, the move suggests that Clinton can suture seeming divisions whether among brothers with different fathers and last names or the nation as a whole. Roger also relays important information about Clinton's apparently intrinsic ability to connect with disparate groups by mentioning the crucial role religion played in Clinton's life and his love of Gospel music—a detail that seems to reference Clinton's love of black churches and his popularity within that community. Further, Roger describes the somewhat preposterous rendition of his own "earliest memory:" Clinton reciting Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech" "by heart." In this way, Clinton can be imagined as like King for performing what Clinton calls the "greatest political speech of his [own] lifetime" in the next sequence (which includes footage of King's oration). This sequence in the film, seeks to deflect the vast contrast between MLK Jr., the grown man and African-American leader, and Clinton the white boy who had just turned 17 when the speech was given. Instead, this section presents the two as somehow connected and part of a continuum of great men in American history. The national audience was supposed to be impressed with Clinton's desire to memorize and recite King's speech—and not to consider it bizarre for a white 17 year old to be parroting the man's words out loud at home. While King's rhetoric is inclusive, clearly mentioning "white brothers" and ultimately seeking to unite the nation, its use of the pronoun "we" indicates a black subject as speaker. This disjunction was apparently lost on young Roger who, 10 years younger than Clinton, had this memory, his "earliest" recollection, at around age seven. My point is less the issue of Roger's unlikely "first" memory, and more so the film's fixation with creating "prophetic" moments of origin for Bill Clinton. The film uses this sequence with Roger to transition to the Civil Rights era, using stock footage of riots, burning cities, Robert Kennedy, and Coretta Scott King at what looks like

King's funeral. Clinton's voice-over recalls bringing "supplies" to the "burned-out" part of Washington D.C. during the Civil Rights conflicts. By returning to this footage and era, the film deftly draws connections to the current state of the nation, likely seeking to draw parallels between the 1960s and the then recent Los Angeles riots. The move implies that Clinton can heal the old wounds and assuage the tensions that remain.

The film then segues to Hillary who tells the story of her first meeting with Clinton where she approached first, assertively. She came up to him while he was with a group of peers, explaining to them that he planned to be a "country lawyer" rather than serve on the Yale Law Review or head to Wall Street. Next, Hillary interrupted Clinton's conversation about his future plans, introducing herself and so flustering Clinton that he could not remember his own name. Hillary's rendition (intercut with Clinton's), likewise indicates sexual attraction (she calls him "great-looking" as we see an archived photo of young Clinton with long hair and sideburns circa the 1970s). This part of the narrative seeks to indicate romance and hints of passion, (including Clinton's romantic gesture of buying Hillary the house she liked so that she would marry him), edited alongside photographic stills of said house and wedding day. Hillary's mother, Dorothy, then makes her appearance, confirming what she calls the couple's "synergy." However, this second sequence using Hillary provides the few moments of fissure and upset in the film's rendition of Clinton's masculine leadership. Granted, the aggression Hillary displayed in the story of their first meeting is assuaged by the apparent "sexiness" Clinton found in the assertive act. However, she is still a woman who was resistant to marriage, because she "finally" agreed only after Clinton bought the house. Next, she tells a story where she laughs at Clinton's ineptitude, though it is in regard to Chelsea's infancy. Hillary begins with the exaggerated turn of phrase concerning how Clinton used to "stare at Chelsea for hours," but then she relays an

anecdote where Chelsea rolls off the bed under Clinton's watch. Hillary laughs explaining that the incident happened because Clinton believed the three-month-old baby "understood gravity."

In this case, the films displays a paradoxical tension between its rendering of masculine ideality through "feminine" genre tropes that cannot always manage or contain the crises in men: especially through the film's presentation of weakness in fathers. In one sense, the Chelsea incident plays into the stereotype that infants belong to the realm of women (i.e. men are too "intellectual" to understand the perils of infancy). On the other hand, Hillary laughs at Clinton's incompetence, a move that, in light of the film's themes on marriage, plays into national ideas about any discord behind their closed doors. Another, more subtle possibility is that the moment offers *sympathy* to Clinton in light of rumors of infidelity—because his wife is insubordinate. The film's use of and presentation of Hillary attempts to re-cast her feminist attributes, an aspect that was irksome in national polls. *The Man from Hope*'s melodramatic register aligns with highly emotional zones of the home, the maternal, and the domestic, to inspire sympathetic affect in the audience, but also to suture connections between the nation and the home, the public sphere and the private one as similar realms. In this way, public, national space becomes aligned with melodramatic tropes and becomes constituted through ideas about origins and the space of "home."

The final sequence in *The Man from Hope*, brings the biographical journey up-to-date with the present moment in the campaign by using Chelsea to soothe the negativity of the rumors of Clinton's infidelity. Clinton describes the scene in terms of his being "beat up" by the press, rhetoric that mitigates his own actions and blames the media for a "painful" experience. The simple piano music in the background has swelled to include a string section. The episode is then framed through Chelsea's opinion on the issue. Clinton describes how she watched her parents

discuss their "marital problems" on national television. Clinton pauses and appears to choke up; the camera moves closer and he reveals that after watching, Chelsea said, "I'm glad you're my parents," a line that aims to resolve the issue and put it to rest. Indeed, the next scene shows Clinton at a podium before a crowd, saying that he has "taken a lot of hits" in this campaign, but that they are nothing like the "hits" the American public has taken. In this move, the film adroitly compares the disparate treatment of Clinton in the media to the generalized economic woes of the American middle class, making the connections between the two seem seamless.

The film ends with a dissolve between the iconic footage of Clinton with JFK (in slow motion), and the image of Hope's small train depot—suturing the two through a nostalgic journey back to pure, national origins. That these origins include incongruous renditions about Clinton's history with Civil Rights, domestic violence, and marital problems becomes part of a narrative that seeks to persuade the public through rhetorical uses of sentimentality. Parry-Giles suggests that the film created a "new" persona for Clinton who "came to embody the small town myths, the purity and innocence of childhood, the good father and husband personas, and the visions of hope that are symbolized by JFK and by Clinton's birthplace" (35). The film recreates narrative connections that link together JFK's presidency, the Civil Rights Movement, MLK Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, and interweaves them with emblematic moments in Clinton's private life. Retroactively, these historical events become narrative markers that can only be resolved with Clinton's ascent to the Presidency. The device of a filmic dissolve, the temporary superimposition of two images, "suggests a longer passage of time than a cut . . . it usually connotes a similarity between the two spaces or events" (Hayward 2000, 89). The frequent dissolves are one mode by which the film connects the nation with the domestic home, Hope, Arkansas. Strangely, the film uses the image of the public depot as the representation for

Clinton's domestic life—as if it always existed as a public space. Though the opening image of Hope suggests a travel hub from which there is little coming or going, it is actually, via the dissolve, a portal to the President, and the presidency.

The film utilizes "political" nostalgia: " the limited, distorted narrative of the past-in-memory that argumentatively resurrects and glorifies bygone times and is communicated to achieve an emotional response in the service of a political or electoral goal" (Parry-Giles 88). *The Man from Hope* illustrates the interconnections between nostalgic discourse and national forms of empathy. The film was effective in helping to secure Clinton's presidential win and "connection" to the American public. Parry-Giles confirms what I have already explained about nostalgia; that it, "distorts the past for the sake of affect and for the sake of the present" because it creates emotional resonances between constituents and their leaders (88). Uses of empathy and nostalgia interconnect because they each enable the imaginary bond between presidential whiteness and masculinity and the larger body politic as a whole.

Not surprisingly, the immensely popular blockbuster, *Forrest Gump* (Robert Zemeckis, 1994) utilized a similar aesthetic and narrative design to the one portrayed in *The Man from Hope*. The film depicts the biographical journey of a man born during the Baby Boom years who is *destined* to be great, despite the seeming odds against him which include simple Southern origins and an absent father. *Forrest Gump* also focuses on a travel hub, the narrative is told through flashbacks while Gump (Tom Hanks) sits at a bus stop. While Gump remains static, the narrative shoots across time and the nation (at one point, he literally runs across the nation and back again). Though the film events are portrayed chronologically, major historical occurrences are revised as Gump travels through them, re-experiencing iconic events that have become

familiar in the na tional i magination. T he f ilm ut ilizes c omputer ge nerated i magery t o i nsert

Gump into grainy black-and-white documentary footage, a conceit prefigured in Woody Allen's

Zelig (1983) using blue screen technology. The conceit offers the fantasy that perhaps Gump was

there all along: with Elvis Presley, John Lennon and several others, literally altering the destiny

of the nation, its political and popular culture

If read as an ironic doppelganger to *The Man from Hope* and the Clinton persona that it

constructs, *Forrest Gump* seems t o of fer a n oppositional c ritique t hrough i ts "insertion" of a

"great" man into historical moments. By rampantly inserting Gump into historic footage, the film

backhandedly i mplies a forgery i n t he or iginal Clinton m oment w ith J FK. B oth f ilm moments

with J FK, t he a ctual o ne w ith C linton a nd t he f aux one with G ump, pr esent s imilar vi sual

scenarios. The *Gump* moment, rather than merely copying, suggests almost an accusation about

the ve racity of C linton's e xtremely f ortuitous photographic m oment. In s ome w ays, *Forrest*

Gump takes that design to extremes: What if one man was present at *every* important occurrence

in national hi story—how r idiculous w ould hi story ge t? H owever, G ump a nd C linton a re onl y

similar in age, Southern background, missing fathers, and in their meetings with JFK. Clinton's

other si gnificant cha racteristics as i ntelligent R hodes S cholar, sexualized adulterer, emotional

empathizer, draft-dodger, and ambitious pol itico, ve er decidedly from Gump's characterization.

Gump s uggests the p olar oppos ite: m entally d isabled, a sexual, a nd u nemotional. I n f act, h e

becomes a war hero and a hugely successful and influential citizen despite a total lack of trying.

If Clinton actively sought out and constructed national office and influence, then Gump literally

stumbles upon it, effortlessly achieving greatness.

In t his l ight, i t i s no wonder t hat *Forrest Gump* has be en read as an "aggressively

conservative f ilm" (Wang 93) . J ennifer H yland Wang a rgues t hat the f ilm a ctually "reversed

reality" as the revolutionary acts and texts of the 1960s were converted into "a celebration of conformity to dominant values" (96). Wang contextualizes the film as part of the culture war morass of the early 1990s, presenting Gump as an antithesis to the liberal; he is a boy scout representing all that is good and innocent about America and its values. As part of its conservative agenda, the film demonizes women and erases black history, suggesting both that out-of-control women wreck the nation and racism has been "erased from contemporary society" (99). The film was quickly anointed as a conservative masterpiece, perfectly demonstrating the problem with the counterculture (Democrats, liberals, women, blacks, etc.). Wang asserts that 34 percent of voting Republicans who saw the film thought it was a documentary (108). She convincingly suggests that the film was integral to the 1994 Congressional elections, assuring Republican dominance in the House and Senate.

In addition to revising the 1960s, feminism, and the Black Panther Party, *Forrest Gump* also revised Clinton's moment with JFK. It did so by "desecrating" Clinton's famous meeting; representing a similar occasion with Gump as vapid and incidental. While Clinton meets JFK at a Boy's Nation event, Gump meets him through his renowned college football career with the All-American team who are invited to the White House. Gump is digitized into footage with JFK who makes polite conversation as they shake hands. Gump responds with: "I have to pee." Strangely this moment focuses on the corporeal "reality" of Gump's body. In contrast to Clinton's highly public and intensely imagined penis (put into public discourse later in the decade), Gump's is purely mechanical. Like a "documentary," this sequence brought the material reality of male bodies into the public realm (the next shot shows Gump flushing a White House toilet). The sequence defiles the Democratic White House (in the past and present), but it also asserts the corporeal nature of Gump and celebrates his lack of affect and manners. In opposition

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to Clinton's reverent meeting (as presented in slow-motion dissolve with music), *Forrest Gump* commemorates s uch a n e pisode (meeting J FK) w ith c hildlike a pathy, a nd de spite the potentialities of the set-up, a total lack of irony.

3.1.1 Nostalgic Discourse: The Presidential Body and National Affect

> Grand Jury Questioner: The day you wore the blue cocktail dress—
> Monica Lewinsky: It's not a cocktail dress.
> . . .
> GJQ: How would you describe the dress?
> Lewinsky: It's a dress from the Gap. It's a work dress. It's a casual dress.
> GJQ: With respect to that dress . . . you mentioned that you believe that
> that there could be semen on it. Could you describe what you did
> with the President that led you to believe that?
> Lewinsky: We were in the bathroom and—can I close my eyes so I don't have to—
>
> From *The Starr Report: The Starr Evidence*, 1998

3.1.1.1 Presidential Sexuality

This c hapter a nalyzes C linton's m asculinity in t wo modes: first, through a n a nalysis of vi sual representations of hi s s exuality a nd s econd, t hrough a n e xamination of hi s e xpressions of empathy. In contrasting ways, each mode worked as a means of uniting the national body. By the end of C linton's s econd t erm, facets of hi s s exuality be came t he do minant m ode of hi s publ ic persona. Clinton had always courted the American populous through empathy, his ability to feel the nation's pain. Both aspects of Clinton's public persona, sexuality and empathy, are crucial to analyses to come later on Spielberg and especially Hanks, who had crosscurrents that contrast in important ways with Clinton's sexuality and empathy.

Because the president is a symbol for the nation and a figure through which to view and understand national identity, presidential politics are always image politics. Clinton scholars Kenneth L. Hacker, Maury Giles and Aja Guerrero state that presidents "generate symbolic constructions made from interactions that circulate through [public and private relations] . . . to reside in citizens' minds as . . . images (1). They further define these images as aggregated, dynamic, and in a constant state of temporal flux, existing both in actual time and in memory. Presidential imagery and its symbolic overtones are collective and shifting (2). Hacker, Giles and Guerrero term this cluster of imagery and meaning around presidentiality an "image object," constructed out of "values, beliefs, attitudes, schemata, shared representations and ideology" (28-29). Within this visual system, the presidential image becomes concrete, like an actual object that encompasses ideas about his individual persona *and* the nation's. The image as object is composed from the fused interdependence between the two (32).

In the case of Bill Clinton, the presidential image object circulated within public spheres related to politics and popular culture, and encompassed within both zones, connotations related to celebrity, scandal and law. Ideas about Clinton's body were always at the fore, and as sexual harassment scandals increased, his image infused with intensifying sexualized corporeality. In addition to sexualized corporeality, Clinton was characterized as a nostalgic text and in tandem, an empathetic one. Early on in his campaigns Clinton imagery constructed around nostalgia, especially linking him, as the additional chapter discussions suggest, with JFK. In one sense, the presidency is always a nostalgic office, image, and idea because it is so closely tied to the iconicity of previous presidents: Lincoln and Kennedy being two of its most widely cited emblems.

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The pres idential i mage coalescences w ith S. P aige B aty's not ion of a "r epresentative character" and also with film theory's notions of a "star persona." In this sense, a star persona is a pa rt of pr esidential i magery, but i t doe s not a ccount f or t he a ttendant i conicity of t he i mage object in its relations to ideologies about nation, government and history. The imagination of the presidency m akes i deas a bout t he na tion a nthropomorphic. P art of C linton's pol itical pr owess came from his abili ty to represent a w ide r ange of pol itical phi losophies and diverse ci tizenry. Baty, uses the t erm "r epresentative cha racter" to articulate a c ombination be tween t he c ultural and the pol itical t raits o f popul ar figures that c irculate t hroughout t he mass media, a nd vi a t his process e mbody multiple a nd s hifting r epresentations. A r epresentative c haracter i ncorporates aspects of a star persona, but differentiates itself from that category by extending to media zones beyond those associated with cinema and its industrial tangents within the entertainment wing of mass media. The r epresentative character incorporates s tardom, celebrity and entertainment modalities, but fuses these with civic platforms that also oc cur in designated political publicity: legislative acts, speeches, ceremonies, news account s and public appe arances. The pul p screenwriter Joe E szterhas[14], w ho or ganized pr omotional e vents f or C linton du ring his f irst campaign, noted that "politics is a movie" with Clinton (Dickenson 83). Both the remark and its source specify the coalescence between Clinton's celebrity, his politics, and his circulation in the "National E ntertainment S tate," a m edia n ation-state w here news and infotainment dissem inate through c ulture.[15] Clinton as i mage obj ect, r epresentative ch aracter and s tar pe rsona balanced embodiments of t he i ndividual m an, t he na tion a nd t he pr esident. D uring hi s c ampaigns a nd

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[14] Eszterhas is one of few Hollywood screenwriters who is well-known. He gained notoriety by penning *Basic Instinct* (1992), considered a titillating and suspenseful thrill fest and huge box office success. Additional notable works are: *Flashdance* (1983), *Jagged Edge* (1985), and *Showgirls* (1995).
[15] "The National Entertainment State" was coined by *The Nation* in 1996 to represent the mode through which four primary conglomerates controlled and dispersed news media content.

years in office, Clinton oscillated be tween both political and cultural r epresentations. He operated as a site on which "American politics [were] written and exchanged," within and as, a body politic (Baty 10). As a fusion of image object, representative character, and star, circulating through m ass m edia, C linton m ay s eem l ike a n e ver-shifting hub of meanings. H owever, a n analysis of Clinton's body, as it relates to nostalgic imagery, provides a concrete foundation for more specific understandings.

Here I a m influenced by t he w ork of S usan J efford's i n *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era,* which uses popular film and its representations of masculinity as a lens for analyzing Ronald Reagan's image, as a cowboy, star, and national hero. In many ways, Reagan's image was able to overturn national anxiety that perceived his old age as weakness (he was s eventy w hen he t ook of fice). J effords a rgues t hat t he exaggerated musculature of 1980s stars such as S ylvester Stallone an d Arnold Swartzenegger, and the h ard-bodied c ostumes of characters such as Batman and Robo-cop, made militarism and excessively corporeal masculinity popular. Their perceived military strength and performances of American heroism transferred to images of Reagan, and in tandem, America itself, as an impenetrable global superpower.

Jeffords explains that "the very idea of a nation is itself dependent on t his visual realm" (6). I n t his sense, popul ar f ilm a nd t he pr esidency br ing t ogether a n interrelated registry of narrative m eaning a bout m asculinity a nd the n ation. In J efford's w ork on t he 198 0s, t he ideal vision of a national bod y is one t hat s eems i ron-clad w ith i mpregnable borders. In t he c ase of Clinton i n the 1990s, that m ilitary a nd masculine body s hifted t o a di fferent fantasy of na tion. Still re lying on m ilitary i deas, s hown t hrough the na tional fascination with kha ki clothing, t he 1990s national body was strangely inclusive, as if all citizens could be a part. This liberal fantasy of an all-encompassing political body, propagated through many representations of Clinton, was

fractured by his ideological contradictions and political shifts. While Reagan's national image contained contradictions seamlessly through fortified, streamlined masculine and military unity, Clinton's national image was fraught with incongruity and paradox, most especially around military duty and masculine strength.

Jefford's *Hard Bodies* argues convincingly that Reagan was a symbol for national identity in 1980-1988. She explains how he transcends literal status as a mere president and man, and used his charismatic stardom to become an icon of the New Right and invulnerable military leadership during cold war politics. Jeffords asserts that "it is impossible to discuss some of Hollywood's most successful films of the 1980s without also discussing 'Ronald Reagan,' the image that was conveyed *through and as* the presidency" (emphasis mine). Jeffords also stresses: "A nation exists . . . as something to be *seen*" (6). The nation is known and recognized via the imagery of the public sphere, which I argued earlier demonstrates a narrative element. A nostalgic motif, especially around nation, ineffaceably, erases the specific "individual" identity of the president, and he becomes an unmarked body that suggests white masculinity. In my conceptualization of the national identity that Clinton came to represent, he is a textual site of national and nostalgic inscription. Shakespeare's history plays recognized the "king" as having "two bodies," the public and the private.

Especially within the impeachment scandal, Clinton representation moved usually private sexual acts to the symbolic zone of public representation. Clinton's body, as representative of the nation, was something to be *seen,* through imagery in the national mindset and its nostalgia for presidential scandal. Because nostalgia often enacts a revision of the prior record, the impeachment scandal inevitably concerned Richard Nixon—with the essence of a return or replay. Clinton's impeachment scandal used nostalgia in two distinct ways. First, it resurrected

Nixon's bygone impeachment in the national imagination. For Republicans, Clinton's impeachment re-worked the Watergate scandal and alleviated Nixon's shame, by re-conceiving his scandal as lesser than Clinton's. The Republican Party was no longer the bearer of presidential shame with a New Democrat facing impeachment. The GOP felt that Clinton's fall would provide a distraction within U.S. history for a disgrace "worse" than Nixon's. Second, popular images of Monica Lewinsky were styled to imitate and recreate iconic photos of both Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe. In these 1990s reenactments of JFK's perceived sexual objects, the nation returned to Kennedy's private and hypothetical sex life through the highly exposed narratives of Lewinsky and Clinton. Closed doors opened, clothes came off and through the nostalgic text, the nation could re-imagine the shame and sexuality of two former presidents. Nostalgic longing, through intense affect, became desire—what Susan Stewart termed nostalgia's "desire for desire." In "Sexuality's Archive," Ann Cvetkovich illustrated that imagination governs the way a nation thinks about presidential sexuality through the story of her childhood fantasies about Nixon's sex life. She imagined that if she could counsel him and Pat to please each other better, she could, by proxy, end the war in Vietnam. Cvetkovich's story exemplifies ways that presidential sexuality haunts the American imagination, "as evidence of the simultaneously outlandish and powerful role of fantasy in constructing what we know and make of the presidency" (269).

Historically, nation is always imagined as a body, and with Clinton's reign the bodily metaphor became a predominant trope for national consciousness in ways that eroded distinctions between public and private. Literally, the barrier of clothing undressed the

presidential body, exposing its characteristics and nature.[16] The *navy* blue Gap shirt dress held the residue of presidential ejaculate and a huge percentage of America, whatever their class status, ethnicity, age, orientation or gender likely owned some item of clothing that matched in either cut, style or brand-name. Fedwa Malti-Douglas in *The Starr Report Disrobed*, discussed the significance of the Gap dress to the narrative presented in the official report. The dress attained an anthropomorphic quality. The Report described seminal stains as being "near one hip and on the chest," and as Fedwa-Douglas pointed out, these terms are used to describe body parts as if the dress possesses them (108). While the dress material is given subjectivity and movement (as readers imagine the acts that produce seminal fluid on chest and hips), Lewinsky is made an object. The dress replaces her body and her subjectivity. The American uniform had met with the viscous fluid of the presidential body.

In *Volatile Bodies* Elizabeth Grosz theorizes that seminal fluid has the metaphorical qualities of a solid substance, a "thing," despite its literal characteristics as a fluid (199). In agreement with Carol Clover, Richard Dyer and other scholars on white masculinity, Grosz further explains that masculinity is an "incidental," a given, partially achieved through the male body's "unspoken quality," as always already known and understood (198). Masculine corporeality, rather than indicating the specificity of male bodies, instead enlarges the category into a broad generality. The male body stands in for "all." The particular corporeal realities of masculinity are rarely represented openly. Grosz concedes that even the explicit "money shot" of pornography has often been theorized as a representation of the "interiority" of the female body or the male's prowess in giving it pleasure. The graphic presence of seminal fluid is often seen as the concrete evidence of material agency in its reproductive capacity. This agency then extends

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[16] Both Paula Jones and Monica Lewinsky purportedly knew distinctive physical characteristics about the President's penis.

that pow er to gove rnance ove r w omen, t heir bodi es, a nd t he c hild inside t hem. T he f act of seminal fluid's viscosity and tendency for seepage, cast it as a substance beyond containment. To formulate it as a solid thing, aids in producing its cultural meaning and imagining its control.

Clinton's e jaculate, while "wasted" i n terms of r eproduction, non etheless, became politically powerful. It was a concrete evidentiary source, but it became an inscriptive surface on which to write the narrative of the president's private sexual acts as events, the public's process in creating a na rrative, and the u ltimate evide nce f or his i mpeachment t rial. Simultaneously, these f unctions be came a spects of t he n ational i magination s urrounding pr esidentiality a nd sexual relations. P reviously, t hese i maginations w ere e ither non -existent o r di screet. The relationship be tween Presidents and First L adies w as one of s eemingly ideal dom estic partnership a nd marital i deality. Presidents w ere pa rents, but t hey were not er otic (hence Cvetkovich's urge to help out Nixon in that department). The First Lady and the President have an imagined sexuality similar to the one people generally fantasize about their parents—that their number of offspring precisely matches their number of sex acts.[17] It is as if, beneath clothing, Presidents are without genitals—sleek and benign as Ken dolls. While JFK and Jackie indicated sexuality and romance, it coalesced around the facts of their young children. JFK's sexuality, much more so than Jackie's, arranged itself around rumors of infidelity.

Generally, C linton i s t hought t o ha ve w on t he e lection i n s pite of t he e vidence of hi s affairs and womanizing. These indiscretions are rarely thought of as having been an asset, but as I m aintain in later c hapters, C linton openly hi nted that hi s he terosexuality was virile, if hi s

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[17] While Barack Obama's presidential imaginary completely upends most of the theories posited here, it remains to be seen how ideas about his corporeality play out on the national stage. Nevertheless, connotations about his sexuality abound—most recently in the internet frenzy that occurred over shirtless photos of him on the beach in Hawaii. Additionally, both Whoopi Goldberg and Wanda Sykes soon after the election, publically referenced the sex they presumed the Obamas would be having in the White House. Certainly, these concerns play into stereotypes about black male sexuality, but they also imply moral values associated with marital fidelity. Obama has never been rumored, as almost all presidents and/or candidates to have anything going on "on the side."

military prowess was weak. Sexuality became a means to overcome perceptions of weakness associated with lack of service experience. Additionally, a tough stance on crime and occasionally, foreign policy, was used to divert attention from the indelicacy of scandal. However, in many senses, the scandals stabilized and fortified Clinton's masculinity, and demonstrated some of the perks associated throughout history with posts of power—the taking of young, willing women.

Linda Denise Oakley explains that the American public was "outraged" to a far lesser degree than they were titillated by the incessant media coverage of the details of the affair and the associated "high crimes and misdemeanors" committed by the President when he lied. Oakley argues that for the general public, who did not rabidly oppose Clinton, the details solved an important issue: "the question of sexual competition among males." She goes on: "enjoying and then *disposing* of a sexual partner remains a socially accepted measure of personal power among U.S. males" (emphasis mine 190). If the scandal was a love story, instead of sex story, then Clinton's weakness would have truly shocked the nation and it likely would have turned against him (191). It was Clinton's unapologetic discarding of Lewinsky, "that woman" (who was surprised and heartbroken), that strengthened his masculine power. Clinton's actions also proved that he "wore the pants" when it came to Hillary who did not leave and who remained silent throughout the ordeal. Clinton controlled women, and this made the nation safe. In this light, the fact that his approval rating improved, rather than decreased at the height of the "crisis," is far less baffling (Lumby 231).[18]

[18] Clinton's approval rating went from 56 percent to 59 percent in a Gallop poll between December 1997 to January 1998, just after the scandal broke. Also see Toby Miller "The First Penis Impeached" pp.125. Over and over, the polls showed that the public did not want Clinton impeached no matter how salacious the details got.

I will not retread the abundance of fascinating scholarship on the Clinton and Lewinsky scandal.[19] My concern is with the use of a nostalgia aesthetic in the first mainstream images of Lewinsky to which she willingly submitted: her photographic profiles in *Vanity Fair* (July 1998) during the investigation, and in its aftermath, in *Time* (March 1999). The images of Lewinsky were less about her personal perspective and subjectivity, and more so about "visualizing" fantasies about the President's body, especially his penis and its seminal fluid. These visual fantasies served the American nation during a time when moral outrage was in heavy rotation, but without having any consequence (i.e. Clinton survived impeachment and gained approval). The visual imagery of Lewinsky in *Time* and *Vanity Fair* alleviated a sense of national shame, through the proxy "use" of Lewinsky as a nostalgic object. As Tyler Curtain states, "the nation's fascination with the Lewinsky-Clinton encounters are not simply salacious voyeurism. They are also a symbolic encounter with our own democracy" (43). The public forgave Clinton because they both identified with and enjoyed the fruits of, his error. They *identified*, because as Toby Miller argues: Americans, for the most part, lie, lie about sex, and/or have "private fantasies" (128).

The *Vanity Fair* spread appeared in July 1998, in between Linda Tripp's Grand Jury testimony in June, and Lewinsky's in August. The public was hungry for information about Lewinsky, and the image of her posing with the flag caused a minor public uproar. She was clearly shameless.[20] The written copy and the short article accompanying the images contained snarky remarks and phallic puns by Christopher Hitchens. Lewinsky does not have a voice, but

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[19] See Drucilla Cornell "Dropped Drawers: A Viewpoint." in *Aftermath: The Clinton Impeachment and the Presidency in the Age of Political Spectacle*. Ed. Leonard V. Kaplan and Beverly I. Moran. New York: New York UP, 2001. 312-320. See also the fascinating and comprehensive anthology *Our Monica, Our Selves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest*. New York: New York UP, 2001.

[20] Monica states that the flag pose is the only one she regrets. See Morton, pp.231

her image speaks. Despite the intriguing and provocative imagery in the spread, it has not been discussed critically in any of the prominent scholarship on the scandal and affair.[21] Lewinsky purportedly agreed to the photo shoot due to being confined indoors for months during Kenneth Starr's investigation. She wanted to provide an alternative to the paparazzi images of her (many unflattering) bandied in tabloid media. She also was reportedly looking forward to enjoying the California beach atmosphere where the shoot took place.[22] She posed under ideal conditions for maximizing her beauty: professional lighting, make-up, styling, direction and champagne—to loosen her inhibitions. The facts of her exploitation are obvious, but they are the least salient point.

Lewinsky had been an "image object" since January 21, 1998 when her White House ID photo first appeared in the press. The *Vanity Fair* images, shot by famed glamour photographer Herb Ritts, countered that "mug" shot and the paparazzi footage by deliberating using a nostalgic aesthetic to construct Lewinsky. Ritts used iconic pin-up style and directly referenced Marilyn Monroe beach photos. The first image in the feature (Figure 1.), displays Monica lying back against a grassy backdrop (in the two page spread the seashore is visible in the distance). The small copy on the opposite page titles the scene "Grassy Moll," invoking JFK's grassy knoll.

The first two pages display an aura of unapologetic tastelessness that pervades the entire spread. In doing so, *Vanity Fair* points to the cultural hypocrisy in cries of "shame on you" aimed at Clinton and Lewinsky by a public with a ferocious appetite for details and images. The national curiosity was not as much about Lewinsky's mystique (she was, in fact, an open book

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[21] Tomasz Kitlinski and Pawel Leskowicz briefly contrast the *Vanity Fair* spread to Annie Leibovitz's photos of Hillary Clinton in *Vogue* at around the same time. They read the photo of Lewinsky holding a living pink poodle as using a European trope where a dog stands not for loyalty, but risqué and "dirty" sexual behavior. "Monica Dreyfus" *Bad Subjects*. 1999. http://bad.eserver.org/issues/1999/44/paul-lockard.html
[22] See Andrew Morton, *Monica's Story*. New York: St.Martin's Press, 1999. pp.230-1.

when Starr would let her speak), but more about what she revealed about the President and his desire. She functions as a portal into his corporeal sexual nature. She animates what is usually unknown about Presidents. She raises the dead in multiple senses: previous notions of presidential flaccidity[23] and the aura of JFK and his rumored lust for Monroe.

The first image of Lewinsky recalls countless Monroe photos where she poses on the beach or in nature and gazes up at the camera while reclined on the ground. The first Lewinsky shot also costumes her in retro-styled jeans and a red-checkered blouse, mimicking the style of Monroe's early work as a pin-up. Monroe imagery, especially when set in "nature" seeks to display Monroe's simultaneous youthful innocence and unabashed sexuality. Monroe looks girlish and giddy. Part of her allure rested on the idea that she was unaware of her own high eroticism. It sprung from a "natural" femininity, without tedious construction or staging. The Ritts imagery does not possess that same "freedom," and it revels in its own self-conscious reconstruction of "sexuality" and "desire."

The spread undressed Lewinsky and her affair with Clinton, by ironically dressing them up and "staging" ideas about presidential power and sexual desire. The "outcry" (i.e. publicity) over Lewinsky's pose with the flag, highlighted the alignment between her sexual allure and the presidential office. Whether or not Lewinsky was attractive (and this point was meanly debated in the press) was not the point.[24] Clinton clearly had desired her. She was Clinton's object and so the sign: Monica+flag+beach stood in for Clinton's Oval Office orgasm.

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[23] Eric Lott, in "The First Boomer" argues that Johnson was considered "flaccid" in the American imagination. Similarly, I suppose "flaccidity" could be imagined in relation to figures such as FDR and both Reagan and Bush Sr., due to their age. Presidential candidate Bob Dole openly displayed this nature by appearing as the spokesman for Viagra in commercials.

[24] See Marjorie Garber's "Moniker" in *Our Monica, Our Selves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest.* New York: New York UP, 2001. She analyzes the Jewish stereotyping the media used in scapegoating Lewinsky. Anti-Semitic prejudice ran through the misogynistic commentary, but was never a part of the overt critique of Lewinsky as a young woman. Garber relates these prejudices to public ideas about Lewinsky's body, especially her weight.

It w as w ink-wink c outure. T he i mage made vi sible, w hat c ould o nly be i magined. Lewinsky's body becomes a s creen on which to proje ct presidential sexual de sire. Her display activates a s urface for the na tion's cons umption of fantasies unde r t he guise of ou trage and/or condescension. The salacious accompanying c opy by H itchens trivializes the affair by raising it to epic proportions: "Monica has graduated into that pantheon of women who shook men enough to s hake hi story." T he ve rb, " shook," pl ays on t he c liché of s haking hi story, but i t a lso knowingly r eferences sexual c limax a nd C linton's qua king body i n the pr esence of L ewinsky. She and her clothing become a material trace for presidential corporeality—not unlike Lincoln's bloody pi llowcase pr eserved unde r glass in D.C. I n the flag phot o, L ewinsky's s tance i s bot h open and closed at the same time. Her legs close and twist to the side, demurely. In contrast, the upper ha lf of he r body ope ns w ide. L ewinsky's m outh s miles b roadly, s lightly op en, a nd her arms s pread e xpansively a gainst t he l arge f lag. I n a ddition t o t he t itillation, t he *Vanity Fair* images fashion the scandal and Lewinsky nostalgically.

Hitchens' l anguage pl ays w ith euphemism, i n a pe rformance of ol d-fashioned "innocence," amidst self-conscious knowing. The composition and props also aid in the creation of a nostalgic, "long ago" scene. Though Lewinsky's "little black dress" seems contemporary, it is credited as "vintage" from "United Costume Rental." As mentioned, the flag also has a vintage look, a s i f i ts c olor ha s f aded w ith t ime. S trangely, t he u sually b lue s tar pa nel i s r ed, a s if bleached from age. Yet, without blue it is an imposter flag—though the blue and the white take shape in the sea and surf in the background. Lewinsky, a Gen-Xer, is photographed in the style and fashions of bygone eras. As usual with some nostalgia, epochs merge giving a general sense of pastness, rather than focusing on one era, such as the 1950s.

The image also had a uniquely military feel. The image engaged with WWII tropes through its "vintage" flag—one uncannily similar to the bleached flag that opened and closed *Saving Private Ryan*, the popular film (discussed in detail in Chapter Five) that also entered the cultural array in July of 1998. The gold fringe that lines her flag even has associations with flags of the Civil War era, and also with the pageantry of official government ceremony. It could be Lincoln's flag for all we know. She stains the flag, when "she" stains the Gap dress. And though that seems a shocking act of desecration, a flag stained with Presidential semen, (as in Lewinsky posing with one), aptly portrays the connections between the national and the sexual.

Lewinsky's images, despite her act of "freedom" on the beach, do not portray emancipation, but as a historical register, they become part of a long tradition/celebration of behavior by men in power. At this time, Lewinsky was already an imaginary portal in an array of texts: testimony, snippets, news feeds (*The Starr Report* would not be released for two more months). Her nostalgic image connected her here to Monroe and to multiple historical eras, but it also connected her to the events between November 1995 and March 1997 (the dates of the affair). Her image allowed the national consciousness to go back there, via a nostalgic narrative constructed out of fragments and snippets.

To examine Lewinsky's mouth was to imagine the President's penis. Linda Williams would likely describe these images as "on/scene"—as opposed to obscene. Obscenity does not define what should not occur, but what should remain hidden. In contrast, the on/scene is: "the gesture by which a culture brings onto its public arena the very organs, acts, bodies and pleasures that have heretofore been . . . kept literally off stage" (3). Williams locates this staging (the conversion of the obscene to the on/scene) with public political scandals of the 1980s and 1990s: Gary Hart, Clarence Thomas, Bob Packwood, et al—*or* perhaps at the moment when run-

of-the-mill "flirtations" converted to sexual harassment law suits. Sexual discrimination was a part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. However, the first sexual harassment law suits filed in the 1970s were mostly dismissed. The Supreme Court did not hear a case until 1986. During the 1990s, with amendments to the original Act, these law suits, and general awareness about sexual harassment law, reached national consciousness.[25] Feminism made strides in the 1990s by criminalizing behavior that previously had been accepted as "normal," and this revision cracked ideologies surrounding sexuality and behavior. It was a part of the culture "war,"—here, a war on masculinity.

Although Clinton used Lewinsky, he got away with it. First, he was acquitted and suffered relatively minimal political damage considering Nixon's fate of shamed exile. Second, Clinton got away with the unabashed tossing a side of Lewinsky—he broke her heart. He engaged in a sexual relationship (in which he was primarily recipient) while obviously manipulating Lewinsky's emotions. Their affair was an early display of the "Hook-Up" culture that would become commonplace among youth in the current decade—minus the broken heart. Wesley Yang, in his review of the recent expose on contemporary men under 30, Michael Kimmel's *Guyland*, explains that predatory sex, devoid of emotion, is commonplace among the Gen-Ys and the Millennials. He describes an "oral sex 'epidemic'" in which disaffected people who barely know or like each other, hook-up in a truly "no strings" fashion. Moms are shocked; "the fathers though, get jealous" (As Quoted in Kimmel 12). It is a telling line. Broadly, masculinity associates "use" of women as desirable, and as a competitive sport. In this light, Clinton's affair with Lewinsky in the 1990s rehearsed a large scale public example of the "Hook-Up."

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[25] See http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/vii.html for a copy of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and its later amendments to accommodate clearer law on sexual harassment.

This m ay be one r eason that L ewinsky's m outh became a r elentless "l ocation" as a subject of extreme photographic detail. Her mouth was a r eceptacle for "concrete" expressions and assertions of m asculine pow er—especially si nce m uch of he r sp eech in Tripp's t apes, testimony, and later, interviews, was mostly viewed as drivel.[26] Her statements, when viewed in print, are hard to read in an intelligent, serious, or flattering light. For instance, she claims that telling only ten people about the affair was for her "discreet," and she re-plays the "subtle" move of how to lift one's jacket to reveal thong underwear (Duffy 32). Her Grand Jury testimony is filled with what could be viewed as strategic off-topic remarks, such as backtracking, queries, apologies and asides. However, she is often ceaselessly open about the details of what for her was a torrid *romance*, which Margaret Carlson observed was an "invention" despite the fact that Lewinsky "prattle[ed] on for hours" with Clinton on the phone as if they were "teenagers" (41). This "drivel," though the speech act of her subjectivity, literally becomes silenced, through its associations as non-important, background noise. Her mouth ceases to function as a location for voice; it becomes pure prurient object.

Lisa Jean Moore explains i n *Sperm Counts* that w hen t he P resident pa rted w ith hi s "seed," i t i ndicated that the n ation itself w as w eakened, because the m an in charge w as "uncontained." A dditionally, s eminal f luid i s "used t o e ncourage c ertain i deas about w omen" (134). M oore e xplains t hat s eminal f luid, w hen c irculated i n publ ic a s e vidence, be comes anthropomorphized; it "narrates" what happened between a man and woman (136). The *Vanity Fair* spread publ ished one s uch " narrational" c lose-up, s hot i n e xtreme de tail t o hi ghlight

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[26] Despite the mostly accurate descriptions of her statements as schoolgirlish and inane, to Lewinsky's credit, she is particular in her ferocious honesty and notable in her total lack of shame. If the public cast it upon her, she tirelessly tossed it back. She felt the flag was as much hers as anyone else's. (Morton, 231). Lewinsky's various taped calls and testimonies are also an early example of "blog" culture and its notion of "oversharing." For a discussion on the public "oversharing" of personal details by young women, see Emily Gould. "Exposed." *New York Times Magazine*. May 25, 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/25/magazine/25internet-t.html

Lewinsky's open mouth, teeth, and the hollow beyond (Figure 5.). It represents not what "is," but the space of what *was.* The photo indirectly references Clinton's penis in action, but it does so through nostalgia—through the fantasized, sideways offshoot that builds a story beyond access or historical purview. The image allowed the nostalgic return to the origin of desire and its expression. The *Vanity Fair* close-up is a visual (pre-)addendum to *The Starr Report's* (dubious) reportage.

The *Starr Report* was published (and widely consumed) in September of 1998, a few months before Clinton's acquittal in December. By March of 1999, the hoopla should have subsided and the public's appetite should have been sated, yet *Time* magazine published two more images of extreme close-up detail of Lewinsky's face and mouth. The March 15 issue (Figure 6.) promoted Andrew Morton's affectionate Lewinsky biography, *Monica's Story*. The images, complicit with the content of the magazine's profile and editorials, work to further fetishize Clinton's sexuality, rather than presenting "Monica's" "story." *Time's* scathing review of the Morton book expressly reads it as a window into Bill (41).[27]

Time's cover image is uncomfortably close. The image moves closer than normal aesthetic range for *Time* covers, to a choker close-up, almost strangling. It achieves the feel, when holding the issue in hand, of being to precise human scale.[28] Lewinsky smiles, but her mouth is not open; her lips encase her teeth. The first internal image that accompanies the "Exclusive interview," zooms in even closer. The framing highlights the true effect of a close-

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[27] See, Margaret Carlson. "The Story Within the Story." *Time.* March 15, 1999. pp.41 Carlson's book review appears as the tail end to the Lewinsky pages which include an interview, and an article on her make-over with sidebar and poll results. Interestingly, beginning after the Lewinsky section, is "Lone Star Rising," a profile of G.W.Bush who had yet to announce his candidacy for President.

[28] Actually, her face is to human scale, but on the slightly large side—perhaps the size of large man's head.

up—its ability to enlarge objects. Lewinsky's face appears to twice the normal scale. If she was "life-sized" on the magazine's cover, the internal shot makes her Amazonian, but she is also tight-lipped. With her mouth closed, she no longer encourages or aids in fantasies of the corporeal mechanics of the affair. In *Time's* mode, she assists a different narrative, still nostalgic. Lewinsky's closed mouth revises the rampant exposure of the previous year. *Time's* closing in move, shifts perspective further away from the events, moving them back into the realm of the obscene, but hidden in plain sight. Her closed mouth censors Clinton's body. When enlarged, Lewinsky becomes an object of horror; with her mouth closed, she escapes rendering a *vagina dentata,* but the image avoids a sexualized narrative portal as well. The image is a visual rendering of Lewinsky's "weight" problem, and thus she is unattractive. Strangely, as the pages turn, and full body shots place her in miniature, doll-sized, she becomes a citation for Jackie Kennedy iconography.

Lewinsky wears pearl earrings and a pink "classic" cashmere sweater. Most telling though, is her hair, styled in the iconic Jackie flip do, the same one sported on the cover of *Monica's Story.* She also displays placidity and none of the open-mouthed exuberance present in the beach shots. Her expression also mimics Jackie Kennedy's serenity and composure.

Lewinsky in pink conjures not only multiple images of Jackie's iconic hair style, but the image of Kennedy that "graced" *Time's* cover in 1994—to mark her death. The chosen cover image did not represent Kennedy in "real-time," but caught in the heyday of her White House years, as if *that* preservation was the most important thing about her. But what is the effect of rendering Lewinsky as like Jackie Kennedy, the *wife* of a President? Clearly, *Time* has no interest in recuperating Lewinsky's reputation—the surrounding copy and the interview, are for the most part, critically damning. Their likely interest is in recuperating Clinton's status due to

his popularity. In their transfer of the Lewinsky aesthetic: from prurient to prude, her mouth was no longer the salacious imprimatur for presidential fellatio, but a staid rendition of decency and taste. Jackie Kennedy was the proper wife, the moral location for masculine on/scenity. The obscene had moved off-stage again. No matter the size of Lewinsky's immense mouth, it was shut; it was passive. Through nostalgia, she became like another woman—a better choice. The mystique of both women, classic Jackie, and "tamed" Monica, conveniently hide uncontrolled and uncontained presidential desire.

Images of Lewinsky are always images that display ideas about Clinton. Whatever the risks in my readings, Lewinsky's attorney Bill Ginsburg stated a similar thing, in part, long before the version here. While chaperoning the *Vanity Fair* shoot, he quipped to Lewinsky's own father: "The President is going to cream his pants when he sees this" (Morton 231). By the time of *Time*, the only cream would be delicately stirred with one of Prufrock's coffee spoons. Quite literally and literarily, *Time* used excerpts from T.S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* as epigraphs to their article's sections on Lewinsky's make-over. They were resorting to the "high brow" to wash away the stains, but they were not on Monica. They were *his*, the President's. Lewinsky was now like her famous dress, objectified and animated, as an expression of the public's fantasies about Clinton.

3.1.1.2 Clinton's Audience

Clinton's presidency is so closely associated with the impeachment scandal, it is easy to forget the more "innocent" cultural milieu around his sexuality before Lewinsky's emergence. Prurient ideas about Clinton's sexuality were part and parcel of his infamous charisma and

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ability to connect with audiences of all kinds since his national splash in 1992. Early in the presidential campaign, Gennifer Flowers appeared with stories of a long-term extra-marital affair with Clinton. Despite rampant media coverage, the public seemed to side with Clinton, viewing the alleged affair as a private matter. Clinton's public persona fostered a familiarity with the American public who came to feel like they "knew" the president. This informal intimacy was perhaps best exemplified by the famous "boxers or briefs" inquiry that was asked on an MTV town hall in 1994. [29] Clinton's first such town hall, during "Rock the Vote," in the 1992 campaign is credited with helping him to gain popularity when he trailed in third place before the primaries. Aids attributed his increasing popularity to appearances in youth-based forums and "entertainment" media such as MTV, *Donahue*, and the *Arsenio Hall Show*.[30]

When George H.W. Bush refused youth-oriented questions during his own interview with MTV during the same period, this choice was recognized as a detriment to his campaign.[31] Because the MTV appearances were so popular and gave Clinton a connection to youth culture, he repeated them in 1993 and 1994. Host Tabitha Soren prepped the young audience during a break before the upcoming Q&A sequence and suggested, flippantly, "boxers or briefs" as a sample question.[32] Laetitia Thompson, 17, took her suggestion. Clinton, sheepishly answered, "usually briefs," which was then widely reported in the press, enabling the nation to conjure the image of the tight-fitting garment on the President. The incident seemed a precursor to the events and obsessions to come, especially since it rehearsed a Lolita-like flirtation between the middle-

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[29] http://www.salon.com/politics/war_room/2008/02/27/boxers_briefs/. This post confirms that the incident was in 1994, not during the 1992 campaign as is conventionally thought. It also references Barack Obama's response to the same question in 2008. Though Obama demurs, he does reference his sexual attractiveness, saying that whichever he wears he looks good in them.
[30] See Elisabeth Kolbert, "Frank Talk to the MTV Generation." *New York Times*. April 20, 1994. http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C05E3D91531F933A15757C0A962958260
[31] See Jonathan Alter. "Between the lines online: Boxers or Briefs." http://www.newsweek.com/id/48529/page/3
[32] Ibid.

aged man and a very young woman. However, it also functioned to connect Clinton's sexuality to his ability to connect with audiences in an intimate way. The public had a sense of the private man behind closed doors, enabling an intimacy that was useful in figuring emotional intimacy. This ability—what Parry-Giles termed his "politics of empathy," was the mode by which Clinton connected with and inspired affect in a wide demographic.

This section explores Clinton's "intimate" relationship with the American people, and in doing so, I aim to draw out the emotional connections between affect and nation—emotion that is ultimately the most crucial aspect of nostalgic discourse in the public sphere. I argue that during key moments in Clinton's first campaign, he used empathy politics to gain popularity and connect with the people. While the head of state is an emblem for the nation, the nation's body politic is conventionally defined as the group or mass, the collective entity of the citizens of the politically organized country, which takes on the "imaginary" community of contemporary, capitalist nationalism. Anderson's influential *Imagined Communities*, conceptualizes nationalism in ways that usefully transfer to the ways that cinematic language is read by the mass audience. Anderson writes, "[nation] is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail . . . the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). Reception theories help to understand the vast divide between communities that nationalism alleviates. Clinton was able to manipulate televisual modes to suture these divides and make arguments about his connections to "everyone." The melodramatic mode of cinema, the affective properties of film spectatorship and spectacle, and the formal aesthetics of point of view and character identification in contemporary American film each contribute to the formation of these kinds of imaginary communities and aid in bonding a deep comradeship within the audience across chasms of inequality and difference. Nationalism

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functions due to its audience and their shared projections. Clinton was particularly effective in using melodramatic strategies to create a connection with audiences.

However, Clinton's presidential body, seeming to embody the collective, was fraught with contradictions that splintered the horizontal comradeship that conventionally binds such an entity into a whole. Brenton Malin concludes that masculinity under Clinton is characterized by "bizarre" "oddities," "[an] utter weirdness, parodying a set of [masculine] concepts that seem so natural and taken-for-granted," but that engage in "invisible manipulation" (192). Malin finds dominant codes of masculinity odd in part, because they use unmarked whiteness to forge invisible manipulation—the covering over of social inequalities. As Malin suggests, strangely, this masculinity can exists *both* as parodic *and* ideal. For instance, he describes that when Clinton "negotiates tensions of working-class Southerness with those of Oxford-educated Rhodes Scholar, [he] sits precariously between experienced man of the people and backwoods clod" (93). Clinton's extreme contradictions were partly smoothed over by an intimate display of empathy that seemed to alleviate fracture.

The Clinton textual body constitutes itself in two primary ways: through empathy and through nostalgia. These two parts interrelate due to nostalgia's dependence upon producing affective emotion. Clinton is famous for emoting and for expressing these emotions on his face through hyperbolic affectation (Figure 10.). Clinton utilized empathy to suggest the bonds between his individuality and the collective body politic.

First, using empathy, Clinton's public persona performs the politics of empathy and exudes this empathy via an affective contagion that transfers through modes of spectatorship, much like the affective contagion of the social disease of nostalgia. For instance, when Clinton displayed outrage at Phil Donahue (on his talk show) due to being confronted about infidelity,

Clinton's ire transferred to the audience who exhibited mass scorn toward Donahue in the form of supportive applause for Clinton. One woman stood up and explained that though she was not even a Clinton-supporter, she was outraged by that harassing line of questioning when the country was "in trouble." The audience felt that while Clinton was being confronted, the nation was simultaneously suffering, "taking hits." This equation was the primary trope used in *The Man from Hope*, which reveled in its exposure of Clinton's privacy.

As Boym and Stewart describe it, nostalgia, through its longing for home and homeland, can cause a bad case of patriotism. Clinton's empathy is one of the ways that his persona becomes more visceral and corporeal. The Clinton body literally reduces to bodily emissions (tears[33] and semen), appetites (for food and sex), and excessive aspects of the male body (his corpulence, uncontrollable desire, and emotion and "sensitivity"). The Clinton persona inhabits a liminal status, always bordering on contradiction and incongruity and being constituted by this paradox. The Clinton persona attempts containment of the multiple personalities as Malin elucidated earlier: rich, poor, black[34], white, feminine, virile, strong, weak, etc. In trying to contain multiple figurations of both the president and its match in the public collective, the Clinton body eventually becomes a text of excess, with cracks in its facade. However, it is specifically the textual body's uses of nostalgia, and its temporal and spatial distortion, that enhance the ability to traverse or oscillate between different identities. Emotional affect in the form of empathy becomes one of the primary ways that Clinton connects with the masses.

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[33] Clinton is considered to have possibly "teared-up" in *The Man from Hope*, and in several other intense expressions of empathy during town halls. Rush Limbaugh also claimed that Clinton "faked" tears at a public funeral. Clinton does not really ever publically cry, but he seems on the precipice of being about to due to his sensitivity.

[34] See Toni Morrison, "The Talk of the Town," The *New Yorker* (5 October 1998): 32. This is the famous piece where Clinton was designated as the "first black president." Reading the article reveals that the oft-quoted phrase is taken out of context in most cases.

3.1.1.3 America's Body Politic

I ha ve pr eviously m entioned t he r elationship between C linton's body a nd t he body politic. T he not ion of a body pol itic is u seful i n t hinking a bout the r elationship be tween individual and c ollective bodi es. T he body po litic metaphor c ombines the c oncept of t he m ass population of t he na tion a nd t he c ollection of i deas a nd i deologies a bout t hat na tion, w ith t he "representative character" who is in power over the mass. The body pol itic metaphor plays with spatial r elations i n the ways t hat it a t onc e, reduces t he mass t o one w hole bo dy, a nd a lso expands individuals to be a part of the gr oup mass. O ne r ecent i llustration of how t he na tional body politic metaphor is rendered is by examining any of the multiple images of Barack Obama standing be fore a t eeming mass. N ational body pol itics a re a lways i n operation, e ven w ithout such literal renditions o f the ir m echanics a nd shared political c orporeality; th ere is a lways an implied unity between national leaders, groups, political parties and citizenry.

Historically, the body politic indicates the metaphorical relationship between the nation and the citizen (or state power and its subject). The nation is rendered as a body, almost always male, a nd i ts pe rfections a nd pa thologies m ap out across t he s ymbolic surface of bodi ly representation, as por trayed in s uch phrases as t he " *head* of st ate" o r t he " *arms* of government."[35] The not ion of a body pol itic a ppears t o b e t ranshistorical, as Moi ra G atens suggests in "Corporeal Representation:" "perhaps the metaphor of the human body is an obvious

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[35] The *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* cites t he o rigin o f t his a nalogy a s P lato's *Republic*, w here a peaceful state works as a healthy body. Hobbes' *Leviathan* is an oft-cited mid-seventeenth century text that outlines in de tail the m etaphorical r elationship between the anatomy of t he h uman bo dy a nd the anatomy of the p olitical state. The body politic was a popular literary analogy throughout the Renaissance. Shakespeare uses the analogy in his hi story pl ays, a nd fashions E ngland's enemy, F rance a s a f emale vi rgin waiting to be pillaged and raped by English s oldiers, a notable use o f a bo dy politic a s a female, a virgin and a victim. Of course, this "victim" bo dy politic opposes, and is overtaken by, the virile, military body politic of England.

way of de scribing pol itical l ife; s o obvi ous t hat t he m etaphor pa sses i nto c ommon usage, no longer mindful of its origins." Used as a metaphor in European historical, political and literary tracts from the middle a ges through t he 19th century, t he body pol itic c oncept s till a pplies t o contemporary cultural analysis as numerous books and articles suggest. However, as Gatens goes on to explain, the body in question excludes countless beings from both the metaphor and from political activity: "slaves, foreigners, women, the conquered, children, the working classes," etc (83). My use of the notion of a contemporary body politic in Clinton's era builds on the classical definition. I am interested in the concept's rendition of a collective, and also in its exclusionary behaviors, e xiling unw anted, non -ideal ci tizens. The 1990s c ulture w ars s hifted the f ocus of idealized citizenry to previously marginalized groups: gays, women and minorities. Because my work concerns the national collective body and nostalgic representations of his con stituents, the concept h elps t o elucidate the w ays t hat na tionalism ope rates collectively and i ndividually in relationship to bodies. The body pol itic "excludes countless beings," but also appropriates their experience and feeds upon them.

Gatens' h istorical a nalysis e xplains tha t classical A thens is thought to be the first true body pol itic, a s ociety modeled on a n ideal po litical body, one th at existed w ith a pr ecarious relationship to the female body as a "motherless" "artificial man." The "artificial man" concept is a lso rooted i n t he J udeo-Christian mythic t raditions on c orporeal origin s uch a s the f irst woman "made" from Adam's rib, and the Christ child sired, by God, himself. These conception myths are tethered to the problematic relationship masculinity has to being "of woman born."³⁶ Gatens expl ains t hat in cl assic con structions, "the i mage of ar tificial man, the body pol itic, perfectly mirrors the infantile wish for independence from the maternal body" (82). To continue

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³⁶ *Macbeth,* Shakespeare 5.8.13

Gaten's thinking here, one of the ways this infantile wish broadcasts itself is via the compulsion of fort/da, and its fantasies of reworking time. Gatens clarifies that, though the artificial body wishes independence from the female body, it remains reliant upon the female body through its obsession with her regulation in social and political matters. Through the fantasy of independence from female and other bodies, the metaphorical body politic puts forth a false idea of self-reliance. Instead of independence, the artificial male body of the classic body politic does not publically acknowledge female bodies and numerous "other" bodies, though it needs them to control the populace and depends upon the public denial of the existence of deviant bodies and deviant citizens. This fantasy of uniformity is the primary mode whereby the body politic gains political hegemony—as *one* body, without difference, frequently male and white. This one body feeds on other bodies, but makes invisible its parasitism. This expression of "feeding upon" others makes the constitution of the body politic much like that of a fetus who relies on another for survival. The metaphor of a unified, neutral political mass body, though often taken up as progressive by liberal movements, is naturally incoherent as in practice it often renders anything other than the ideal healthy male body totally absent.[37]

3.1.1.4 Clinton's Empathy

The American body politic during the Clinton years, incorporates the basic form of the classic version, but with crucial differences, the first being that rather than seeking to covertly

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[37] As an aside: Gatens explains that "women who step outside their allotted place in the body politic are frequently abused with terms like harpy, virago, vixen, bitch, shrew; terms that make it clear that if she attempts to speak from the political body, about the political body, her speech is not recognized as *human* speech" (84). Hillary Clinton strikes me as being cast as such a woman, especially during the 2008 election. Her plight as representing a distortion of the ideal body politic (much more so than her husband) should make interesting studies in the future.

obfuscate deviant "other" citizens, the Clinton administration attempted a publicized inclusion as the administration openly preached diversity and multicultural values. The primary mode Clinton used to unite the masses was by expressing empathy toward them. His emotions were the means through which to include "others." Thus, the body politic of the 1990s, rather than alienating and excluding difference, sought to embrace it, in a liberal fantasy of inclusivity. This inclusivity still "fed" on the "others," although without seeming to. The politics of empathy masked Clinton's performance, making its appropriation of economic struggle invisible. For instance, during one moment in the 1992 town hall style Presidential debate[38], a young African-American woman asked the candidates how they were "personally" affected by the national deficit. Bush fielded the question first and failed miserably. Initially, he ignored the "personal" aspect of the question, and when interrupted and redirected to answer the "personal" side, he responded with little-concealed anger and then was flustered, claiming he did not understand the question. The woman told him about struggling people whom she knew, and more forcefully, asked how this struggle affected Bush. Caught off guard and in an effort to repair the damage, Bush segued clumsily to a story about visiting a "black church," reading their bulletin, and learning about "teen pregnancy," and families whom he "talked to" who could not make ends meet. It was a clear misfire, and he was caught in a mire of racist stereotypes, swimming in details that had nothing to do with the question, and insulting the questioner and "black churches" everywhere. Next he offered the graceless metaphor, that just because one did not have cancer, it did not mean he could not *understand* cancer. Bush finished with rhetoric about stimulating exports and better education. Worse than his failure to present an empathetic connection with his constituency, was his easy set-up for Clinton to saunter in and "connect" with the questioner.

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[38] The debate took place on 10-15-1992. For C-SPAN's clip of this exchange, see youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ffbFvKlWqE&NR=1

First, in a sympathetic tone, Clinton asked her to repeat how she had been affected. Before she could answer, he said for her: "you've been affected, you know people." She nodded in agreement: "yes." Clinton began by saying that, as Governor of a small state, he is affected each day by the recession, finishing with, "in my state, when people lose their jobs, there's a good chance I'll know them by their names." (In 1992 Arkansas's population was 2.3 million and the unemployment rate hovered around 7%—that's a lot of names, Bill!) Nevertheless, Clinton's answer, fortified by his intense eye contact with the questioner and clear and grave vocal tone, lent his remarks solemnity and believability. He mentioned that he had talked to "people like you all over America," a remark that joined the woman to the larger nation rather than fostering division. Clinton then listed a litany of generalized fiscal solutions that ended with "bringing the American people together." Clinton was uniting the people, but his use of sentiment and empathy covered over his rather blatant appropriation of the questioner's personal experience, connecting it to "people like you" across the nation and equating the people she knew to those he encountered in his experience as Governor.

The politics of empathy includes both comprehending the emotional feelings of the populous, and the identification with and transference of these feelings. In the case of 1990s American nationalism, the *popular* feeling centered on victimhood, and pain. The culture wars debates, along with a deluge of self-help media, combined to make the 1990s public sphere particularly attuned to trauma and its consumption. Clinton's campaign focus on emotion and pain contributed to its popular trend in culture. In the same presidential debate previously referenced, another questioner asked the candidates when they thought an "Afro-American" or woman would be elected president. Clinton responded that he hoped they would be soon and pointed to the previous African-American female questioner as an example of the perfect

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candidate—most especially because she understood the personal struggle attendant to being a woman, minority and possible mother. By referencing her, Clinton indicated that he understood too. In more subtle terms than Bush's cancer metaphor, Clinton implied that he did not need to *share* a plight to understand it.

When ACT UP activist Bob Rafsky confronted Clinton at a campaign fundraiser in 1992 about the ways that gay communities and AIDS/HIV citizens had been ignored by government, Clinton replied (in his famously empathic mode,) "I feel your pain."[39] Though Clinton began coalitions with ACT UP soon after, his policies in office such as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," were hardly victories for gay rights. Clinton's plan to end prohibition against gays in the military was shot down by the Right and military bigwigs. The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" compromise was a defeat by liberal standards. Gays could not be banned from military service, but "homosexual activity" was completely "forbidden" as was simply stating that one was a homosexual. The open policy that was previously sought was totally shut down as homosexuality was pushed to the closet for fear of persecution. Military personnel were merely limited in their tactics to harass suspected homosexuals and such harassment continued in force (Schwartz 159). In this instance, when Clinton expressed feeling the pain of the gay community, the body politic he represented as potential president, grew to include the gay community. This inclusion depended upon the performance of empathy.

Malin explains that Clinton's masculinity was cast as both hypersensitive and hyposensitive, at different moments, thus creating a paradox. His sensitivity was sometimes

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[39] See http://www.actupny.org/campaign96/rafsky-clinton.html for an account of the exchange. The site reports, "Two days later, April 4, candidate Clinton meets with members of ACT UP and other activists to discuss his AIDS policies and agrees to make a major AIDS policy speech, to have people with HIV speak to the Democratic Convention, and to sign onto the UAA's (United for AIDS Action) five point plan."

deployed positively, as the "new" sensitive and "feminized" man in the 1990s, and other times negatively, as this "new" man was seen as emotionally anxious due to abandoning masculine toughness and strength (27). Clinton's famous "I feel your pain" line, and his penchant for sensitivity and display of feelings, was widely mocked during his campaign and presidency. Rush Limbaugh accused him of "faking" tears in order to appear caring. However, the performance of empathy was integral to the nationalism he represented in the televisual realm. The performance represents what journalist Richard M. Levine indicates as part and parcel of the self-help cultural movement in the 1990s. In his discussion of Clinton's appearance on *Donahue*, Levine points out that Clinton was not acting like a politician, but like the host of the show, effectively eliding Phil Donahue and performing a role as the new host of a self-help nation with an increasing appetite for shows like *Oprah, Sally Jesse Raphael, Jenny Jones* and that ilk. J. Hoberman, argues that in the 1990s popular culture and politics were increasingly entangled. He writes that participating in media events constituted patriotism: "To be ignorant of Anita Hill and Rodney King, Murphy Brown and O.J., Desert Storm and *Independence Day*, Dick Morris and *Seinfeld*, Princess Di and *Titanic*, Oscar Night and the Super Bowl is to be actively un-American. In the National Entertainment State, the president rules as first entertainer" (125). Hoberman remarks on the increasingly diegetic component of the public sphere where each of these texts is a link in a narrative—in this case, one that marks the route to patriotism. Clinton as First Host, plays on his narration and also as host body to a widespread social "disease."

Bernard Timburg explains that television talk is all about the host. The host usually controls content, is at the center of the marketing, and "a successful talk show host also becomes the fulcrum of the show's power" (359). Empathy, for Clinton, becomes a political force to wield

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by usurpation: by taking over both Donahue's status as host, and by manipulating the feelings of the viewing audience.

Levine describes Clinton's performance on *Donahue* as follows:

> "People are hurting all over this country," [Clinton] said, as he would over and over during the campaign. "You can see the pain in their faces, the hurt in their voices." You could plainly see the pain in *his* face (especially since he bit his lower lip in an empathetic gesture before making the pronouncement) and hear the hurt in his overworked voice. Clinton was successfully presenting his own brand of self-help politics on television's longest-running self-help show, merging the public realm with the private, citizenship with co-dependency.[40]

Levine's reading identifies Clinton's corporeal signifiers of empathy that became signature: the bit lip, the wincing, the grimace, becoming the hurt he describes seeing, and in doing so, encouraging audiences to make a similar move, and to trust him (Figure 29.). A "feeling of pain" transfers to the national body politic that blurs the distinctions between the nation's individuals, their leader and disparate experiences of pain. Levine concludes that Clinton transformed himself into an Oprah or a Donahue, and became "the first host." This designation echoes the critique offered by J. Hoberman of Clinton as "the first entertainer," set upon the national televisual stage and leading the nation's audiences through an identification ritual, transferring pain from public citizen to president and from president to nation simultaneously. In this mode, and in this early campaign appearance, Clinton began to forge the body politic that would seek to include the masses not as the idealized citizens of conventional models, but through the painful emotions of their lived experiences and their feelings. In the

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[40] Richard M. Levine "I feel your pain: How to Host the Presidency in 12 Steps." *Mother Jones*. July/August 1993.

midst of the burgeoning culture wars, Clinton needed to present himself as a white male who was sensitive to issues of race, class, gender and sexuality. This sensitivity clearly feminized him—he presented himself as a champion of women's rights and his wife Hillary's feminism and success.

However, in tandem he was also a callous womanizing Southerner, though he deployed empathy to offset the usual connotations associated with this demographic. Though he did not possess a specific status as a cultural victim (Civil Rights violation, discrimination, harassment, traumatic history), by empathizing with that constituency, he could "claim" their pain. With Clinton in the lead, others who were similarly devoid of a precise cultural victim status could "claim" one as a part of their national citizenship. Economic hardship became one powerful trope that was figured as "equivalent" to the horrors of racism and discrimination. It emerged much later, in *The Starr Report* and *Monica's Story,* that Clinton did think of himself as having survived "trauma": the weight issues he had dealt with since childhood, and his feelings of being "misunderstood."

Early in his first presidency, Clinton was known for employing various strategies to "control" the press corps, one of which was to bypass their scandal-hunting coverage and to "go public" through controlled forums where he met directly with the American people. Employing some of Reagan's media strategists, Clinton used town hall and talk show formats in the presidential debates and after he was elected. He told the press "Larry King has liberated me from you by giving me to the American people directly."[41] Clinton's town halls eliminated mediation by an informed, experienced press corps situated between himself and the public. In

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[41] These lines and their context are quoted on page 20 in Hacker, Kenneth L. Maury Giles. Aja Guerrero. "The Political Image Management Dynamics of President Bill Clinton." *Images, Scandal and Communication Strategies of the Clinton Presidency.* Ed. Robert E. Denton Jr. and Rachel L. Holloway. West Port: Praeger, 2003. 1-38. The article details the communication strategies of the Clinton campaign and administration in attempts to influence public opinion.

this way, Clinton could "stay in *touch*" "with the people," by fielding their soft ball queries with his empathetic style through a televisual aesthetic (emphasis mine). Critic Rachel Holloway argues that the town hall style elevated the "people's voice," and represented the "symbolism of direct contact" between the president and the people unfiltered by and outside of Washington and the media. This symbolic dynamic created the illusion of an intact and inclusive body politic: a host and its subject (63). Alex Wadden argues that Clinton was responsible for creating the "New Democrat," and its democracy of socially liberal politics, and also (before his own scandals) with allaying the "trauma" of presidential rule in the 1970s and 1980s by repairing the betrayal residue from Nixon and the suffering caused by Reagan and Bush (1-2). In this sense, six years before his own scandal and impeachment, Clinton was set up as a "healer" for national trauma, and he employed empathetic politics that attempted to bypass conventional media and shoot to the heart of the American people. Clinton used the televised format of the casual, "right in your living room" town hall conversation to better control content and image. Regardless of his strategist's intentions (his image was rarely under "control,") these televised meetings created a symbiotic relation between Clinton and the questioner that was achieved through the illusion of empathetic connection which was aptly transferred via filmic and televisual aesthetics.

While Clinton worked to empathize with potential voters, in turn, he convinced them to empathize with him. In visual media, the dynamics of identification require interdependence between image and spectator. In a film, for example, forms of editing, composition and point-of-view compel the audience to identify with certain characters, usually the leads. Clinton, in televisual mode, invoked what Carl Plantinga calls "*the scene of empathy*," in which an audience member experiences a period of long concentration on a character's face (as Levine's details suggest) and this prolongation of the facial close-up elicits emotions and empathy (239).

Plantinga argues that this mode of viewing enhances the spectator's *character engagement* as opposed to *character identification*. Plantinga resists the concept of identification because it implies the "losing of the self in the other." Plantinga explains that audiences engage rather than identify with film characters because they operate as separate selves, without melding their minds or experiences with those on the screen (244). However, the dynamics of the "scene of empathy" can shift when audiences move from a strictly fictional to a documentary-like format, and when the scene enhances nationalism and nation-forming.

In the political and televisual milieu of talk shows both negotiations with characters exist, identification and engagement. Clinton offers an alternate point of identification for viewers than does a fiction film. What Clinton represents ties to spectators' views on citizenship, nation, experience and self. The melding Plantinga forewarns of is possible, if not likely. Plantinga's examples primarily come from respected cinema, mostly fictional, rather than from talk shows on television screens and their documentary or "reality" structure, a decidedly different format. Though Clinton is a real-life figure and not an actor portraying a character, his "performance" nonetheless, blurs the distinction between the two ways that audiences will relate. Clinton's image was merging his representative political text with his star persona as celebrity, the melding between reality and fiction is less distinct. Both the constructed quality of his performance and its veracity are obscured in the televisual form. Parry-Giles contends that television spreads feelings of intimacy between viewed subject and viewer in an immediate and hyperrealistic way. She makes a case for the "hyperreality" of Clinton's political intimacy, one mediated and manufactured by televisual apparatuses and screens (25). Clinton had much to gain from these transactions. He encouraged a mass of citizens to newly invest in the Democratic fantasy of

"representation." He could convince diverse constituents that he could empathize with their specific needs.

By "televisual," I refer to the aesthetic form of television production and dissemination. John T. Caldwell, in discussing the televisual apparatus, offers that televisuality is a style, the *look* of the particular programming that relates to the conditions of its production, technology and form. He contends that the 1980's began a technological "upgrade" in stylistic techniques. Talk shows obviously have their own specific production modes and aesthetic styles; the director is not on set, but in a control room watching different angles and perspectives through "video-assist," and chooses when to move the camera closer and when to pull back. The "scene of empathy" appears to be most assisted in televisuality via the close-up (295). Talk show and town hall style in particular create an "imaginary" space that transforms public social relations into the private space of viewers' living rooms (or wherever) for private consumption of the public experience. Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt, in "Studio Discussions," explain that audiences of talk shows establish a special intimacy with the show's hosts and consider them "friends and family." This "parasocial interaction" recreates an imaginary space of intimacy that diminishes temporal and physical space and distance (329). This occlusion of time-space reality functionally enhanced the representation of Clinton as national host. It allowed the audience to lose their sense of physical difference (or distance) and experience the perceived truth of the pain Clinton felt. They could believe it *was* theirs. Televisuality, in a realism mode, marks a crucial component of the function of the Clinton body politic as empathetic. I understand the difference between fiction film and talk show realism as the difference not only between televisual and cinematic form, but as between their different screens and spectator practices. However, the ways that both forms transfer affect can be similar.

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Plantinga's ideas about cinema and affect seem especially relevant and transferable to televisuality, especially his notion of the emotional contagion between spectators and images, where an audience "catches" the emotions expressed by the character. The physical proximity normally necessary for contagion transference is simulated through the faux intimacy of television. The body politic metaphor functions in a similar mode, and in doing so departs from the literal realm and becomes "airborne." Citizens need only have empathetic contact with the image-object of the president to feel themselves a part of the body politic he represents. The body politic becomes a widespread mass that effectively catches citizens who come in contact with it during an empathetic transfer mediated by viewing its image object, its representation.

Ronald Reagan nostalgically referenced this attribute of "contagious" nationalism in his 1989 farewell speech to the nation, and he lamented what he perceived as its loss. Whatever the specific dynamics of Reagan's image and the body politic he represented, he describes the viral character of American patriotism of the past: "*we absorbed, almost in the air*, a love of country and an appreciation of its institutions" (emphasis mine.)[42] By 1992, Clinton imagery had restored contagion to the nation's "air." Clinton had harnessed both the nostalgia for American nationalism and the infusion of it into patriotically contaminated air—and airwaves where it could be absorbed through witnessing and "catching" empathetic politics.

In "host" mode, the Clinton body politic facilitated and encouraged through performance a viral transfer of affect facilitated by the simulated intimacy of television screens and the invasive close-ups of video cameras (244). When viewers *engage* (which includes their sentiment, indifference or revulsion such as may occur with *Jerry Springer* or *Geraldo* episodes,)

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[42] David Greenberg brought this speech and these lines to my attention in "How the Republicans claimed the 'Patriotism' Mantle in Presidential Politics." www.slate.com July 2nd 2008. http://www.slate.com/id/2194695/entry/2194697/

they do so as subjects separate from the body politic. However, if they *identify,* they connect and absorb the contagion of painful feeling, experiencing it and taking it on as a factor of *self.* Clinton's various performances of empathy and the "feeling of pain" spread this emotional contagion, infiltrating audiences, so they enter the fold and become one with the mass body. Clinton's performance encourages audiences to imagine their emotional connection to him and to a similar citizenry, to believe that Clinton feels the same way they do. In this sense, every American had painful feelings, but their diverse sources (i.e. race, ethnicity, gender, etc.), were becoming less relevant.

In her argument concerning Clinton's televised town hall meetings, Holloway contends that Clinton mastered the sense that he understood the needs and desires of the citizenry because he felt these needs and desires and in the same way. Though she primarily uses transcripts of the events and does not provide or engage in visual analysis, she describes Clinton's engagement through physical closeness to the citizen by using physical gestures, facial expressions, vocal tones and by repeating their words; these methods indicate not only camaraderie, but identical experiences. The town hall format avoids technical or detailed confrontation with issues or policy and substitutes generalizations about similar feelings and emotions (63). While these forums got valuable press coverage, media influence was thwarted by limiting their access and focusing on "real" people. In fact, Clinton uses a "therapeutic" style of communication in which he repeats and mirrors what he has heard the questioner say, conveying not only that he understands, but that he shares in the feeling. He often repeats the question again to clarify if he understands them correctly. Holloway describes an exchange about people losing jobs and homes where Clinton talked about "people that he 'knew by name.' As he answered, the questioner nodded and said, 'Mm-hmm'" (62). This discussion seems identical to the one in the

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Presidential de bate de scribed ea rlier. In t his exchange, without sp ecifics, and using a c asual conversational m ode, Clinton asse rts a simpatico attitude between his and the q uestioner's comrades and experience. Holloway concludes that televised town meetings allowed the Clinton image t o operate as h ost and i ngratiate i tself t hrough "f ace-to-face contact w ith everyday citizens," and by pr oxy, the viewing audience at home. She quotes Joe Klein's assessment that Clinton not oriously led a udiences to be lieve he a greed w ith t hem—without ever s pecifically saying s o (83). T he C linton i mage obj ect a nd body pol itic w ere a s et of r epresentations t hat allowed audiences a n emotional o r e mpathetic c onnection, a nd of ten they w illingly a llowed themselves to be a bsorbed i nto t he e motions and t he bod y pol itic. C ertainly, these m ethods enabled him to garner enough votes to win the presidency, but they were also crucial in shifting the modus operandi of white masculinity in representation—especially now that it was relying on a fantasy of unity, rather than on the severe race and gender differences of the past.

Gatens explains why a citizen's connection with the host of the body politic is dangerous. She argues: "that feminist politics recognize the futility of continuing to ask to be fully admitted to t he f antasy of uni ty" (87). G atens relates t he f antasy of uni ty t o a n a ct of s ymbolic cannibalism. Gatens hits on the essential factor of the body politic as a host that consumes rather than nour ishes, t hough i t a ppears t o nour ish t he na tion-state and its c itizens. Feminist pol itics (and m ost l iberal m inority pol itics) though s eeking unde rstanding a nd e mpathy, ga in l ittle o r nothing by joining w ith t he dom inant he gemony. T he C linton body pol itic, t he na tional body under Clinton's reign, constitutes itself through its di sguised feeding on c itizen's emotions, and the televisual form helps to obscure the distinction.

One f acet o f t his body politic is t he "f antasy" of e motional uni ty w ith " other" gr oups, women, the impoverished, gays, and AIDS sufferers and advocates. Clinton feels their pain, but

he feels a unifying, non-specific, general pain that is the same for all groups, eliding difference. The emotional contagion that Clinton's performance of empathy transfers to others depends upon the televisual medium and the entertainment stage of American politics, what Parry-Giles defines as the postmodern hyperreality of 1990's presidential campaigns and its politics. In tandem to the classic body politic, the contemporary version appeals to, and absorbs the bodies that it governs, but makes this practice invisible through the emotional contagion of feelings. The Clinton body politic appropriates the experiences and causes of others, and its leader, Clinton, instead of achieving social change or reform (as with ACT UP and gays in the military) maintains the status quo of ideological conservatism or "the middle road."

The politics of empathy described above ties to cinematic melodrama and its attendant affect, and also to what Jane Gaines configures as *national melos* in her discussion of "the uses to which melodrama has been historically put in the service of nation-building" (298). As I will argue in later chapters, the *national melos* in 1990s American film uses the politics of empathy, the modes of cinematic affect, and the nostalgic narrative to continue and clarify the work of the national body under Clinton. This union seems to include diverse citizens, but parasitically uses their narrative of pain.

Contrary to the militarism and impregnable strength represented by the body politic of the 1980s, the 1990s version was constituted, in part, by vulnerability and trauma. What seemed a liberal and democratic mode of empathy—indentifying with another's pain, became a trend for experiencing trauma and victimhood, most explicitly through popular culture forms such as the explosion of the self-help movement, and cultural obsession with fantasies about WWII.[43] This

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[43] I call WWII "fantasized" here because I refer to its particular cultural representation in late nineties film and popular media, a representation that was at odds with and distinct from a factual, "historical," or "authentic" account of the events. *Michael C. C. Adams, in The Best War Ever: America and World War II*, argues that the "best

trend occurred in tandem with the decade's fixation with nostalgia, that bittersweet longing and instinct, as Freud put it, for "*a need to restore an earlier state of things*" (69). Of course, vicarious trauma does not work in the same sense as Freud's original formulation in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where traumatic memory is inaccessible to the victim, repressed. To explain further, Freud theorizes a kind of mental shield that protects victims from the originary traumatic memory. When "remembering" through fantasy, since to Freud the origin of trauma is inaccessible, the shield is breached and anguish ensues. Trauma is then obsessively returned to through nostalgia and reminiscences that seek to control the reenactment. In Freud's formulation of the fort/da game, the child works through (plays with) its trauma of maternal absence through the repetition of the act that it controls. In this way, the trauma or loss is mastered and the "victim" empowered through the repetition.

Freud wrote about traumas that were specific to individuals, those of the war veterans of World War I, or those of his own grandchild from which he extrapolated his theory. However, the national popular trauma in the 1990s had far less specific origins, though it did require its replacement toy. Late-century America obsessed over ritualized recreation of "imagined" war trauma in pop cultural forms. Most of the consuming audience did not share in the "originary" and lost experience of World War II, which was decidedly more popular for cultural consumption in the 1990s than histories of Vietnam, Korea or other less popular American military skirmishes that produced veterans and victims. Even the "victory" in Kuwait did not produce a significant cultural currency. Though Operation Desert Storm (1991) produced 700,000 U.S. veterans, there was not a popular film representation of it until *Three Kings* (David

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war ever" status is a myth perpetrated primarily by Hollywood cinema that exaggerates heroic aspects, imposes false narratives and censors or leaves out questionable or brutal aspects and tactics. In this way, the American imagination of the war at the end of the nineties was a *use* of the "best war ever" that fortified the imaginary ideologies and politics of that moment.

O. Russell, 1999).[44] In the American cultural imaginary of the 1990s, trauma was expressed and brought forward by nostalgic narratives that were constructed and consumed in a desire to experience trauma that the mass of the national audience did not possess: the experience of the perceived horrors of World War II, its battles, and its rewards. The cultural desire to be a "victim" was emphatically "vicarious," and existed in opposition to real traumas.

But what elicited the desire to be a "victim" in addition to, or instead of, a hero? Iconic film characters such as D-FENS (discussed in the introduction) and Tyler Durden (mentioned in Chapter One), embody and give voice to that strange desire. Just before Tyler Durden's pronouncement about khakis, he lectures a group of men (Boomers and Gen-Xers) of variant demographics, on the advantages of "Fight Club," where they will willingly and gleefully beat each other silly. The men then revel and bask in the physical and mental anguish caused by the wounds, scars and deformity gleaned through fighting. In *Fight Club*, combat, even when self-directed, is therapeutic, creative and transformative. But what exactly needs to be transformed? What are the ills ailing these men? They partly stem from their anger at having had khakis foisted upon them through false advertising. They also rebel against the consumer "emptiness" of condominium living and IKEA shopping (not unlike D-FENS' consumer anguish over the "wrong" hamburger). They have been "harassed" and "discriminated" against by social and political insincerity. They uniformly deny any supposed masculine privilege. Their other harassments, as revealed in Durden's speech, include not having access to a "Great Depression" or a "Great War," because they are the "middle children" of history. The speech invokes the typical jargon of the self-help movement where birth order can have disastrous effects. That may

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[44] In 1996 a Defense Department study was released that denied the existence of Gulf War Syndrome, a debilitating illness that affected about 200,000 Gulf War veterans to various degrees, although the case has never officially closed (Schwartz 282).

be true, but the most salient points about the 1990s desire for "trauma" are that, for the most part, there are none in contemporary America that rival the experiences of WWII. The ironic conceit of *Fight Club* is to raise "middle child" syndrome to a height equivalent to "real" trauma. *Fight Club* premiered in October 1999, a few months before the millennial turn and it was a brilliant emblem for the decade's obsession with masculine crisis as a form of trauma—where there is not one. I use the film as a point of illustration because it is so explicit in its expression of desire for victimhood. The films I discuss later, exhibit similar "pleasures" in less conspicuous form.

E. Ann Kaplan in *Trauma Culture* indicates that there may be a cultural value in popular cinema that depicts trauma because it allows audiences to see and understand the horror of war. She asserts that there are "socially useful" effects of discomfort, such as with a Rwandan documentary about rape victims that she describes (91). Kaplan opines that within certain contexts, traumatic imagery can be usefully consumed if it provides historical knowledge to the viewer. She warns against the problem in popular American cinema of "wounded attachments" to sentimentality and "empty" empathy. Empty empathy is very much in line with the politics of empathy described above, "elicited by images of suffering without any context or background knowledge" (93). Clearly Clinton, and the national body during his reign, forged a bond of empathy that was all-encompassing, non-specific, and that was part of a therapeutic trend in pop culture. The problem with reading this trend as eliciting merely "empty" empathy rests with its extraordinary political power.

One of the contradictory aspects of American nationalism as it applies to dominant hegemony is the relative lack of trauma and pain suffered by the ideal citizen of the 1990s: represented by the white, straight, head-of-state Clinton who was not a veteran, an AIDS patient, a victim of racism or sex discrimination, a mother (possibly single, teenaged or unwed), or a

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person impoverished and unemployed. Those categories indicate a lived experience far different from Clinton's or the average mainstream male Boomer and point to various domestic political and social crises. Masculinity was undergoing a much different crisis, "the crisis of masculinity" as Malin states it, where "the notion of a real, true manhood underwent particular challenges" (8).[45] Though this crises, was of course, not like a trauma, it was culturally represented as one.

According to Malin, this masculine crisis centered on identity politics and critiques of dominant masculinity that made visible its previously "repressed" (less overt and questioned) relationship to racism, sexism and classism. Clinton's public was engaged with absorbing those marginalized factions, and was forced to confront the troubled male identity that for centuries had raised white, straight, rich males to the top of the pecking order. Jane Gaines, in her discussion of *national melos* explains how racism, combined with an obsession with birth and origin via the female reproductive body, stabilizes national systems. As quoted in *Prelude I*, she explains that racism, and its complex of attendant forces, is a philosophy of history through which a nation can know itself. White masculinity defines itself in relation to the who, how and where of its oppression.

The peculiar set of political forces in the 1990s, embodied by Clinton's liberalism and seeming dedication to minorities, began to gain mainstream momentum in 1991 with the reign of

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[45] Malin's *American Masculinity under Clinton* argues that the nineties were particularly prone to a "crisis of masculinity." I think a similar argument could be made regarding any era in American history, especially since the film era began. Freud defines the ascent to male subjectivity as stemming from the Oedipal event of crisis—the separation from the mother, and notably Gayle Rubin in "The Traffic in Women," argues that Oedipal scenarios are as much social as psychological. I think it is safe to say that each cultural moment has its own *specific* crisis of masculinity. Crises of masculinity are likely constitutive of patriarchal cultures and ideological systems. Susan Faludi's popular history, *Stiffed*, claims that American men, especially the Boomer generation were betrayed by several cultural crises and are "victims." Victimhood is an essential characteristic of the Clinton body politic and the masculinities I examine. Judith Kegan Gardiner writes that the features of dominant masculinity and its subordination practices and uneven distribution of power will "naturally" produce crises among men (8).

"political correctness" or "PC," a term and movement that called prior American cultural rhetoric into question. The term emerged alongside the culture wars and their purported solution—the adoption of a politics sensitive to and knowledgeable about difference. Historian Richard Schwartz credits the "PC" trend with originating in feminist and multicultural programs in the academy that actively critiqued white, Anglo, male hegemony and created a curriculum that examined gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality. Schwartz contends that such a schematic represented women and minorities as the victims of white men and contributed to the "sacralization of victimhood in the 1990s" (viii). He obviously glosses over the history of new academic departments and canon wars of the 1970s-1990s, but what is important is how identity "wars" became configured in the mainstream culture. What is most interesting is Schwartz's linking of PC to victimhood as conjoined trends. To that mix, I would add the 1990s masculinity crisis, whose traditional codes destabilized. This collection of forces, as they played out in popular culture, helps to explain the rampant desire to become a victim and to experience pain as a facet of masculinity at the turn of the 20th century.

Susan Hayward, in "Framing National Cinemas" provides a brief historical guide which I quote in full because she cohesively links the disparate facets of nationalism, representation and the male body as they coalesce *now*:

> We think of the modernization of white masculinity in the 1930s and 1940s
> (heroic and complex characterization,) the threat to it in the 1940s and 1950s (film
> noir,) the reconstruction of it in light of the 1960s and 1970s into new
> masculinities, and of course *now* the post-modernization and virtualization of
> white masculinity/ies over the past two decades –as in *Forrest Gump* (a.k.a. Tom
> Hanks . . .) representations which in this context lead . . . to a performance, a

display of an *erotics* of nationalism through the male body that reflects the very pathologies these sets of representations-as-a-discourse-of-nationalism seek to deny. (Emphasis mine 97)

Hayward goes on to explain that nationalism in representation depends upon its disguise and masquerade, shaping itself through nostalgic uses of the past. As we know, the "now" moment of white masculinity (beginning in the 1990s) takes aspects of each of the previous historical trends: it is heroic, threatened, and reconstructed, continuously. Hayward cites the erotics of nationalism that are continuously displayed through appropriations of women, minorities and victims who become subsumed into the erotic male body. Lewinsky provides one example of this process, in the readings of her imagery as a proxy for the male body. Her own subjectivity becomes impossible under the aegis of masculine representation. The national male body, always masquerading as a "true" white male, the great, unmarked default category, takes over the positions of others in order to consume their experience.

Often this consumption is disguised within representations of masculine figures who are (as opposed to Tyler Durden and post-scandal Clinton), nice, ordinary men. The next chapters explain in detail the connections between Clinton, Spielberg, and Hanks as they relate to the issues presented in these first two chapters on nostalgia, 1990s culture, and representations of Clinton's sexuality and empathy. However, their connections are best illuminated through contrast—while Tom Hanks and Bill Clinton had symbolic ties, they split in the way each embodied the romantic male, the sexual male, and fatherhood. In contrast to Clinton's exposure, Hanks was nearly sexless.

Gump, whose empathy is akin to autism, projects a perpetual boyhood. Clinton seemed always already to have been a man (standing up to his stepfather, reading about current events,

and expressing ambition and foresight). However, alternate representations of masculinity in the 1990s engaged within the experience of men who behaved like boys. My next chapter explores Steven Spielberg through the register of boyhood. While Spielberg's cinematic form often relies on the aesthetics and politics of empathy to produce strong affect in audiences, this form does so through the masculine vantage point of the "boy"—a figure notable for its lack of sexual desire. This lack indicates its strongest contrast to Clinton's public masculinity.

4.0   STEVEN SPIELBERG AND THE NOSTALGIC "BOY"

4.1   *PRELUDE III*: NATION, FAMILY AND THE BOY SCOUT

> A Boy Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient,
> cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.
> Steven Spielberg, on the nature of his own character

Steven Spielberg happens to be one of the world's leading collectors of works by Norman Rockwell, the American painter known for "distilling each image into a celebrated universal truth about America and its people" (Segal 635). Since at least 1939, Rockwell's iconic *Saturday Evening Post* magazine covers (1916-63) have been criticized as kitsch depictions of American capitalism (633). During his lifetime, Rockwell's work was ignored in high art circles and he was labeled a popular "illustrator" of maudlin, patriotic images depicting middle class American families. Rockwell began his career as a military artist during World War I. By the second World War, he was responsible for popular nationalist pieces such as *Rosie the Riveter* (1943),[46] War Bonds and U.S. Army posters, and his iconic *The Four Freedoms* (1943), inspired by an FDR address and featuring four thematically related tableaux.

Freedom from Want, one of the four, presents the classic national imagination of the American Thanksgiving scene: an elderly patriarch and his wife deliver a golden turkey to a long

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[46] During the war, Rockwell's version was far less circulated than J. Howard Miller's "We Can Do It!" poster. In 2002, the Rockwell original sold for just under 5 million dollars at a Sotheby's auction.

table of relatives frozen in mid-chat—a few pairs of hands are clinched in prayer, two children with smug grins sit at the midground. In the right lower foreground, the painting's edge crops just beneath the twinkling eyes of a middle-aged man who gazes out to the viewer in a direct address. White details fill the canvas: curtains, wainscoting, "mother's" apron, "grandmother's" hair, while white light gives halos to the figures, as well as the central shaft of whiteness on the long table with its white cloth, white china and clear, full glasses of water. These details work together to highlight the racial whiteness of the figures in the scene.[47] Until his later "social comment" works on civil rights, painted in the 1960s, Rockwell's paintings portrayed "exclusively white" scenes of quotidian family life that linked together values of the middle class: militarism, heterosexuality, Christianity, and nation (635).

By the 1990s, Rockwell, "once synonymous with bad taste," had been resurrected in high art circles, garnering new showings at elite museums and gaining scholarly attention that revised his previously irrelevant status (Soloman 32). In a *New York Times* piece, Deborah Soloman tried to make sense of the 1990s explosion of "bad" art that was becoming increasingly important to the respectable art scene. Rockwell's works were emblematic of *good* bad art. (Disney animation cels were also esteemed, for instance). Good bad art encapsulates technical virtuosity coupled with thematic sentimentality that glistens on the surface. Patently, good bad art is obviously skillful, but requires little thought in assessing its meaning. Soloman described this attribute as one that permits an *easy looking*, that allows spectators to revel in normality and familiarity, with "unclouded affection for American life."

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[47] The white highlighting effects seem the inverse of the chiaroscuro lighting used in popular film noir during the same period. Similar bright white halos and the sense that the outdoors bursts with white light are used in interior shots in such Spielberg films as *E.T.* (1981), *Minority Report* (2002), and *Catch Me if You Can* (2002). *Empire of the Sun* (1987) alludes to Rockwell aesthetics throughout and imitates one of *The Four Freedoms*, *Freedom from Fear.*

Soloman argued that in the late 1990s "looking" was over, even by some academic theorists. Close readings and analysis were replaced by a kind of millennial affection for nostalgia. The late century revival of Rockwell (which mostly ignored his civil rights illustrations for *Look* magazine) was a part of the nation's fervent nostalgia movement at the time. Soloman offered: "the rampant revisionism of the 90's isn't just a backlash against modernist taste or one more rotation in the cycle of coolness. Rather it marks the end of coolness—*a premillennial yearning for the safe past*, for the kind of reassuring experience that avant-garde art aggressively renounced" (emphasis mine 32). Returning to the reassuring was one way to renounce critique, or work against it, by embracing art that apparently had all its attributes on the surface.

Svetlana Boym would likely characterize this art trend as a part of pop nostalgia, as opposed to reflective nostalgia, exemplified by the distinction between the nostalgic emotions of war buffs and war veterans, between fantasy reenactment and actual experience. In her mention of American films and pop nostalgia, Boym aligns with the postmodern critique of popular nostalgia: as base and vapid. While Boym understands its value, she attaches pop nostalgia to a specifically American collective trend toward a more assured national identity. These films are reassuring about national identity because they celebrate and reaffirm the conditions of morality and safety in national life. Boym's analysis of *Jurassic Park* (1993) as the American pop nostalgia text *par excellence*, a "techno-fairy tale," argues that the film's nostalgia does not long for the past, but for the pleasurable, present-tense experience of viewing the film. In this sense, nostalgic discourse does not "return" to anything, but exists in the "present tense" diegesis of a film text. The "Jurassic" dinosaurs are not "returned to," but brought forward, into a future that does not exist except as a filmic world. As pop nostalgia, the film does not travel back to the

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Jurassic period; it visits prehistoric myth within the realm of special effects, CGI and visual spectacle.

While Boym differentiates between pop nostalgia and more "reflective" forms, I think that the two have more similarities than she accounts for. Their main difference is that while nostalgia requires a desired "object" that is lost, usually some form of home, in pop nostalgia, this desire object can usually be restored and become "un"-lost, offering the audience pleasurable reassurances. The act of watching facilitates nostalgic thinking in the audience through the aesthetics, formal and industrial, kitsch and commercial, of the blockbuster event film (33, 35). The audience engages with the spectacular surface of the pop text, which is nonetheless a zone with a complex structure, though it seems rote and easy.

Boym's concept aligns with Solomon's notions about the easy looking practices in 1990s reception. Solomon, writes about bad art, "it quickly absorbs the inventions of high culture . . ., of kitsch, . . . reproduces the effects of art and stays away from exploring the mechanisms of critical consciousness" (39). However, the mechanisms of critical consciousness always attach to looking practices, and it is my argument that these mechanisms persist in Spielberg and Rockwell works which both disguise as and are *mistaken for* kitsch. It seems rather, these films are mistaken as banal, just as Rockwell (and his cultural influence) was ignored for most of the last century. Nostalgia and its accompanying "sentimentality" have been too often mistaken for vapidity that ignores cultural influence and also their complex technical and textual mechanisms for producing meaning. Soloman, Boym and other cultural critics, in line with Frederic Jameson, will attest that such texts are "postmodern," kitsch, and devoid of critical value. Some would claim that a culture that adores Spielberg is moved by "the yearning for a safe past." However, there is also danger in the too easy dismissal of "yearning" and its mechanism of constructing

meaning. Pop nostalgia seems simple and confuses its veneer of simplicity with the childlike. As this Chapter argues, the "childlike" is actually an intricate construction. Spielberg films employ significant complexity in their creation of national safety—often through "Rockwellian" locales of boyish innocence and decency.

Eric J. Segal argues that Rockwell's works were integral in fashioning American masculinity beginning "around the moment when the United States conscripted its first recruits to World War I" (633). This recruitment occurred shortly after the formation of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) in 1910. The BSA was founded as an antidote for two cultural trends: the lack of "frontier" in modern, industrial life, and the notion that women had too much influence over boy's development due to fathers' work outside the home. With Rockwell as the principal artist for the BSA, his version of the ideal Boy Scout appeared on handbook covers, recruitment posters and yearly calendars beginning in 1918, imprinting the Boy Scout brand with the romance of military service and the imagery of idealized boyhood.[48] For Segal, part of this imprint occurred through what he calls a *sartorial masculinity*, wherein manly outfits fashion the corporeal meanings of the body beneath with gendered codes. The BSA's use of military-inspired uniforms and its adoption of a badge and patch system, mimic both the martial uniform and the rank system of earning stripes, medals, etc in the American military. However, Boy Scouts are strictly a civilian group engaging in activities that are intended to foster camaraderie and build character through a series of rituals, songs, and games that take place in the outdoors. The BSA's focus is on "managing" boyhood through discipline and character training with an emphasis on citizenship, leadership and *morality*. Moral health was assumed to be tied to physical health, so that exercise, strength and proper clothing, signified a moral fitness and

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[48] For a gallery of Rockwell images related to the Boy Scouts see, www.ogdenj.com/scout/pages/rockwell.htm

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uniformity. Segal attests that with the western frontier "gone" by the early 20th century, the BSA sought to replicate the American idea of expansion, discovery and outpost living. The BSA's focus on the outdoors aimed to recreate a purist "campground" outside the city and beyond the purview of modernity. Urban zones were fantasized as harboring the moral dangers associated with close quarters with women. Camping provided an escape from the increasingly busy and heavily populous public sphere.

This tendency to return to the frontier was nostalgic. In an annual report on the BSA, a leader wrote in 1914:

> The Wilderness is gone, the Buckskin Man is gone, the painted Indian has hit the trail over the Great Divide, the hardships and privations of pioneer life which did so much to develop sterling manhood are now but a legend in history, we must depend upon the Boy Scout Movement to produce the MEN of the future.[49]

Like many statements of American nostalgia the one issued above uses the fantasies of the past to construct the future. The BSA engaged in wilderness activities that were imitations of Daniel Boone style mythos in order to earn merit badges and masculine distinction. The case made above, contends that the enemy is gone along with the frontier; the "painted Indian" too, has departed. Nevertheless, the BSA simulates military units, fantasizing a sense of "danger" and the need for survival skills where none are necessary. While the movement's underlying agenda is likely military recruitment to the U.S. Army or the National Guard, this was not part of the overtly expressed philosophy of the group. Many parents, especially of African-American BSA

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[49] Quoted in Segal: Daniel Carter Beard, BSA fourth annual report, *Scouting* I, 1914.

groups avoided their sons' participation due to the suspicion that it was in preparation for later service in the army.[50]

African-American Boy Scout troops, started contemporaneously, but met with instant opposition so the number of troops remained small and grew at a far lesser rate throughout the century. In 1927, the "Inter-racial Committee" was established to begin an outreach program amongst troops that combined "racial minorities with rural, poor, and handicapped boys," keeping separate boys who were socially undesirable through implemented categories such as "Feeble-minded." Black scouts were often categorized with white scouts who actually were mentally disabled (though the means of this assessment are dubious). Poor, rural and minority troops were often given sub-par resources and denied uniforms.[51] The BSA engaged in intensive segregation until after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, though Southern groups were not integrated until the mid-seventies. David Macleod's academic history of the BSA, *Building Character in the American Boy*, asserts that the organization was predominantly "middle-class" and helped to organize class distinction during the 20th century, when blue collar citizens could *rise* because of the value of industrial skills and the display of distinctive *character*.

The BSA's focus on "character building" linked this trait or moral condition to class, while effectively making it a possibility mainly for white boys (14). It seems clear, that the BSA's character building during the pre-Civil Rights era, overtly made race and gender bias an integral part of moral codes. Jay Mechling's insider study (in defense) of the BSA describes overtly misogynistic camp rituals that base in psychological need to separate from mothers.[52] Since the 1970s, the BSA displays overt homophobia and misogyny (they still restrict admission

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[50] http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/2781/The_Black_Boy_Scout_a_history
[51] Ibid.
[52] Mechling describes a "poison pit" across which the boys have a tug of war. The pit is a watermelon filled with urine which Mechling describes as representative of a "vagina."

of gi rls a nd ga ys).[53] His de scriptions of ca mpground antics t hat revel i n those f ears, are dismissed in a "boys will be boys" mode. Though there are no longer formal racial restrictions, since t roops ar e orga nized by neighborhood, " naturalized" s egregation oc curs.[54] Mechling argues, "the national office has never shaken off the symbolic demography of the 1950s," in part, guided by the visual imagery of Rockwell (14).[55] While there were complicated cultural shifts in the BSA t hroughout i ts first c entury, i t ha s m aintained c onnections be tween morality, na tion, militarism and religion, collapsing moral codes with doctrines such as pledging allegiance to the flag "under G od." A s Macleod s uggests, t he BSA maintains a 1950s s ocial s ensibility that i s nostalgic, and which locates sound character with a sound nation, and displays these ideologies in Rockwell's iconic imagery of the white, middle class American boy.

Rockwell's *Mighty Proud* visually configures the importance of uniform in constructing boyhood. As w ith most R ockwell's images, there is an implicit narrative within it. Rockwell's use of "standard" issue visual icons casts the figures as familial (a mother, father and *only,* sons). The "mise-en-scène" appears as a typical middle class living room. The brown stairwell, a sliver in the ba ck upper r ight, makes visi ble a secon d story, securing the family's saf e middle cl ass status in a traditional home. In the narrative, a white family gathers around the middle son, while his mother a nd ol der brother *fashion* his uni form as he wears it. The older teen brother, on hi s knees, adjusts his brother's kerchief, while the mother sews an arm badge. The father looks down on the middle boy, while the youngest brother looks up. In the foreground, the wrinkled, cast-off, Cub Scout uniform lies next to an open box. This detail provides the image's story: the middle

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[53] Spielberg has remained devoted to the BSA through serving on boards and financial contributions. However, he ended his official tenure due to their continued restriction of openly gay troops.
[54] See David Macleod, "Review: On My Honor: Boy Scouts and the Making of American Youth." *Journal of Social History* 36.4 (2003) 1065-7.
[55] Ibid.

brother has graduated to the next rank, and his ascension is marked through sartorial details as he leaves the previous uniform for the new one that imitates an adult soldier's uniform in style and material, replacing the blue of police wear with khaki. The mother wears sensible shoes, a modest house dress, and her sewing kit, proof of "women's work," sits on her lap. The father's newspaper and shirt and tie (indicative of a white collar job), visually render the time: early evening, after work, sans jacket, and with the leisurely prop of the *evening* paper. Rockwell arranges the figures so that the boy is the center of the domestic technicolored universe. Importantly in *Mighty Proud*, boyhood is represented by what appear to be three brothers, but these figures also exist as representations of the stages of boyhood that lead to adulthood. The teen and the post-toddler (for lack of a better term) are tangential, less important ages than the fully-grown "boy." The post-toddler visually connects to the mother figure, their heads touch and their hair color affixes them, so that the smallest boy seems still attached to mother and represents that kind of Freudian angle and its problem (the need for separation). The teen kneels, making him shorter than the middle child, and therefore, securing his rank as lower. Though he has clearly advanced up the chain of command, his kneeling position places him, for this family "ceremony," as subservient to the glory of the middle child. Though the teen stage might logically be more desirable, this image arrests masculine ideality within boyhood, at a cusp before puberty. Rockwell's composition makes explicit the hierarchal roles of the family, with the father in the upper left, in a line going diagonal to the post-toddler—the only figure below the mother and as he is still attached, the two conjoined represent the lowest rank in the frame and familial structure.

Most explicit in the image is the centrality of the boy as the idealized hub and heart of the family, garnering everyone's attention, and per the title, their pride. In this sense, the painting

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fantasizes the role of the boy child, its centrality and its importance. Rockwell's composition also encourages identification with the center figure, with the overly bright hues of his uniform and sheepish expression. The ideal boy is always on the cusp of manhood, but has not yet entered puberty or any development that separates him from childhood.

Mighty Proud was painted during the cultural moment of post-WWII "ephebiphobia," the fear of teenagers. This fear was celebrated by Hollywood in a series of films portraying the "juvenile delinquent" in "rock fables" and "gang dramas" (Shary 29). Though this trend was credited with influencing the "juvenilization" of Hollywood cinema, the Rockwell image portrays an alternate vision of male youth. Both the teen and the boy appear as regulators of delinquent threat, ideal patrollers of criminality or wayward behavior. By emphasizing the boy, instead of the older teen, the image enforces control over the potential menace of the teen years. Rockwell's many BSA illustrations fantasize the physical and psychological cusp between boy and teen and its significance. Importantly, it occurs before the "taint" or threat of sexual desire, of complicated reasoning, or of adult understanding about the relationships between power structures in institutions and ideology. Prime boyhood stops time after separation from the mother, but before re-attachment to another female force: wife, girlfriend, or sexual desire for, or interest in, a female. Ideal boyhood represents a position of self-interest, narcissism, and solipsism, as seen in Rockwell's vision of the boy as the center of the domestic universe. Why should such a position (one without much agency or developed intellect) become the locale for the entwined projections of militarism, nation, Christianity and morality? And why should it be a nostalgic locale for adult rhapsodies about an idealized past, the point before ascent into knowledge and its accompanying loss of "innocence"? Innocence, the prima facie trait of all

children, usually implies purity and simplicity, but it also carries the other meaning: guiltless and blameless. This aspect may be one facet of the fantasy of boyhood in nostalgia—longing for the position before responsibility that accompanies knowledge and critical reasoning.

Ron English's *Color Corrected* parodies Rockwell's *Mighty Proud*, using its narrative, a boy's transition from Cub to Boy Scout, while questioning Rockwell's use of default whiteness by making the central boy, black. In addition, to "correcting" the color, English makes the encircling family figures more tangential by de-saturating their color, hyperreal in Rockwell's version, but bleached to sepia in the latter painting which calls attention to their unfinished, sketched look. In English's version, the family appears unfinished, cartoon-like and the father is depicted harshly, as sneering rather than emitting pride. At the same time, these techniques that fade the family, heighten the centrality of the black boy and the vibrant color of the uniform he wears. Another significant change is in the countenance of the boy figure in the latter painting: he gazes to his side, toward the viewer, rather than straight ahead as in Rockwell's version. Rockwell's figures often appear in profile gazing to the left of the frame toward an idealized but unknown force: pride, morality, ultimate nation, etc. In English's version, the boy looks to the viewer and his expression suggests vacancy or melancholy so that he seems caught in the grips of the figures surrounding him, rather than esteemed by them as in the Rockwell painting. The "correction" changes the status of boyhood from beatific to entrapped.

English seems to be revising *Mighty Proud,* as an addition to Rockwell's later civil rights images. Rockwell's scenes of exclusive whiteness pre-1963, were later "corrected" with images depicting the "other" America in such works as *The Problem We All Live With* (1964), *Negro in the Suburbs* (1967) and *Southern Justice* (1963). Each of these works depict a narrative story about the entrance of a black figure into a white world, evidenced most explicitly in *The Problem*

We All Live With, where a young black girl, likely based on Ruby Bridges, is escorted to school by four men who are cropped out of the frame at the shoulders. A racist epithet (the N word) is scrawled across the wall they walk along, and a tomato, casting a blood-like splatter, has been thrown against the wall, presumably at the girl. Rockwell's title betrays a perhaps unintentional ambiguity. Racist viewers of the image could easily take the young girl to be the "problem," as there are multiple problems depicted in the image that we "all" live with in vastly different ways. Each of Rockwell's civil rights works have ambiguous themes, especially *Southern Justice* which depicts the Mississippi murders of civil rights workers Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and James Cheney. Goodman and Schwerner were white Jewish organizers and Cheney was a black activist. The KKK beat Cheney, and then shot all of them. Rockwell's depiction attempts to portray the horror, rage and sorrow, but his rendering is problematic. In the painting, one white man lay dead or dying in a brown wasteland. Centrally, another white man stands and bravely faces the dark, armed figures shown by the shadows they cast on the ground from beyond the frame. This white man has a shaft of white light on his resolute face, and an expression of bravery and fortitude. He seems to be lifting the black man who is on his knees, bloody and suffering. His face is pressed against the white man's chest. Clearly, Rockwell had good intentions, and *Southern Justice* was painted and published in the same year as the murders. However, it depicts a dying black man in despair on his knees, while a white man faces certain death with grit and impeccable posture. The aesthetic is expressionistic and hyperreal, and it renders a scene of unimaginable violence, through racial codes that depict the conventional hierarchy.

English's *Color Corrected,* seems to "play" with the idea of inserting blackness into Rockwell's previously all-white scenarios, and minimally, this move betrays its own

awkwardness and ambiguity. Rather than seeking to judge Rockwell, English engages with nostalgia by going back to the 1958 scene and inserting a black child into the domestic location. In his composition, this schematic seems to fall apart, the family fades, the child is entrapped, and the composition seems to make a mockery of black despair. The boy's face resembles the kitsch cliché of sad clown paintings which English is also known to imitate. In this sense, representing blackness seems beyond the purview of possibility in Rockwell scenes— unrepresentable, except as imitation of despair, an imitation of the past that can never be revised satisfactorily. The image indicates a visual puzzle that usually poses a question to young children: "which thing does not belong?"

English gained critical notoriety in the 1990s as part of the "bad" art scene through his revised renditions of popular icons, imitations of bad art and its subjects, and in paintings that fuse classic high art with pop icons such as Manet's *Dejeuner Sur L'herbe,* reproduced with the heads of Charlie Brown and company on the original figures. Art critic Carlo McCormick attests that depictions of childhood and images of childhood topics haunt English's work. One series of paintings depicts the 1970s glam rock band KISS as children; another reinterprets sad clown iconography as children; and both series give children the accoutrements of adult vices such as poker cards, cigarettes and liquor. The figure of the child disrupts the normalcy of the kitsch meaning through the collision between innocence and vice. English's subjects include the constant use of Mickey Mouse in paintings depicting Marilyn Monroe and Malcolm X. McCormick reads English's use of "kiddy fare" as an aggressive reminder that the public sphere is populated by infantile tropes and figures. More complex than a mere dumbing down, English's work inverts "puerile fascinations" and undresses their "frenetic tyranny." While Rockwell celebrates the delights of boyhood innocence, English's work depicts youthful innocence

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disjunctively, arresting the possibility of easy delight. His depictions of Disney characters and Teletubbies make apparent the cultural consumer violence inherent in representations of innocence, a violence that can only be recognized by an adult perspective and visual knowledge. McCormick suggests that English's work points out the weird, "mutant" quality of the fantasy of the public sphere. English reworks the essence of easy, facile or pleasant looking. Gazing *as* a child or feeling nostalgic for the delightful reception of Disney imagery is obstructed by the dissonance between adult critical knowledge (Marilyn's topless sexuality) and innocent reception (a smiling Mickey Mouse). The two fuse in several English paintings where Mickey's face appears as Marilyn's nude breasts, his nose becoming a nipple.

English's work points out the inherent fraud and disabling dynamic of pop nostalgia. English's bad art engages in nostalgia, but disallows the return to a safe past, instead pointing out its awkward and bizarre visuality. In contrast, Rockwell's work allows for pleasurable consumption, hiding the problems of consuming boyhood. The juxtaposition between *Mighty Proud* and *Color Corrected* suggests that visual nostalgia disables the white hierarchy of 1950s morality and more importantly, makes recognizable the problems of representing black despair and its incompatibility with nostalgic representations. Contextual knowledge of racist history makes this compatibility impossible so that revisions like English's become glaring portraits of the perils of representing blackness within white hierarchical image systems. *Mighty Proud*, even within its contemporary moment in 1958, was still a nostalgic text because it seized on boyhood and any viewing adult would have been forced into its nostalgic depiction of this state. Despite the popularity of 1950s youth culture, teenagers were too old. Delinquents were, in their own way, critics of hegemony and conventional codes. The nostalgic focus on the boy, moved to a time prior, not only chronologically, but also psychologically and intellectually. The child

represents guilt-free looking, a position truly relieved from critical consciousness. Perhaps a child's viewpoint is the only one truly exempt from nostalgic longing and the only one capable of the pleasures of "innocent" viewing. In this sense, pop nostalgia works cannot fully disable critical spectatorship—not if they are seen by adults.

4.1.1 The Blockbuster and Nostalgic Meaning:The Spielberg text and "Adult" Visions of Boyhood

The Spielberg aesthetic has often been described as "Rockwellian" because of its emblematic use of sentimental iconography to signify a moral reverence for American life—a reverence apparently inspired his Boy Scout experience during childhood. His own troop had a copy of Rockwell's *Spirit of America* (1929), and that painting was the first acquisition in Spielberg's now preeminent collection. The following chapter takes as its interest, representations of masculinity and race, through the lens of "boyhood" in Spielberg texts. Simply because this analysis takes as its subject the work of Steven Spielberg, it is necessarily an auteurist pursuit. While Spielberg's biography, his statements of intent, and the identifiable motifs and thematic obsessions in his films, provide crucial illuminations on the subject of boyhood, I prefer to read these aspects as textual attributes of a constructed celebrity figure, and not as character assessments, or "true" details about the director's life and mind. My analysis of various biographical materials presents these details as significant views into the textual array that surrounds the Spielberg narrative in culture—one that informs his films and acts as their extra-diegetic backdrop. What does the fantasy of childhood, and boyhood specifically, illuminate about popular representations in the American public sphere? What is the cultural force of Spielberg films that openly engage with representations of boyhood—especially in films that do

not explicitly feature children and are not exclusively for child audiences? This chapter has three

sections: the first establishes the dimensions of Spielberg as an auteur-star through an analysis of

the repetitive narratives that fashion his own "boyhood" text and its imprint in his films. The

second part examines the nostalgic function of Spielberg blockbusters and their uses of memory.

The third part reads *Amistad* (Spielberg, 1997) through the lens of "boyhood," analyzing its

effect in representations of race and history.

4.1.1.1 Part 1: The Auteur-star

Auteur theory examines the artistic expression and signature of a film's director. In

Andrew Sarris' early American formulation, auteurism develops through three areas: technical

competence, distinguishable personality, and ascertainable film meaning that will arise from the

tension between the director's signature and the film's subject or material (516).[56] Peter Wollen

revises these conditions to focus on the critic's "operation of decipherment," or his or her

unearthing of a series of motifs that run through a body of work and that can be interpreted

through semiotics and deconstruction (52). Sarris and Wollen theorize auteurism before the age

of the blockbuster, Spielberg's primary domain, and before recent conceptualizations that take

into account the changes in the media landscape since the birth of the New Hollywood, best

exemplified by the predominance of marketing objectives over production. Timothy Corrigan

explains that "the artistic expression of contemporary directors is fully bound up with the

celebrity industry of Hollywood," a system in which Spielberg is both participant and partial

constructor (39). The reinvigoration of auteurism in Contemporary Hollywood has aligned with

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[56] Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962" p. 516. Earlier notions on auteurism stem from Francois
Truffaut's notion of a director's "signature" in *Cahiers du Cinema*, 1954. The signature is similar to Sarris's notion
of the director's "soul," and early theories were vague about exactly how to gauge the director's idiosyncratic
imprint (517).

the collapse of the studio system. Prior to the rise of the blockbuster, the studio's signature would brand a film and foster and satisfy audience expectation. Increasingly since the 1960s, a director's name (especially before the film's title in marketing materials) indicates a trademark: "a kind of brand-name vision whose aesthetic meanings and values have already been determined" (Corrigan 40). Corrigan argues that most versions of the auteur theory share the notion that a director's imprint is both ascertainable and organizational to meaning. Reception theories and Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" thesis render intentionality irrevelant. Film meaning is "completed" by the audience. Meaning springs from the attention they give the film text in a type of "pretend" mode in which the "author" does not exist. Auteur theory remedies this lack, but it offers its own method through which the audience can fantasize. The "principle of textual causality" between author and meaning makes their relationship inextricable (41). The auteur-star text gives the audience permission to wonder about and fantasize about the director's influence on meaning (41).

My understanding of Spielberg as auteur is informed by the work of Warren Buckland, Lester D. Friedman, and Andrew M. Gordon, who each offer new auteurist readings on Spielberg's cultural influence in their recent book-length meditations on his oeuvre.[57] The three argue from different vantage points that Spielberg's work not only deserves critical attention, but has been previously overlooked and too easily discounted in critical and scholarly considerations. They each spend time mounting a defense against the history of scathing commentary on Spielberg films, inspired by and since the profound success of *Jaws* (1975) and

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[57] See: Buckland, Warren. *Directed By Steven Spielberg: Poetics of the Contemporary Hollywood Blockbuster.* New York: Continuum, 2006; Friedman, Lester D. *Citizen Spielberg.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006; Gordon, Andrew M. *Empire of Dreams: The Science Fiction and Fantasy Films of Steven Spielberg.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008.

the accompanying narrative of its young, boyish director as a manipulative, commercial *wunderkind*. Spielberg's continuing box-office successes, peppered with a few economic and aesthetic failures, are one facet of the rampant cultural criticism against him and his ilk.[58] Another critical wing emphasizes the overt sentimentality and childlike vision portrayed in his films that revel in conservative ideology and the position of the white middle class masculine figure in familiar locations. Most academic commentaries on Spielberg begin with descriptions of Spielberg's enormous influence on the global visual stage, and argue that his vast popularity make critical studies necessary, despite the caveats about aesthetic unworthiness. Spielberg is described as a force who reshaped American movie-going practices and reinvented the film industry. Spielberg's films, especially those between 1975 and 1998, are positioned as responsible for making the lion's share of available revenues in the global cinema industry, in an age when popularity and worldwide accessibility are automatically suspect by critical theorists.

Jean-Luc Godard, an auteur theory darling, who remains a respectable scholarly topic, makes a point of lampooning Spielberg in his film *In Praise of Love* (2001), which critiques American cinema, and Spielberg specifically, as someone who purchases memory and experience, churning representation into commodity. And yet few, if any, films (people actually see) exist beyond the purview of commercialism or outside the scope of "commodified" experience and memory. Godard et al would argue that Spielberg and his historical "social conscious" films, exemplified by the popularity of *Schindler's List* (1993), do not exhibit the ethical wherewithal to be responsible arbiters of memory, history and experience—despite their being chock full of good intentions, values and morality.

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[58] Wheeler Winston Dixon credits Spielberg with causing "the death of cinema" and J. Hoberman argues that he has caused a "Spielbergization" of culture: that is, its artistic demise.

Buckland, Friedman, and Gordon defend Spielberg's formal style, his influence on audiences, and his impact on culture, noting that immense popularity need not be equivalent to fluff. Gordon encapsulates the critical divisions about Spielberg's films as follows: "critics see his work as shallow, excessive, childish, manipulative kitsch; on the other hand, there are those who view it instead as visually powerful, sweeping, childlike in a positive sense and often moving" (4). *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *E.T.* (1981) each produce iconic and affective images of children: the small boy standing in the glowing orange doorway before alien abduction in the former, and in the latter, young Elliot's wide-eyed gaze at E.T.'s glowing finger tip. Most criticism takes issue with the notion of the "child" in his work, finding this figure as either positive and uplifting or negative and manipulative. In cahoots with the specter of the child in his films, Spielberg is widely credited as the orchestrator of the "infantilization" of contemporary films, coding them with a mentality that hinders critical thought, exemplified in the rampant silliness of *1941* (1979) or *Hook* (1991). And yet, he has had a palpable influence on the visual images and cultural codes that shape the national consciousness of America, and beginning with *Jaws* (1975), "the combined products of Spielberg's imagination represent a ubiquitous cultural force whose influence extends far beyond the confining screens of local multiplexes" (Friedman, 2000, viii).

The connections between Spielberg's imagination and the national imagination are crucial to unpack, and mark a cultural operation that necessarily extends beyond value judgments, except to say that Spielberg films mark exceptionally good "bad" art. Buckland's book, on the "poetics" of blockbuster style proves through multiple shot breakdowns the virtuosity of Spielberg's technical and aesthetic eye. But Spielberg's aesthetic sensibility is always part and parcel of the industrial and economic structure of contemporary Hollywood.

Buckland explains: "Spielberg is an auteur because he occupies key positions in the industry (producer, director, studio co-owner, franchise licensee); he is therefore attempting to vertically reintegrate the stages of filmmaking" under the control of creative management (15). Buckland explains how Spielberg's studio, Dreamworks, attaches to his brand name codes of inspiration, trustworthiness, fulfilled expectations and emotional contentment—traits exemplified in the visual markers in the studio's logo—a boy fishing for dreams (although not in shark-infested waters) (22). Friedman notes that Spielberg's signature sentimentality is integral to his popularity. The easily recognizable melodramatic, emotional shifts in his films signal a collective, uniform feeling on the part of audiences that combines with the inspiring trust that Buckland theorizes (2006, 64).

Spielberg is often described in terms more befitting a celebrity than a mere auteur. Corrigan formulates the useful conjunction of an "auteur-star" "who can potentially carry or redeem any sort of textual material, often to the extent of making us forget that material through the marvel of its agency" (43). Corrigan primarily analyzes the cases of Quentin Tarantino and Frances Ford Coppola, but his notions are applicable to Spielberg who can "handle" any material and does work in multiple media forms as mentioned above, and in multiple visual genres. Corrigan notes that auteur-stars are pre-understood (based on their previous work), known without being seen. Their signature allows a pre-sold audience, and also a pre-condition in their spectatorship, similar to Buckland's ideas on brand expectations. Familiarity with an auteur-star allows the audience the "knowledge" of having "seen" a film without having seen it.[59]

The auteur-star, and his or her textual narrative, collapses the distinction between public and private space. The conjoined texts of auteur-star and film, form a combination text that

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[59] I happen to feel this way about *Spiderman* 2 and 3 because I sat through the first installment.

represents the private realm of meaning and the intimate knowledge of the auteur-star's signature. The dynamics of spectatorship enable a slippage between an auteur's life and texts. Audiences thrust popular thought onto the imagined "intimacy" of the text, enforcing their "public" viewpoint onto the "private" life of the auteur-star. Corrigan cites Dudley Andrew who calls this combined presence or contract between director and spectator across the text a "fourth dimension" comprised of the presence of idiosyncratic directorial creativity and its inevitable translation by spectators fluent in the textual clutter of the public sphere (59). This clutter takes shape in fan magazines, award show appearances and any public details that contribute to a fantasized narrative about the director. Corrigan wants this fourth dimension to address both space (the collapse of public and private) and also time. Via Andrew, he argues that the auteur-star's signature, his essence, always gives the film text a temporality, an identifiable durational stamp that indicates the director's presence—almost like a textual postmark, a sign that indicates actual presence. Though a different medium, this postmark operates similar to Van Gogh's or DaVinci's actual signature on a painting—a sign that appears to suture temporal chasms. In a fetishistic sense, memorabilia functions this way: autographs, props, collectibles are imagined to carry a trace of the "essence" of the star the fan tries to touch across space and time. In Corrigan's argument, this trace can travel within the film. The film as object does not carry the trace—films exist in immeasurable copies and their nature is to repeat, to replay in ways that are incalculable. A film can open on 2,700 screens, but that number does not begin to count the ways, forms and times it will be screened and seen. With its object nature obliterated in limitless, uncountable repetition, this postmark, the director's essence, lives fleetingly within the imagined space of the meta-diegetic.

In the case of Spielberg, that postmark operates in a nostalgic way; in part, Spielberg's auteurist signature, analyzed below, depends upon a nostalgic use of time and space. The sense of nostalgia conforms to Boym's theory of the nostalgic spatiotemporal offshoot that avoids progressive conventional time and goes forward and backward simultaneously. Filmic space can easily render this type of zone—and the imagined auteurist imprint aids in fantasizing malleable conceptions of time. Finally, Corrigan's views make possible insights concerning the commercial conditions of Spielberg's auteurism. Culture's textual clutter layers the auteur-star's texts with identifiable traces and meta-textual references. Authorship communicates "as figures [signs] within the commerce of the image." Corrigan explains, "for viewers, this should mean the pleasure of engaging and adopting one more image of, in, and around a movie" (60). Viewer recognition of these signatures causes a critical consciousness, however suspect. Indeed, even in imagined conditions of viewing a Spielberg film unknowingly, a standard American will likely recognize the Spielberg imprint.

Each of his popular films has its own cultural imprint, and *Jaws* made popular a Spielberg style that relies on "visual" storytelling and the creation of affect, though it is considered a thriller and not "sentimental."[60] While "visuality" is a basic facet of cinema in general, with *Jaws*, Spielberg interwove this technique with audience "training" on how to read imagery. For instance, in the sequence when Chief Brody (Roy Scheider) studies shark history by reading books, the film presents learning (acquiring information and interpreting it) as a visual experience. In order to recreate the experience of *reading*, the sequence sets up the relationship between images and affect, showing how images create response. The sequence

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[60] This style was already present in *Duel* (1971), a made-for-television film that ended up with a small theatrical release. The film has very little dialogue and plays more like a silent action film; its story of an "angry" truck chasing a beleaguered car driver plays out almost entirely through stylized "psychological" images.

shows Brady at a desk with a stack of books and one open before him. The shot cuts to an extreme close-up of the book's page and slowly pans across it. The image depicts a shark drawing with a series of lines coursing through its body, labeled its "sensory system." As the shot pans across the shark, we see the lines labeled, in part as "erratic" and "smooth"—though it moves too fast to adequately read all of the words. The image conveys the message instead. The erratic impulse line leads across the page to the second image, a wiggling smaller fish labeled as in "distress." Brody's wife, Ellen (Lorraine Gary) approaches and they both startle—a demonstration of how the "sensory system" operates, but the scene draws the lesson out further. Brody notices his son playing outside in a boat roped to their pier. He frantically calls for the boy to get out of the boat, but Ellen encourages Brody to relax. Brody says that he at least wants his son "to read the boating regulations . . . the rules." However, then Ellen glances down at a page in the book. The shot cuts to an illustrated image of sailors in distress before panning lower to the cause: a shark biting through the boat. Ellen then screams for her son to get out of his boat, nullifying the need for reading any regulations or rules. This kind of knowledge (written) is extraneous to visual language which is immediate and iconic. This "shark lesson" scene educates the audience; it trains viewers to recognize what they see, and convert that thought to feeling, in this case, distress.

 Jaws uses this sensory image system throughout, consistently moving from moments of calm to moments of distress, using the shock of the horror genre to create affect in the audience. But the film's training also relies on the audience's memory to continue creating distressing affect throughout the film. Certainly the famous opening sequence of the woman being violently dragged across the surface of the water and then yanked beneath, in tandem with brief images and descriptions of her corpse, signals the audience to feel anxiety about the surface of the water,

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and what lies beneath it. But *Jaws* also employs another language system to reinforce this anxious affect—a motif. While the film repeats its mode of short, close-up insert shots of images in books (shark jaws, teeth marks on bodies, various horrid injuries) the film does not solely rely on the shark images to achieve an anxious feeling in the audience. In addition, it relies on the color yellow to signal emergency, stress, fear and "shark."[61]

The motif of the color yellow first appears in the scene when "the Kintner boy" is eaten. The scene does not show the shark, and instead relies on multiple uses of the color yellow across the beach's mise-en-scène to indicate danger. Each instance of yellow causes anxiety in Brody as he scans the environment for the shark. Brody's stress then signals the audience that they should feel stress. Such a dialectic is in fact displayed openly in a later scene when Brody's youngest son apes his father's every expression as they sit at the dinner table. Brody's point of view comes to stand in for the audiences. We see a yellow hat on the Kintner boy's mother, a yellow shirt on a man whose dog disappears, a yellow towel and various splotches of yellow worn by the tourists. In one sequence, the camera moves closer and closer to Brody as he sits and patrols the beach by watching; the scene employs a wipe that drags the blurred color of yellow across the frame. Yellow signals both anxiety and *looking* for its cause. Ultimately, the crucial sign that the audience is being trained to notice is the yellow raft the Kintner boy has dragged across the sand and into the water at the scene's beginning. After he disappears (shots of his kicking legs, splashing body and then blood across the surface of the water), the half-eaten and deflated yellow raft washes to the shore, the final image in the scene.

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[61] This system may arise in part because during production the shark animatron was notoriously awful-looking and glitchy. Because its look detracted from, rather than aided the creation of fear, *Jaws* relies on a more classical film style that creates tension and a sense of the "material" without actually showing anything.

In the film's segment that takes place on the open water as Quint (Robert Shaw), Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss), and Brody hunt the shark, the film continues to employ the color yellow as the stand-in for both the monster and for the affect of distress. Yellow inflatable barrels attach to long ropes, harpooned to the creature, so that the yellow signs skate across the water, indicating the threat beneath. Ultimately, this kind of language system accomplishes two things. First, it trains the audience to toss aside the complex language system of the written word (as in the manual of rules and regulations). It encourages the quick and direct sensory system of reading signs, i.e. yellow = danger, and like the "impulse line" in Brody's book, the sign continues to the feeling of distress. Second, and more importantly, is the fact that in addition to simplification, the system encourages audiences to focus on the surface of things. Spielberg films are often mistaken for superficial, but their language system is usually quite complex in its creation of audience affect. *Jaws* caused a similar phenomenon to the fear of shower-taking after audience's watched Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). Audiences were reportedly fearful of entering the ocean beaches the summer *Jaws* premiered—or at least they flinched and yanked their feet and ankles up off the theater floor during screenings. As many theorists begin their arguments when the subject is Spielberg, his influence is vast, powerful, widespread and ideologically material. That is, it creates and maintains social experience. Pre-knowledge of auteurist tendencies is one of the ways that a present experience engages with layers of meaning. As Gordon argues, Spielberg films "have become part of the dream life of our nation" (10). Because many of the films, even the "realistic" ones are fantasies, an analysis of the components of Spielberg's auteur-star can be illuminative.

Lester D. Friedman and Brent Notbohm's *Steven Spielberg: Interviews*, is a collection of the most significant Spielberg journalism between 1974 and 1999, and it provides a valuable

textual location for gleaning aspects of his meta-textual signature. Published together, the interviews illuminate motifs, obsessions, repetitions, and different versions of anecdotes that construct the celebrity of Spielberg as a public figure. Friedman and Notbohm indicate that the interviews are not edited in order to reveal the repetitions, "marks of the director's private obsessions" (xiv). Friedman and Notbohm intend their collection as a scholarly resource that has sifted through multifarious print media and chosen the most significant and illuminative works.

Many biographers, reviewers and scholars remark on Spielberg's relationship to "boyhood," "the child," "infantilization," "the orphan," and dreams, fantasies, and an array of themes associated with childhood. Critics usually see the child motif in Spielberg's films as directly related to not only Spielberg's own biography, but to his adult claims about being a "child" and actively living the life of one. Notable manifestations of these themes emerge in relation to Spielberg's biographical childhood details, concerning his Boy Scout experiences, a Norman Rockwell fixation, and his parent's divorce, which was apparently devastating. The specter of a "broken home" is often theorized as haunting such films as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *E.T.*, *A.I.* (2001), *War of the Worlds* (2005), and many others. This fixation is attributed to the pain of Spielberg's own broken home. Spielberg states, "My parents got a divorce when I was 14, 15. The whole thing about separation is something that runs very deep in anyone exposed to divorce, especially when you're cognizant of what it means to not have a routine—no matter how stressful or antagonistic that routine may have been . . . all of us are suffering the repercussions of a divorce that had to happen."[62] Strangely, in timelines produced by Friedman and Notbohm and biographers Kathi Jackson and Joseph McBride, Spielberg's parents separated and divorced when Spielberg was 20 and no longer living at home. This

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[62] As quoted in Myra Forsberg, 129, 1988.

inconsistency is important not as a fact-checking error, but in how Spielberg's rendition above converts the experience from that of a man, to that of a teen—moving the incident back toward childhood and into the family home. The inconsistencies in the various textual versions of Spielberg's parents' divorce point to an imposed nostalgic text that "imagines" the occurrences around 1959 or 1960, a year after Spielberg's "first film" instead of six or seven years later when Spielberg was in college in California away from the "routine" mentioned above. Whatever actually happened is less important than its impact on Spielberg's signature textual imprint—one that focuses on divorce, orphans, broken homes and lost fathers. Another undeniable narrative thread running through the popular Spielberg narrative concerns the "origins" of Spielberg's filmmaking—located at variant moments and attached to various films, but repeatedly linked to his Boy Scout experience.

These repeated details have the collective effect of any motif: they enable arguments about textual meaning related to his films and his auteur-star text. Beginning in 1978, Spielberg interviews begin constructing his "Boy Scout" persona. This persona actively engages in boyhood memories and constructs a text of boyishness, "innocence" and its moral guides. In three interviews prior to 1978, relating to *Jaws, Sugarland Express* (1974) and Spielberg's studio work in television, the focus is on formal technique, production details and aesthetic influences. There are a few biographical details, but hardly any relating to a moral code, save for one about Spielberg's decision to remove the sex from the original *Jaws* script. This decision was practical, rather than moral. In the screenplay, Hooper has an affair with Brody's wife. Spielberg explained there was not enough time for both Hooper's marine biology and a subplot of seduction. Of course, editing out this detail (a major plot point in the novel) changes the masculinity dynamics significantly. Brody is affectionate with his wife (though not sexual), because shark fighting

leaves no time for erotic desire. Even the young man in the famous opening (conventionally read as very drunk) forgoes a sexual encounter and a skinny dip, in favor of a nap on the shore—and thus, avoids a shark bite himself. Friedman calls this tendency, not anti-feminist, but simply juvenile, representing Spielberg's "inability to fashion a mature relationship between a man and a woman" (86).

By 1978, Spielberg's personal narrative and its more overt motifs move, with his increasing stardom, away from industrial and aesthetic concerns, more toward biography and its themes. In response to a journalist's query about the stressful "responsibility" of directing *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* that left the director with severely bitten fingernails, Spielberg deflects the notion of stress, especially brought on by responsibility, commenting that he has bitten his nails since age four. He claims it as his *only* vice: "I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't take drugs" (Tuchman 53).

Before 1978 and the critical and cultural success of *Close Encounters*, Spielberg describes his "first" film as an unnamed short (*Amblin'*, 1968) that got him enough notice to secure a studio job. Later, a Boy Scout story emerges as the revision of his "first film" anecdote and is revised throughout the years gaining momentum as personal legend. In 1978, Spielberg describes this first film, a three minute Western, as a production made to earn a BSA merit badge. The film, and especially its screening, becomes the "raw beginning" of his film career. Every film in Spielberg's oeuvre, beginning with *Jaws* and going to *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) exhibits a fixation with either boyhood, WWII or both. The two exceptions are his black "social conscious" films, *The Color Purple* (1985) and *Amistad*. In 1980, in an interview about *1941*, he provides details about his "child-like state" as a director, and his large scale "plays," admitting

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he is not grown up, nor ever will be. He veers away from serious conversations about industrial, formal and aesthetic aspects of filmmaking, describing it instead as "play."

In fact, in his textual narrative, Spielberg's first "social problem" film, *The Color Purple*, aligns with a rite of passage—fatherhood. Filming young Celie's (Desreta Jackson) labor was literally simultaneous with the birth of his first son, Max. This detail imagines an alignment between textual imprints of the auteur-star and the events and details in his own narrative. Spielberg designs his life-narrative as one that constantly revels in or stays present in childhood, in spite of adult occasions like marriage, childbirth, divorce, more kids, running a company, working, and turning 40, which he describes as like "the death of innocence, [but] not an attenuation of childhood, which by my own admission and everybody's admission is what my life has been."[63] On *Empire of the Sun* (1987), a film that focuses on a 13 year old boy, Jim (Christian Bale), "home alone" in war-torn Shanghai in 1941, Spielberg comments that the boy represents "the growing pains of the 20th century"(137). Spielberg makes time anthropomorphic and conceives of it as a young lad separated from his parents and experiencing adventures in the face of the historical atrocities of WWII. Young Jim reads a vast explosive whiteness that lights up the sky as a dead woman's soul going to heaven, only to have his wonderment and faith smashed when he learns it was the Hiroshima bomb days later. In Spielberg films and interviews, boyhood operates as a metaphor and representational device, endlessly malleable and subject to revision. Childhood does not attenuate with knowledge and sight, it alters with it.

Despite trying, Jim is unable to maintain a sense of wonder and play amidst war zones. Yet, the film ends with optimism. This is made possible via the Norman Rockwell motif in the film. The film models an early shot on Rockwell's *Freedom from Fear* painting where a mother

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[63] Ibid, 127

and father tuck their children safely in bed, despite the bombing headline on the newspaper in the father's hand. Spielberg's tableau employs a visual citation that mimics the painting and he also uses an actual clipping of the original painting which Jim carries with him on his adventures, tacking it up next to his bed in internment camps and stowing it in a suitcase when he is on the go. When the suitcase finally becomes too heavy, Jim tosses it in a river, abandoning the optimism within. Jim reunites with his parents a changed boy, slowly able to recognize them. The film's final shot of Jim moves close in on his eyes, now hollow and red-rimmed suggesting the impact of all he has seen. However, the final shot of the film itself is of the suitcase, floating along the water, back toward the city, as if the optimism within cannot be tossed away. The boy can try to discard Rockwell and his optimistic iconography, but as if a magical suitcase, it winds its way back into the frame and narrative, an image more important than the boy's eyes. How does such an aesthetic and moral guide as this combine to figure boyhood as a valuable trace throughout Spielberg's oeuvre?

Remarks about Spielberg's personal obsession with Rockwell constantly haunt the details of his "first film" story, due to Rockwell's integral role in imaginations of the BSA. Each time the anecdote of Spielberg's first film is relayed, the story changes slightly. Spielberg's nostalgic act, conforms to Boym's notion of a reflective nostalgia that "lingers in ruins" and accepts the imperfections of memory. In a 1989 interview, Spielberg's Boy Scout experience reemerges and he mentions the enduring values and lingering impression it had on him, though he doesn't mention this as the time and location of his first film. In *Rolling Stone* in 1998, another version of this narrative unfolds: "For me, nothing's changed from the first day when I was a twelve years old and showed an 8 millimeter movie I had made to the Boy Scouts. The reaction the Boy Scout troop had and the feeling that it gave inside is no different than the feeling I have today

when an audience has the same reaction to something made by hundreds of people and for a lot of money" (Turan 222). Incidentally, in the McBride biography this screening takes place in 1958 when Spielberg would have been 13 or 14, not 12. This distinction only makes a difference because it situates the event on the precarious cusp between boyhood and puberty, not to imply there is a finite line, but Spielberg consistently makes himself younger than the temporal record suggests.

In the narrativized scenario, the mass audience is cast as a giant Boy Scout troop, with the same child-like vantage, able to be delighted by what is described as a *Great Train Robbery* knock-off that used ketchup as blood and was edited in camera. Jackson's 2007 biography (a series for high school student use), but written with Spielberg's participation, relays this anecdote, but names another short film as his first, shown publically before the Boy Scout premiere. The first film in the Jackson account, *The Last Train Wreck*, (Spielberg's first films ironically contain the world "last" in their titles), was filmed as a child's ingenious way to "keep" the train set his father threatened to take away. Jackson then recounts his *second* film, screened for the Boy Scouts (5).

McBride's 528 page, heavily detailed biography provides a comprehensive account of the minutiae of Spielberg's Boy Scout experience in Phoenix, Arizona as a member of "the Flaming Arrow Patrol of Ingleside's Troop 294" (77). In addition to copiously detailed anecdotes about the goings-on in this tribe, McBride's versions are supplemented by the adult recollections of other troop members. One account chronicles the relentless and cruel hazing of an "underling," a troop member who was "a little obese," but who had Spielberg's sympathy. During a camping trip, higher-ranking scouts exposed him beneath a flashlight's glare while heckling him in the dark as he was "taking a crap." To Spielberg's credit, the adult interviewee

recalls the tale because notably, Spielberg protested the treatment and was subsequently tortured himself "a little bit" (78). Another adult recollection recalls that the young Spielberg was a "good guy. He wasn't the kid we beat up or anything else." The tale above suggests the "anything else" could get humiliating and rather criminal. In spite of that assurance, another scout recalls sending Spielberg out into the dark forest alone to capture birds with a pillowcase, and as proof, the grown recollector "laughingly remembers" Spielberg making bird calls in the dark (78). Nevertheless, in 1989, Spielberg described his Boy Scout experience as follows: "I learned a lot of basic human values and American values" (Royal 139).

McBride seems to have the definitive tale about Spielberg's Boy Scout film, titled either *The Last Gun* or *The Last Gunfight* or *Gunsmog*, depending on the source. However, McBride tracked down a journal published in 1962 where Spielberg spoke of another "comedic project," then unfilmed, called *Gunsmog*, a "parodistic" title spoofing *Gunsmoke*. McBride "catches" Spielberg trying to name his "first" film *Gunsmog* and relays the mistake via asterisk (another example of the revisions of origins, a mark of restorative nostalgia, that consistently reinvents without reverence for fact or actuality). The details of *The Last Gun/Gunfight/Gunsmog* are described by interview with the adult lead actor who claims, "Steven's dad did most the filming, or all of the filming" as Steven was not old enough to handle the camera (83). This account begs the question, how old is old enough to handle a camera? In McBride's version of the tale, the scout audience loves the film, and responds with cheers, applause and laughter so that Spielberg is inspired to "please again" (83).

My point in mapping out the variant versions of Spielberg's "first film" is decidedly not to poke holes in the consistency in the narrative, but rather to illuminate the holes for what they portend for a nostalgic reading of the Spielberg celebrity profile—in its various manifestations

across multiple "definitive" texts. In Boym's theory, reflective nostalgia basks in the holes in memory that create opportunities for an invention. Boym writes that invented traditions (such as the idea of a definitive first where everything came together and marked the future path) "seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition that automatically implies continuity with the past" (42). The inconsistent facts are irrelevant, because the story implies a continuity, a cause and effect, and links these to the additional handles in the story: the values inherent in the Boy Scouts, the Boy Scouts as a positive formative location, the "innocence" of the audience, their ideality as a "market sample" or "preview audience" for future works. Obviously, the few anecdotes supplied by first hand informants deny the sequence of traits that Spielberg lists as defining a Boy Scout (the epigraph to this Chapter). After he lists them, he continues with: "Let's see . . . I'm trustworthy, I'm loyal, I'm sometimes helpful, I'm sometimes friendly, I'm always courteous, not always kind, not always obedient, not always cheerful, mostly thrifty as a producer, not brave at all, always clean, and *very* reverent" (Dubner 224).

Stephen Dubner in his "Steven the Good," published in the *New York Times Magazine* (1999) immediately links Spielberg's Boy Scout spiel to his current home's décor—walls covered in Rockwell paintings. (Other critics also point out the Rockwell prominence in his home and offices). In Dubner's article, both narrative forces (Boy Scouts and Rockwell) coalesce, though both are strong recurring themes throughout many separate articles and biographical anecdotes. Spielberg notes Rockwell's two significant aesthetic mannerisms: story-telling and American morality. Dubner immediately points out the parallels between Rockwell and Spielberg, and their peculiar form of American morality—a significant thematic beginning for an article published during Clinton's impeachment scandal when "morality" was getting noteworthy coverage in the public sphere.

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This article also relays the ambiguous depths of Spielberg's friendship with President Bill

Clinton and finishes with details on Spielberg's "forgiveness" of Clinton and personal hurt over

the Lewinsky affair (232). Dubner's article, published when Spielberg is 53, defines moral

boyhood against sexual corruption and seems to demand an exposure of Clinton's transgressions

when Spielberg remarks: "What hurt is that he didn't tell me." At this moment, Spielberg seems

to be aping the moral code of the nation, also "hurt" by Clinton's reticence on the details. At the

end of the article, Dubner relays Spielberg's retreat behind closed doors to take a conference call

with the sitting president—though he does not relay any specifics. It is notable that the Boy

Scout moral code and the Rockwell collection and ubiquity in Spielberg's surroundings becomes

most tightly narrativized during the impeachment scandal.[64] This article also makes explicit

details about Clinton that at least hint toward a more significant relationship between the two

men than in other accounts.[65] Why does such a detail become so "crucial" to the invented story

of the origins of Spielberg's influence and the guiding principle of his films? How does boyhood

coincide with the 1990s fixation on nostalgia?

The Boy Scout becomes a figural motif in the wholistic narrative of Spielberg's life, a

moral foil to the other details in interviews, press materials and Spielberg's statements such as: "I

dream for a living;" "[I'm] celebrat[ing] the boy in me . . . and get[ing] $30 million to do it"

(about *1941*); "Don't call me Mister! I'm not a grown up yet!;" "My childhood is still fresh in

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[64]Other indications of these themes are in analyses of *Empire of the Sun* in which Rockwell's *Freedom from Fear*
plays a strong thematic role both in a tableau that recreates it and in the actual print that the young boy Jim
(Christian Bale) carried with him on his adventures until he finally abandons the print and the suitcase he carries it
in. Also, Spielberg reportedly carried around Rockwell's BSA illustration "Spirit of America" which he kept in his
pocket for years for some reason. It depicts a Boy Scout gazing westward in front of the gray sculpture like profiles
of Teddy Roosevelt, Lincoln, Geronimo and others. The cover photo on *Interviews* (Friedman) shows Spielberg in a
BSA baseball cap, during the "national jamboree" covered in BSA insignia pins.
[65] Lew Wasserman's *The Last Mogul* relays a scene at a party where Spielberg and Clinton publically spend two
hours reportedly discussing "politics" and "movies" in detail. Multiple reports of Spielberg donations, Hollywood
fundraisers, and press photographs show the Clintons and the Spielberg's vacationing in Hamptons locales—
(paparazzi shots from a distance, but that are indicative of a "close" relationship).

my memory. . ... when I'm seventy or eighty my childhood will be even fresher;" "Truffaut told me . . . 'you are the child.'"[66] Countless other details also point toward childhood, such as his going to Disneyland to unwind after *Jaws*, playing video games and with remote control cars and characterizing the set of *1941* as like "a herd of kids at Toys R Us." Clearly, the mythology of boyhood infects the Spielberg brand, but to what cultural effect? How do some critics' assessments of his cinema as infantile not fully account for the collaboration between narrative, nation and nostalgia? As has already been laid out, most Spielberg scholars, especially Friedman who titled his recent book *Citizen Spielberg* argue that the director has a palpable influence on the American imagination. My concern is the relationship between this imagination as it engages with nostalgia. While Chapter Four examines nostalgia for WWII, this chapter's interest is with that nostalgic obsession for the invented remnants of childhood. That is, the childlike functions specifically as a mode through which to engage with nostalgia—not by regressing to an earlier state, but through a vantage where youth is imagined and constructed. Childhood becomes an imaginary zone with vague relations to accurate year-by-year milestones; rather it is a vast conceptualization that can contain both the infantile and the distinctly adult.

Corrigan's account of the auteur-star and its extra-filmic nexus suggests that there are palpable consequences for spectators and the thought they attach to the text. If Spielberg's signature encourages identification with a boyhood vantage point, then what does that mean

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[66] In *Interviews* see: Gordon (76), Hodenfield (83), Royal (87) and Sragow (113)

exactly? Is the contemporary audience positioned as one big Boy Scout troop, seeing from a

male vantage? My next section on the blockbuster, unpacks some of these issues.

4.1.1.2 Part II: Nostalgic National Acts and the Blockbuster

I remember sitting on the sidewalk for hours, in a queue that snaked several blocks

around the "Cinemadome," waiting to see the premiere of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*

(1977). I was with my mom, her two sisters, and their collective brood of children of which I was

the oldest. We did not arrive to the line in time to see the first showing, or the second, and *Close*

Encounters runs 135 minutes. Waiting in line used to be a major part of the social contract of

blockbusters. There must have been mall showings in the suburbs, because I have read that

multiplexes were burgeoning by 1977, but in our neighborhood, Hollywood, California, there

was just the one place. This was the *only* place to be that day. To be part of the teeming mass

was to participate in popular public culture in the here and now. It was to join in to the ritualized

spectacle of the desire to see. To wait in line, even for a child, was to believe in Spielberg—and

UFOs. I had been shielded from *Jaws* (1975), but I still knew that Spielberg was a *wunderkind*,

and a friend to George Lucas, the mastermind of *Star Wars* (1977).

I was there because of *Star Wars* which premiered seven months earlier and which I had

managed to watch 7 times (I used to save movie tickets). I only remember visual snatches of *Star*

Wars, and vividly, the feeling in my chest that first time, when Obi's voice came on, "use the

force," and Luke blew up the Death Star. I cried. But my memories are impure, vague, dream-

like. Who knows what I was thinking, or *if* I was thinking? *Close Encounters* carried the same

promise. We had waited for *Star Wars* and we were waiting again.[67] We finally sat down for the

third showing of the day, and I can only recall three things: the jittery mumbles of the packed

crowd slowing to silence as the lights dimmed, my assessment that the aliens looked like they

were made of gum, and my memory of . . . disappointment. It was not *Star Wars*.

I risk a personal anecdote here because I want to suggest the social and cultural contract

of movie-going in relation to the emergence of the blockbuster, often linked by scholars to

Spielberg surfacing as a cultural force with *Jaws*. I want to personalize the social essence of

nostalgia endemic to waiting to watch, when waiting prolongs the audience's longing for the

emotional affect of the "the first time," or other expectations about the experience. Though I

relate my personal experience, I want to connect it to that of others in line, and across the nation,

not only with event films, but in the collective act of creating blockbusters: which are partly

defined by their ability to garner a minimum of $100 million domestic box office quickly. A

blockbuster is defined, in part, by its "legs," the term for getting a running start opening

weekend. A financially successful film needs to quickly accrue massive box office, and then

these "legs" will carry it forward. Studios prefer a lucrative opening, rather than a slow start that

eventually builds an audience. Audiences do not wait for hours to see a film that has been

playing for weeks and weeks. The blockbuster film makes money for months (longer after the

emergence of VHS, DVD, and other rental options), but it is believed that its preliminary splash

is a crucial part of the formula. Another part is to create mass interest through marketing

materials and product tie-ins that "saturate" the public sphere in the immediate weeks before the

premiere, increasing media presence in the days leading to its opening. This hype, manipulated

by studios and their marketing strategies, infiltrates the public (and also private) imaginations of

citizens who pay attention to the clutter, arguably without critical consciousness. Blockbusters will have the greatest influence on collective, national memory. A blockbuster is defined in terms of its financial take which directly corresponds to the large numbers in its audience. Some box office dollars will be attributed to repeat viewings by a certain demographic—such as the case with *Titanic's* (James Cameron, 1997) massive box office, attributed to young girls attending over and over.

Thomas Schatz argues that the blockbuster is the "necessary starting point for any analysis of contemporary American cinema" (186). Spielberg is considered, in a nostalgic critical move that seeks origins,[68] to have inaugurated the age of the blockbuster. In many ways, the impetus to find cultural and historical onsets is a nostalgic act because origins are only available through a backward glance. In this way, *Jaws* is often considered to be the originary blockbuster. Its success sprang out of a prepackaged book/movie deal with the ICM agency representing the producer team David Brown and Richard Zanuck, and the book's author, Peter Benchley, thus pooling the agency's financial interests and resources into one deal. At the time, this coalition was considered financially risky—despite the pre-built audience for the best-selling book, Brown and Zanuck were intent on using the relatively inexperienced Spielberg. The agency gambled on a media blitz that saturated the advertising market in print, television and radio, a continuing practice that intends to "front-load" the audience before reviews or other influential texts invade their collective consciousness (191). The blockbuster market saturation strategy engages in narrative ploys that begin to tell the story and create the diegesis outside of the darkened theater. Trailers usually do this kind of work, but the *Jaws* strategy utilized the unproven markets in television and radio to bring the "trailer" out of theaters. In the week before its premiere, *Jaws*

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[68] The impetus to find the definitive origin of this or that usually includes some form of nostalgic discourse: a rearrangement of historical facts and events to suit the theme of the narrative being constructed.

was promoted via its catchy ominous theme, flooding the radio airwaves. Its print strategy used

the now infamous poster image to tell the "high concept" story about a woman and a shark, or

the surface and the force beneath. "High concept" films have a premise that can be consumed

and understood through a single image or word. "Jaws" immediately implies a mouth, biting or

eating—the premise of the story. When combined with the poster image of the shark's open

mouth and the woman's body, the audience instantaneously understands what will do the biting

and who will be eaten.[69]

In contrast, the contemporaneous film *Nashville* (Robert Altman, 1975) has a one word

title and poster image (a "showgirl's" arms and legs on a microphone) that make the film's

premise difficult for audiences to decipher specifically. Schatz explains that the media strategies

used to market *Jaws* were not new. They had been used in the early 1970s with pre-sold

bestsellers and media saturation for such films as *The Godfather* (Coppola, 1972), and *The*

Exorcist (Friedkin, 1973). Media saturation even worked to make risqué films like *Behind the*

Green Door (Mitchell, 1972) and *Deep Throat* (Damiano, 1972) into "events" by inundating the

mainstream public sphere with conversations that made pornography acceptable. Going to these

films was an expected part of being in the cultural know. Award shows also make movie-going a

"mandatory" cultural experience, creating ideas about which movies are worthy and important.

The blockbuster phenomenon with *Jaws* exceeded financial expectations, but confirmed trends

that had already been brewing about how to package, cross-market and saturate the public zone

to enable films to become a social phenomenon, a lifestyle choice and citizenship act, codified

by repeat viewings.

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[69] See Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 1993), for a fascinating reading of the shark as representative of the horror of the feminine in *Jaws*. Rather than the poster image depicting a threat to the woman, Creed argues that the threat *is* a woman—one imagined with scary, castrating teeth.

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Certainly there are pronounced differences between viewers' personal reflections (their own nostalgia as evidenced in my anecdote) and the nostalgic narrative discourse within a film text. However, Schatz's argument begins to explain how they operate in intertwined ways, in a textual cycle that exists in culture. Schatz argues against the notion of the blockbuster as facile, empty entertainment. Buckland concurs that pre-selling a movie within other popular culture forms lets "viewers encounter a movie in *an already activated narrative process*, . . . but the movie itself scarcely begins or ends the textual cycle" (emphasis mine Buckland 11). The dominant practice of filmmaking in the U.S., the blockbuster, helps the public sphere to be constantly activated by nostalgic longing: the hope to repeat previous pleasure through multiple viewings, the recognition of icons, and the translation of cultural codes. I want to argue that the blockbuster is more intimately tied to nostalgia then other types of films and other practices of film-going. In my argument, blockbusters engage with the type of nostalgia that is wedded to nation-forming. Other types of films may engage with nation as well, but may not have the same cultural influence and public consciousness that is created by a blockbuster—that usually inhabits event status and ensures massive collective viewing. When the blockbuster film concerns mythic presentations of historical events (as almost all the films discussed here do), then their nostalgic discourse engages with audiences in ways that are spectacular, but also hugely invested in creating empathy, identification and memory. While less popular films may intensely engage with highly emotional nostalgia, their effect may not be widespread. The blockbuster is defined by its successful attainment of a mass audience. In that way, a popular audience becomes fluent in its language.

Without understanding any nuance of fascism, a public schooled in *Star Wars* still recognizes fascist aesthetic in the infinite lines of Imperial Troops in shiny uniforms. Audiences

who take gender roles as a given, still recognize E.T. as a white male, when the creature's point-of-view applies the standard male gaze to the legs and body of Elliot's mother. That is, the ideological social contract of a nation enacts, and maintains, itself visually in popular entertainment. My points of interest are in the disruptions and contradictions in these seemingly facile presentations of the social contract: when the Rebel Alliance lines up just like the Imperialists, or when E.T. and Elliot share a joint identity as boy and man (with both feeling like aliens). As broad as these arguments are, when the audience claps and weeps, they participate in systematic acts that mandate political and social contracts as effortlessly as does a Presidential inauguration. The emotion of nostalgia (as different from mere memory) constructs ideas about citizen's place in the national landscape.

The blockbuster, and Spielberg's specifically are in some ways, steeped in nostalgic discourse because they force memory to emerge during viewing and beyond—in that way always embroidering personal experience into public spectatorship. This embroidery can explicate and exhibit nostalgic discourse because it demonstrates desire, desire for something long gone, usually childhood *or* the pleasures imagined as endemic to any "first time."

This point might be best exemplified through the example of Joseph Brainard's innovative book, *I Remember*, first published in 1975. As Ron Padgett describes the project:

> [Brainard] saw straight through complexity and preconception to the clear and obvious. Instead of writing an autobiography or memoir . . . he simply wrote more than 1,000 brief entries that begin with the words "I remember." His method had

something childlike about it, and indeed, Joe did have a taste for things that were free of adult complication. (171)[70]

Brainard's declarative sentences recall all manner of experiences, but especially those having to do with every aspect of watching movies, from the images on screen, to the incidents in the theater, to the fantasies about cinema in his mind. Gilbert Adair chose most of Brainard's cinema-related memories in a selection in his anthology *Movies*, calling them "the zero degree of nostalgia" because they are "close-ups of the past" (46). This intimacy facilitates the ache in such recollections as "I remember the little boy with the very deep voice in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. (Like a frog.)" or "I remember Maria Schell's very wet eyes in *The Brothers Karamazov*." Though memories of a past experience, these memories actually have a less distant quality than personal incidents. Unlike the personal and the incidental, the memories of film moments *seem* more accessible because they perpetually exist. They replay. Brainard's memory such as "I remember in very scary movies and in very sad movies, having to keep reminding myself that 'it's only a movie,'" can endlessly be returned to and stitched onto a moment experienced in the present. Cinematic experience as an audience member constructs desire and narrative, suturing distance with nostalgic apparatus. The seemingly incoherent, slap-dash juxtapositions that construct the visual clutter of public zones, actually force *narrative* logic to emerge. As another example, being aware of Spielberg's biographical data in whichever historical moment or order it is consumed, forces a logic that defies the temporal order of the facts of his life, making those facts irrelevant. That Spielberg's parents divorced when he was an adult, is a fact that gets in the way of the more significant "logic" that they divorced when we

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[70] A few examples: "I remember on 'free day' in gym usually picking stilts;" "I remember the 'Breck' Shampoo ladies;" "I remember trying to visualize my insides;" "I remember very clearly (visually) a bride doll sitting in a red wagon under the Christmas tree when I was very young. (For me.)"

was "a boy" and all of his work is influenced accordingly. Cultural clutter is re-ordered into a coherent narrative signature and imprint about boyhood and the childlike themes that invade his work. Nostalgic discourse becomes embedded in narratives about childhood, endlessly seeking to create meaning within a zone that was originally exempt from critical complexity.

Murray Pomerance offers an auteurist reading of Spielberg's work that takes up his obsession with boyhood. Pomerance suggests that the child is an appealing identificatory position because it is beyond the reach of cultural systems, at least temporarily. He writes on the distinction between the adult and the child:

> The adult owns action, if not formally and economically as property then at least morally, and to the degree that his moves can be taken as indications of his intent, alignment and will. Children, on the other hand, exist in nature, without fully internalized—and therefore, automatic—socially constructed systems of guidance in place to assist them in navigating the world with control. (133-4)

Pomerance fantasizes a natural space for children that elides the de-naturalizing forces of school, parents, and culture. He also ignores what some experts suggest is a socialization regime that begins at birth. Spielberg also revels in the child as a kind of "natural," untrammeled person capable of belief and flights of fancy. Both Pomerance and Spielberg find this idealized natural child to be a boy, rather than a girl. Pomerance suggests Roy in *Close Encounters* as the quintessential version of this "man-boy," because he encapsulates its characteristics and possibilities. Pomerance argues that it is only through Roy's embrace of the "boy's" perspective that he is able to escape his dour suburban domestic situation and flee to the mothership to travel with aliens. Pomerance attests that the man-boys of interest, the one he finds throughout

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Spielberg's film narratives, are "an index of social arrangements . . . a way of experiencing and knowing." Pomerance goes on:

> By *man-boy*, I have in mind not the insufficient and incomplete product of whatever it is that is taken as appropriate and correct male socialization in any culture—the boy who never quite becomes a man because for him something is missing . . .—but instead the man who never quite abandons his boyhood. (137)

In Pomerance's analyses, the child position is easily appropriated by the adult's knowing perspective. The adult's viewpoint, allows the contrast between adult life and perspective and child "knowing" to co-exist. The position enables being inside and outside the system of meaning at once. Rather than dissembling social order, *becoming a child*, reifies the social institutions that create the system, but in Spielberg's universe this position is only available to men behaving as boys.

Pomerance's formulation is highly problematic, but also strangely apt. He reads Schindler in *Schindler's List* (1993) as a man-boy because for him, saving the Jews was an "adventure," similar to Spielberg's radical behaviors in making the film despite widespread criticism that it was beyond his purview (139). Pomerance makes the move to conjoin Spielberg as auteur-star with the men within his narratives. While it is irresponsible to read Schindler as having an adventure, it is one way to make sense of the film's problems with representation, with treating the events of the Holocaust appropriately. The film has been notably criticized for abusing historical details and for engaging in optimism. One of the film's multiple problems does issue from the fact that it is a Spielberg film, and so it brings with it the textual array of his star-text—the one read to include wonder, adventures and boyish perspectives.

Just as Pomerance reads Spielberg as a social radical who rejects convention and goes against the grain, he finds the man-boy to be a progressive figure who disrupts and re-orders the culture he is placed in. The man-boy proactively reacts against social order and "makes possible" its unraveling (151). Notably, however, additional to their radical, innocent and rebellious tendencies, all man-boys are sexless. That is, they live free of desire. This is point that secures them mostly to a boyish outlook—as if they exist in the state before interest in girls arises. This interest would avert their gaze from things more important: the Ark of the Covenant, UFOs, E.T.s, sharks, Never-Never Land, and Africa. Pomerance does not account for Schindler's womanizing, although that is likely a facet of his adventure too.

Pomerance's formulation is obviously flawed, but what I find fascinating about it, is the way it articulates masculinity's relationship to nostalgia. Pomerance eloquently communicates the Boy Scout-like characterization of Spielberg's male protagonists. They obsess with a child-like state because it seems to offer freedom from the tenuous state of white adult masculinity, basically since 1975—or wherever we might locate the questioning of dominant masculinity that incited the culture wars and its masculine crises. Finally, Pomerance argues that the man-boy state allows a recycling and revision of temporal order much like the kind that exists within nostalgia. He asserts:

> In each moment of the man-boy's action, we are engaged with everything he became and once hoped to be, and also with him continuing to hope and not yet actually being—since he is both a man who has grown and a boy who looks forward to growth. (153)

Man-boy positionality offers the ultimate nostalgic fantasy.

Carol Mavor, in her meditative and unconventional, *Reading Boyishly* (2007), offers a theory about writers and artists obsessed with capturing some essence of the past by behaving "boyishly." Mavor questions the possibility of nostalgia for children—at least before they understand their place in time. She theorizes that nostalgia seems to be an adult's venture and emotion, but only one that stitches "boyishness" onto its longing and its "work" and "travel" (30). She takes as a given that the function is different for girls. Nostalgia's boyish aspect revels in feminization, a connection to childhood that was moderated and understood through revelry in a boy's connections to the maternal. Mavor's insight and intervention is to refuse to see these connections between boys/men and mothers in a negative light, but rather as one that allows femininity and masculinity to interact. In part, nostalgia enables this possibility because it is never a place. It is a state of mind (44). Mavor's theories potentially impact the texts discussed here, but are ultimately shut down by masculine crises that seek to override the feminine and the maternal.

What Pomerance does not mention is that man-boys, despite fabricating a social order (perhaps it is just temporal order), reaffirm traditional culture—the hierarchy of the white male. They hide this dominance beneath the innocent facade of boyish grace. Like perpetual Boy Scouts, man-boys are exempt from critique. They escape, but they leave women and minorities firmly oppressed. For instance, when emblematic man-boy Roy in *Close Encounters*, rebels against suburban domesticity, he does so through disrespectful behavior toward working class minorities and his wife and elderly female neighbor. Roy destroys the shrubbery landscaping his home and tosses it through the windows, loosens the garden gating of the neighbor sending her pets fleeing, and dumps out the garbage in the cans lining the street (Pomerance 151). The black garbage men (a stereotypical casting) look down at the trash unloaded before them. Roy's

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emancipation occurs at their expense adding extra work, via degradation. As repressed as Roy is, he still has a freedom that these men do not. Pomerance reads this scene as a "glorious act of domestic terrorism" (151). Of interest, is Pomerance's use of "we," that also reasserts the dominance of man-boys in fashioning the ideal spectator, creating a collective that is white and boyish. Spielberg films with blockbuster status are particularly attuned to enforcing this perspective within their collective audience.

Schatz argues that: "the blockbuster tends to be intertextual and purposefully incoherent—virtually out of necessity given the current conditions of cultural production and consumption. Put another way, the vertical integration of classical Hollywood, which ensured a closed industrial system and coherent narrative, has given way to 'horizontal integration' of the New Hollywood's tightly diversified media conglomerates, which favors texts strategically 'open' to multiple readings and multi-media reiterations" (202) It sounds like freedom, but it is a mode that assures huge audiences. However, the differences in the imagination of the collective audience function to create vastly different stories—even as they all try to fit one narrative frame, one concept. An auteur-star's signature helps to organize these various details into narrative. Of course, repetitive behaviors (like going to the movies) are not all nostalgic acts—only when guided by memory, emotion, desire and longing.

I began this section with my childhood viewpoint to try to sift through the dynamics of the media saturation, and its relationship to social mandates (going to the movies) and critical consciousness (thoughts and fantasies that guide the experience). I wanted to illustrate, that the "wonder" of seeing as a child, is never a child's viewpoint, but an adult's retrospective invention. The blockbuster mentality, as described by critics, is an infantile, empty textual experience shared by the American contemporary audience that simulates a simple, child's viewpoint.

Robert Burgoyne argues that cinema creates memory through its effect on the body—the images, he claims, seem to "burn in" (223). In this sense, they leave a scar-like impression that contradicts the postmodern thesis about popular film producing or encouraging vapidity in audiences. To facilitate a child-like perspective is, in fact, a complex process and one with profound cultural and political effects. Spielberg films that revel in wonder, sentimentality and that create intensive affect do more than entertain—they create a means through which a collective popular experience is both shaped and shared. In America, movie-going becomes a national act, not unlike the viewing practices since the beginning of cinema, except that the contemporary blockbuster shifts to the "event" weekend in a commercial system that fuses national holidays with movie-going weekends.

Alison Landsberg has developed the term "prosthetic memory" to account for the influence of cinema on shared collective memory. She argues that cinema's ability to create empathy (affective sensation) enables intimate relationships with events that were not experienced (such as WWII or the Holocaust). She asserts that the body becomes the central force though which "prosthetic memory" operates—as if memory is like a literal prosthetic that can be worn and taken off (149). Landsberg rejects critiques of mass culture that assume audiences are compliant and brainwashed. Rather she is interested in the complexities of their reception, and its construction and negotiations. Landsberg explains that prosthetic memories erase normative lines of gender, race, ethnicity, etc. Group identities are "denaturalized" (149). The movie theater dissolves geographical specificity and transports viewers to new locations, facilitating a shared, public experience that is simultaneously felt as private. Landsberg posits that prosthetic memories, "open up the possibility for collective horizons of experience and pave the way for unexpected political alliances" (149). While she finds these possibilities positive and

filled with progressive possibilities, their same technique also disables difference and contributes to conservative fantasies about "sameness" and "collectivity." This type of engagement with popular culture texts helps form "mediated, collective identification" (150). In the case of Spielberg films, the "identity" is notoriously child-like. That is, it imitates child-like ideality. It "creates" a version of a boy as the ideal spectator—a boy's "prosthetic" view with which it is difficult to avoid identification.

I contend that the lived act of attending the theater and viewing collectively is another aspect of this memory and identification process. For Landsberg and Burgoyne, films produce memories in audiences that are like lived experiences—worn or experienced as virtual imitations and constituting a group identity. The actions on-screen imagined as a lived experience lay over the experience of movie-viewing, and both memories intermingle. But the duties and rituals of theater attendance are also a part of the construction of group identity. The memory of the film itself interacts with the memory of attending the film—that lived act does not dissolve the fantasy of "living" through the other, "mediated" experience. Multiplexes, by showing the film in multiple theaters, thwart the act of waiting, which seemed to be the origin of the term blockbuster, to wait around the block, though it actually derives from military operations, dropping bombs on cities during WWII, to bust blocks.

The blockbuster sets up a tendency of longing in American audiences, of waiting to get "into" the film's location, a portal to a nostalgic zone, a narrative that begins with "I remember" and that recalls, perpetually the first viewing experience. The popular audience, those who attend in droves on opening weekends, the ones whose ticket sales are counted and published as news, long for visceral movement—for the affect that accompanies entertainment and that warrants the repetitive, relentless practice of movie-going: a collective endeavor, experienced privately. My

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childhood and Spielberg's are beyond reach; we cannot reconstruct them except through

invention. My textual response to *Close Encounters* is filled with holes; my experience and my

thinking during that first 135 minutes fade, replaced by memories of gummy aliens who walk

back into the film's world of light. But I have been promised that this place, this nostalgic zone,

is accessible—through repeat viewings or stories that promise to give more of the same. A

Spielberg film *will* transport us to wonder: both the inquiry and the spectacle. Though I could not

identify with Roy's (Richard Dreyfuss) compulsive drive to sculpt mashed potatoes and find the

mothership, I went to the theater in search of my own prior compulsion to identify and to feel.

Roy could not inspire it, but another *man-boy* could. I was longing for Luke Skywalker. I wanted

another sprawling desert that was both "new" and the same, that could evoke the surge of

empathy I felt whenever Luke reached his family's burned-out homestead and decided to follow

the force. This I remember—as Luke gazed into the Tattooine sunset as I gazed back at him, it

might as well have been the proverbial screen as mirror. I was ready to avenge the Skywalkers.

Thirty years later I learned that the scene was a copy of one from *The Searchers* (John Ford,

1956).

4.1.1.3 *Part III: The "man-boy" in* <u>Amistad</u>

Amistad (1997)[71] has been widely criticized by both critics and scholars for a multitude

of reasons related to its presentation of race and history. Catherine Rodat calls the film's

depictions racist, continuing the American tradition of black representation since *Birth of the*

Nation (Griffith, 1915). Gary Rosen's article criticizes *Amistad*'s "abuse" of history, knocking its

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[71] I should mention that *Amistad* is not a blockbuster, but rather one of Spielberg's most significant financial flops, garnering a tepid 66 million during its initial domestic run.

presentation of the Abolitionist movement, unfair depiction of Christianity, and "reverse racism" toward whites. Even Spielberg sympathizer Friedman notes the "unfortunate" aesthetic similarity between *Amistad*'s opening and the opening of *Jurassic Park,* that links "a human being and a raging beast" (2006, 280).

Amistad opens with an extreme close-up of what appears to be a forehead: wrinkled skin over dark eyes. Heavy breathing conveys that the shape is living. However, with dark lighting and a shadow-filled frame, it is impossible to discern exactly what the shot depicts until flashes of lightening illuminate the sweating, furrowed brow of a man. The shots that intercut with this close-up are not of the depicted man's point-of-view. The countershot breaks the convention that often accompanies a choker close-up on a character's eyes—that alternating shots will reveal this character's point-of-view. Instead, the shots which follow depict extreme close-ups of the character's fingers. Again, it is difficult at first to discern that they are fingers. Camera position indicates a similar frontal direction for both shots, indicating it is not the character's viewpoint. While the shots may seek to convey claustrophobia, they also depict confusion about the subject's identity. These intercut shots between eyes and fingers portray the excruciating act of picking loose a nail. The fingers bleed as the nail is pried from wood. Once the nail is free, it is used to pick a lock. Conveyed through dark lighting and tight close-ups, the scene renders the unlocking of chains. When the man, Cinque (Djimon Hounsou), emerges onto a ship's deck, followed by other men, the audience presumes that they are slaves who have escaped. However, most likely, audiences were aware of this narrative scenario before the film began (having read about the film in advance), an awareness that alleviates the visual confusion of the opening shots.

Actually, the group is not exactly slaves, though the film is "about" slavery in America. They are more accurately prisoners, captured from Africa, and not yet sold into slavery. As

prisoners on a ship, they revolt. After a short period of mutiny, they are captured by the U.S. Navy and brought to the American shore. Based on actual events, the narrative portrays the courtroom drama over their legal status—a case that will go all the way to the Supreme Court and eventually be argued by former president John Quincy Adams (Anthony Hopkins). The decision will ascertain if they are property and, if so, who owns them. Part of the film's nostalgic register concerns questions about the band's origins and where they should return: whether to Spain as property, Cuba (where they were to be slaves), or Africa, their homeland. Ultimately, the question of the Africans' desire for "home" and their return to it, appears incidental to the more overt presentation about America as home and its history.

The opening sequence portrays the 1839 prisoner revolt against Spanish slave drivers on the ship, La Amistad. The scene uses techniques that highlight the violent murders of the Spaniards—a mode that makes sympathy with the mutineers problematic because of what is presented as their brutal nature. The scene takes place at night during a storm, but occasional lightening flashes make the action clear. While the prisoners (who are dark-skinned) are mostly filmed in darkness, when they hack, stab and slice a man's throat, the lightening clarifies their actions. When the man who appears to be the ship's captain kills two of the escaped prisoners (the first with a gunshot to the stomach, and the second with a bayonet stab), they each fall in darkness, their faces unseen. These deaths contrast to the illuminated faces of the Spanish men who scream in close-up as they are killed. Cinque (unnamed until 50 minutes into the film) seems particularly brutal, a quality intensified by his guttural yells and screams while killing people. When he stabs the ship's captain, he pushes the sword through his torso with enough force to stab through the deck floor, prolonging the death. While the man suffers and cries, Cinque steps on his bloodied mouth. The final frame in the sequence is shot from an extreme low

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angle, the killed man's point of view, so that Cinque appears immense. Cinque continues to moan and flex as rain splashes on his nearly nude body. The lightening continues in a strobe-like effect as his body becomes illuminated, then darkened. Strangely, though as a slave and/or prisoner, Cinque is a victim who suffers greatly in the opening shots, this sequence distances the audience from that suffering by portraying him as a brutal killer and not unlike a monster. Cinque's inhuman status arises from the sounds he makes and his seeming lack of language.

When Cinque does converse with a fellow mutineer in the next scene, their speech is not translated. However, the conversation of the Spanish-speaking slave drivers, now prisoners, who talk in the same scene does appear in subtitles. The absence of subtitles for the African's speech occurs throughout the film in a mode that appears arbitrary. At times, their speech is translated in subtitles, but often it is not. The arbitrary use of subtitles has a few effects. The first might be part of an intentional thematic, one interested in portraying the communication problems between Africans and English speakers. Also, sometimes films do not use subtitles when the action seems to make clear what is happening so that speech translation is not necessary. However, at times the lack of subtitles for African speech in *Amistad,* conveys a sense that their speech is not important; that it is babble. In this mode, their representation becomes patronizing and reliant on stereotypes about the exotic and the primitive—that they do not *need* translation because they are "naturally" uncivilized which is *visually* apparent, or that they have little of worth to say. However, it also links their language to a childlike or simple level, one that is *more* pure than the complex rhetoric of the American legal system. As I argued earlier, *Jaws* employs a similar visual aesthetic, where the image overtakes any need for written language and its nuance.

For instance, in the first scene with clear conversations (after the revolt) Cinque and a

rival mutineer argue in detail. The translated speech of the Spanish slave drivers gives the

context of their conversation, though in simple terms, without the obvious tones and details of

the men's' longer conversation. Therefore, the audience is only privy to the Spaniard's

interpretation of the argument. It is translated minimally: Cinque wants the Spaniards to take

them home, and the other man wants to go at alone. The conversation is interrupted as another

African approaches the Spaniards and begins to dance, a childlike act that suggests happiness,

rather than the despair and stress that would be more appropriate to the scenario. The dance also

references the long tradition of racist minstrelsy in depictions of blacks. Similarly, the Africans

in the background rifle through the ship's cargo, wrapping themselves in found lace and eating

uncooked spaghetti. In another scene, the mutineered Amistad sails past another ship, this one

populated with "civilized" whites, men and women who dine with crystal and listen to classical

music. Because the two ships pass at close range, the different parties stare, confounded. It seems

unlikely that *Amistad* seeks to portray the Africans through stereotypes as others, in part because

of Spielberg's public pronouncement that he made the film for his adopted African-American

son, Theo. This aspect unravels any auteurist reading reliant on intentionality—the film seeks to

"honor" Africans, but it cannot adequately represent them or the historical scenario. Spielberg's

project becomes similar to Ron English's *Color Corrected* discussed in *Prelude III*. Though

seeking to "correct" the historical record, ultimately the film portrays the perils of black

representation and raises up the conventional structures of a white male world. The film often

contrasts between "civilized" white culture (European and American) and the exotic, wild

"others" of Africa. For instance, the actors in scenes set in Spain speak English with heavy

Spanish accents, though their characters would have spoken Spanish. All African speech is in the

foreign dialect, Mende, either subtitled or often not. Therefore, the film is inconsistent in the way foreign speech is rendered which leads to questions about how the film presents foreignness itself. People from Africa are *more* foreign than people in Spain.

Once in the U.S. the contrast between Africans and Americans occurs mainly through clothing and masculinity codes. Though the African group consists of men, women, and children, the latter two groups fall away from the courtroom drama that concerns ethical problems among men. The fate of the Africans concerns their origins and the problem of language and translation. The first time their conversation is translated in the film happens in a telling way. Though the Africans often speak among themselves, the first subtitled lines occur in relation to an American black man. He is bearded and dressed in a suit, driving a buggy. The African prisoners discuss how he must be a "chief" and they call out to him. Though they are in culture shock, the scene conveys that there are some codes that are universal. The man they name as chief has class status in America, although, as the driver of a buggy, he is likely a slave. They seem to pick him out because he is black, but mistake him for "chief" because he is well-dressed in the American style of the day. This misrecognition makes visible the similarities between two cultures that each assigns status to a well-dressed black man. It seems unlikely that this figure would resemble an African chief, except possibly through his age. Joadson, (Morgan Freeman), a rich free black man who oversees the African's court case, is not mistaken for a chief. This may be due to his status in the white world—he is present in the important scenes as an observer, but has very little agency or power—or indeed spoken lines. The actor's proud visage is often used as a visual punctuation mark for the behavior of the prominent white actors, a *sign* of approval. The film sets up a hierarchy among black men, one in which Cinque rises to the top, not only

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because he is the primary character, but because he has a special ability to understand white culture.

Cinque and the white lawyer Baldwin (Matthew McConaughey) develop a special bond because they have the ability to communicate with each other. While Cinque is the most brutal of the prisoners, he is clearly also the smartest and most discerning, nimbly figuring out elements of English and the American legal system and explaining them to the other Africans. However, when Baldwin communicates with Cinque, he is able to do so because of his childlike, simple way that contrasts to the other white men in the film who speak in fancy rhetoric and legalese. Baldwin is fluent in both languages: complex American law and simple African language. The few simple words of Mende Baldwin learns in a rudimentary lesson are enough to "get by." He also uses gestures and uses line drawings to communicate. Baldwin's fluency is framed as the result of his masculinity as well; he is a man who has not lost his ability to *see* as a child. In fact, when Cinque and Baldwin have their "breakthrough" communication scene, it is uncannily similar to the scene in *E.T.* when Elliot (Henry Thomas) explains the suburban world to the alien. The child Elliot points to toy objects and says the corresponding word, speaking hurriedly and with excitement, adding extraneous details that the alien does not need—such as the identity of one toy as Han Solo (the moment is also a product tie-in to *Star Wars*). Baldwin employs similar quick-paced, excited speech, often adding extra details to his use of simple tropes, visual aids, gestures, and line drawings. E.T. quickly learns English through rote study of children's language systems: a Speak 'n Spell toy, *Sesame Street* on television, the comics page of the newspaper, and Elliot's description and naming of the toys in his room. Each of these modes uses a visual semiotic system to explain language. As a Spielbergian man-boy, Baldwin communicates through theatrical demonstrations (miming) and through simple visual drawings,

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similar to the "sensory system" of language demonstrated in *Jaws*. Baldwin tries to get Cinque to "say" that he is from Africa. Baldwin's delivery is childlike; he adds in details that Cinque cannot glean from the simple geographical drawings that he has made in the dirt, such as "Cuba, it's an island." Nevertheless, Cinque is perfectly able to comprehend geography from Baldwin's sand drawings of La Amistad and the U.S. coast. To signify "Africa" on their dirt map, Cinque walks in chains to the far end of the prison yard, a zone coated in white mist (not unlike the mist in Elliot's yard into which E.T. disappeared). Baldwin understands. Africa is very, very far away.

As a man-boy, Baldwin can better represent the Africans in court. Though he is presented early on as only interested in financial gain, his man-boy status gives him the special ability to see differently than the other Americans in the film—most of whom are considerably older. Baldwin is young and blond (as opposed to bald, white-haired, or wigged like many men in the court scenes) and he also has a boisterous physicality, showing that he is different from the staid masculinity of the colonial days. For instance, in his introduction, he jumps onto a chair in the back of the court so he can better observe (a common child's move to be taller and to "see" better). He also expresses himself impetuously, tossing all the books and papers off his desk and then, for good measure, tossing the desk (in anger after a sympathetic judge recuses himself). Though Baldwin can "see" the Africans in a different way than the other whites, he cannot "see" their physical suffering. That sight rests solely with the free black man, Joadson, overseeing the court case.

When Baldwin and Joadson go aboard the Amistad to search for evidence, Joadson finds himself below deck. He is horrified by the sight of the African's quarters. He gazes in terror at the empty chains and shackles, imagining the awful experience of the people imprisoned there and perhaps the fate of his own ancestors. Somehow, he becomes entangled in the chains and

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Baldwin arrives to free him. But when Baldwin looks at the prison area, he does not have the horrified countenance of Joadson. Instead, he looks to the side and finds a crucial piece of evidence—a hidden ship manifest that will prove vital to his arguments in court. Baldwin is exempt from the horror; Joadson, though free as a black American, carries the horror with him. In this way, the film reinforces a bizarre difference between whites and blacks, the odd suggestion that whites cannot be horrified by the ship's condition, at least not to the degree of a black man's revulsion.[72]

In another scene, Baldwin visits Cinque in his prison cell and brings a small voodoo doll and its accompanying noose that has been sent to him as a threat. However, though Cinque awaits potential execution and the more likely threat of lynching, this fear and fate is given to Baldwin. Baldwin's law practice has also suffered. The consequences Baldwin endures for representing the Africans set up a strange coalition between the suffering of Baldwin and the suffering of Cinque. The scene continues to express the similarity between the simplistic and effortless way the two men communicate: through simple tropes and in this case, a doll that merges the stereotypical trope of African "voodoo" with the noose, the horrifying symbol of lynching history in America. The image of this prop dramatically links the fates of both men.[73]

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[72] I am at odds with this reading. In one sense, it is progressive that Baldwin does not appropriate the horror (as he does in a later scene). In another sense, it seems Baldwin is *spared* from having to face the horror.

[73] Another similar example of simplistic communication depicts Cinque's fellow mutineer who does not read the bible, but adequately understands its content via its illustrations. He has garnered a copy in prison and carefully goes over the Jesus narrative with Cinque. He points to an illustration of the resurrection: Jesus in the sky, arms open, raised above some people standing on the ground. The African interprets the meaning as follows: "This is where we will go when we die. It doesn't look so bad." But the image only depicts a man hovering in the air, over others making the man's interpretation of the afterlife a bit nonsensical because it is the same place as the living which has been "bad" for the Africans. In the next scene, as the same man walks to court, he notices a ship, perhaps the Amistad, in the distance. The wooden beams that hold the ship's sails resemble the three crosses of Christ's crucifixion. Somehow, this image brings the man comfort, the implication being that though the ship experience was awful, it brought him to Christianity which was good. This moment exists in opposition to Gary Rosen's reading that the film does a disservice to Christianity.

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Though, Baldwin succeeds in court, securing the acquittal of the Africans, the verdict gets tossed, and the case is set to be retried in the Supreme Court. When Baldwin informs Cinque, he and the other Africans are celebrating their freedom in the prison yard; in a scene of revelry around an immense campfire, the Africans dance and sing in their native language and play drums. Cinque becomes incensed when Baldwin delivers the news. Cinque gives a long speech in anger, though only four lines are translated in subtitles: "What kind of place is this? Where you almost mean what you say? Where laws almost work? How can you live like that?" He delivers these lines by the raging campfire where he strips out of his "civilized" cloths, down to a loin cloth (Figure 3.). He then approaches Baldwin and carries on for several more seconds, but his speech is untranslated. The visual representation of his fury is meant to stand-in for any nuances in his speech . Cinque goes back to the campfire and Africans dance around him, while his silhouette displays a now nearly nude and muscled physique. Close-up shots of Baldwin's and Joadson's reverent faces follow, as they both gape in awe at Cinque's amazing physique and "authentic" rage. Joadson is not a man-boy, and his gaze seems to suggest bafflement or a sense of contrast between himself and Cinque (Joadson wears sideburns, full suit with ascot and gloves and top hat). Joadson also is shot with a prison guard behind him, over his shoulder, holding a torch. Therefore, the visual association with Joadson is "civilized" regulation and contained fire. Baldwin, however, seems to "see" the solution to Cinque's fate, made possible by Cinque's display of fervent African masculinity (Baldwin's close-up is much tighter, showing his only his face and not his costume). If Baldwin has only a scant knowledge of Mende, he is able to understand via the display of Cinque's body and his outburst before the raging fire, before

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"nature." This sight inspires Baldwin to enlist the help of former President Quincy Adams, who previously rejected Joadson's similar request, but who now agrees to argue the case.

Quincy Adams' staid ways prevent him from being a man-boy; rather he is equipped to "understand" Cinque due to his cultivation of plants and obsession with horticulture—a motif emphasized throughout the film as he tinkers with potting soil and places saplings in sunlight (not unlike E.T.'s ability to resurrect gerbera daisies). The film employs a problematic visual system that aligns Africans with plants, that codes them as something wild that "civilized" culture can both contain and let thrive—as represented through Adams' gardening, and specifically his acquisition of the "difficult-to-come-by" *African* violet.[74] When Cinque smells the violet (he has been brought to Adams' estate for questioning) he recalls his home in Africa. Adams gazes on with understanding: "Adams has blossomed by accepting moral responsibility for these men, and like a good gardener, he will help return these flowers to their native soil" (Friedman, 2006, 281). Friedman is correct that the Africans become like the plants, and the larger moral issues within *Amistad*, convert to issues about white men and white American history. The film ends up constructing a mythic history in which white culture and U.S. forefathers actively aimed to eradicate slavery. Curiously, the goal is to return the Africans to their native land, a "solution" that aligns with white supremacist goals, and one that contrasts to the popular idea of America as a "melting pot" for immigrants.

Cinque becomes the source for Adams' successful rhetorical argument used to win the court case. Cinque, who had previously been annoying Adams with his constant questions, suggestions, and concerns over the Supreme Court argument, remarks about his own ancestors, inspiring Adams. This inspiration is made obvious through a long close-up on Adams as Cinque

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[74] One of *Amistad*'s many anachronisms, the African violet was not "discovered" by white culture until the 1890s.

speaks, then a cut to the court room, suturing the two spatiotemporal locales. Adams uses

Cinque's idea, but appropriates it so that he does not reference the importance of African

ancestry—the point of Cinque's speech. Instead, Adams argues for the enduring power of

American forefathers and ancestry. The logic goes that since George Washington, John Hancock,

Benjamin Franklin and all the rest, so opposed slavery, then by nature, all future generations

should be opposed as well due to the natural continuity between forefathers and contemporary

citizens. The facts of the actual forefather's participation in slavery and dubious interest in its

abolition are rendered irrelevant. In Adams' speech, the Declaration of Independence makes a

clear call to abolish slavery, indicated by the line, "all men are created equal." My interest is not

in pointing out the film's various "abuses" of the historic record and its attempts to "whitewash"

American history so that it aligned with the political correctness of 1997. Rather, I am interested

in the way *Amistad* uses national history to make a much more personalized argument about

nation—one that links forefathers, through a "genetic" metaphor, to contemporary

Americans/film-goers. American history itself is on trial in *Amistad*, in addition to the Africans.

In the previous scene, Cinque told Adams: "I will call into the past . . . I will reach back

and draw [my ancestors] into me. For at this moment, I am the whole reason they have existed at

all." Cinque's short speech uses a conventional invocation of nostalgic discourse. The past is not

lost, but readily available to be re-narrativized and pulled into the present to project the future.

His ancestors are not "dead," but fully able to influence the Supreme Court in spirit. Their prior

existence is reworked—now, their lives existed for Cinque's need and use. When Adams' draws

upon this inspiration, his speech finally argues: "Who we are is who we were." This equation

necessitates historical revisionism, but Adams still uses Cinque's method of using the ancestors

to define one's own subjectivity. Adams delivers his oration against a side wall of the Supreme

Court room (Figure 4.). Images of important forefathers line the wall as either marble busts or oil paintings. Adams conjures their spirits, but their status as objects is evident in their stiff and inanimate form. The mise-en-scène is oddly similar to the Rockwell image, *Spirit of America* (1929), the first acquisition in Spielberg's collection[75] (Figure 5.). The courtroom scene often frames the characters in profile, so they resemble not only the busts shot from the side, but the iconic and distinctive look of presidential heads on coins. The black men are similarly shot in profile, though in a separate grouping, segregating the visual motif. The use of profile seems a citation of the Rockwell image in which a young Boy Scout stands in profile before the "spirits" of America: Washington, Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Geronimo. Aesthetically, the image associates the anonymous young boy with the "great" men of the past who appear as if marble busts or ghosts in the gray background to the boy's hyper-color in front. The image suggests a temporal continuity across history, but nostalgically, flattens it. Posed against those who appear inanimate, the boy attains their symbolism as great, but they remain frozen, dead. The image also suggests that the boy's forebears had his "spirit" within them—they see as he sees because they all stare together to the left.

"Who we are is who we were," in the collective sense, gestures toward the wide nation and the fantasy that it was founded with anti-slavery ideals, an always liberal, modern nation-state. But the history conjured has little relation to factual truth, rather it is a rearrangement, a reanimation of the forefathers for one's own design—pulling the past, as Cinque advised, right up into the present. The man-boy actually dwells in this kind of fictional locale. As Pomerance described Spielberg's man-boys, they always meld together a "past on display as the future" evident in the "contemporary" racism in the film even as it strives to be reverent and unbiased.

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[75] In one of the many biographies I read, I recall in one of them, the "mythic" anecdote that he carried this image, folded, in his pocket for years.

This political aim is partially sunk by the film's representation of Baldwin, the man-boy, who is "both a man who has grown and a boy who looks forward to growth" (Pomerance 153). Being who "we" were, is not only a reference to forebears, but to childhood. In the case of the white men in *Amistad*, they *were/are* boys, and in perpetuity they always will be. In that case, the historical revisionism is made an emphatic necessity. If America, *in spirit*, is like a boy scout, and if the national audience *sees* like one, then America is/was reverent, clean, moral, trustworthy, friendly, and *innocent*.

Spielberg's interest (for whatever personal reasons) to right the wrongs in America's racist and brutal history has ties to Clinton's similar attempts to appeal to and appease the African-American community during his campaigns and presidency. Clinton used that demographic to further his own political aspirations. This subject, the appropriation of black suffering by white male bodies, is taken up as the subject of Chapter Six.

5.0   TOM HANKS AND NOSTALGIA FOR EVERYMAN

5.1   *PRELUDE IV:* "EVERYMAN" IN UNIFORM

Bill C linton a ddressed his 1995 speech commemorating the f iftieth anniversary of WWII's

Victory in Europe, V-E Day, to a crowd filled with "an ethnic rainbow sampling of veterans."[76]

The Clinton Administration's relationship to the military was, by this time, tinged with concerns

over di versity and political correctness. C linton's r elationship to ve terans was compromised by

his pol icies on ga ys in t he m ilitary a nd m arred by hi s o wn l ack of military service. WWII

commemorations be gan marking a nniversaries in 1994, a nd C linton's p revious s peeches w ere

conspicuous due to his oft-reported efforts to avoid service in Vietnam and by hi s "Don't-Ask-

Don't-Tell" policy that had proved politically disastrous. Clinton shocked the general public and

political opponents when during his first days in office he authored ambitious executive orders

relating to abortion and gay rights. One of his orders allowed for abortions to be performed in

military hospitals a broad. However, i t w as h is proposal to lift t he ba n on a llowing ga ys a nd

lesbians to serve in the military that inc ited controversy in multiple public s ectors.[77] Though

Clinton had openly courted the gay vote during his 1992 campaign (and had garnered 72 percent

of it in the election), military service is sues had been tangential to the la rger ga y movement's

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[76] See T odd, S. P urdum, " V-E DAY PLUS 50: WASHINGTON; C linton P ays H omage t o a n 'Extraordinary Generation'" *New York Times.* May 9, 1995.

[77] See Wadden, Alex. *Clinton's Legacy: A New Democrat in Governance*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. pp. 135.

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concerns with civil rights, marriage, and health care matters related to AIDS. On the other side, conservatives, in line with high-ranking generals led by Colin Powell, firmly opposed lifting the ban.[78] Republicans s eized upon the or der as pr oof of C linton's " endorsement" of homosexuality,[79] and the general public (heterosexual and civilian) was nonplussed by his focus on a social issue at the expense of substantive concerns with the economy.[80] A reconciliation between the myriad of diametrically opposed political groups around the compromised order, the "Don't-Ask-Don't Tell" policy,[81] was impossible. Nonetheless on other fronts, Clinton sought to reverse the damage by moving to a centrist position, and courting the approval of liberals *and* traditionalists by catering to "family values" and presenting a tough stance on crime (Guth 207).

The public relations aspect of the president's 50 year commemorations of WWII had two goals in rehabilitating Clinton's relationship to the military. The first was to cast Clinton as reverent toward military service after avoiding it; and the second sought to re-establish his masculinity after appearing "soft" on homosexuality. A focus on WWII, and its cultural specter, was particularly attuned to these two objectives by virtue of being the nation's last "good" war. The Boomer generation had, for the most part, criticized the Vietnam War *en masse.* The WWII fascination of the 199 0s ena cted a m ilitary "r evival" wherein war's unpopu larity was reinvigorated a longside a nos talgia for va lues (duty, honor, pa triotism) t hat ha d fallen by t he wayside since the 1940s. World War II had a cultural register that offered fantasized antidotes to the political problems related to Clinton's social liberalism: his draft-dodging, his feminist wife, his abortion policies, and his tolerance of gays. Supporting WWII, despite its being *over,* offered

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[78] Ibid. pp.136
[79] Ibid. pp.137. As quoted by Texas Republican Tom DeLay
[80] See Diane Hollern Harvey. "The Public's View of Clinton" in *The Postmodern Presidency.*
[81] The compromised order was signed six months later in July 1993. Gays and lesbians could serve in the military, but not openly. The policy was basically, a mandated version of what had already been going on. The "upside" was that gays could neither be investigated nor ousted for homosexuality, but discrimination and harassment remained in force.

Clinton a public forum in which to reassert traditional family values. Clinton balanced these values, hegemonic notions on race and gender, alongside his obvious concern for diversity and rights for women and minorities. Oddly, Clinton's military ceremonies sought to rectify the tensions of the culture wars through emphasis on a past time of extreme social conservatism, when "diverse" individuals were openly persecuted.

Support and reverence for WWII also offered Clinton, and the nation, a rehearsal of the "tough on crime" stance. WWII was the last conflict with a clear victory and with an easily demarcated opponent in the evil Nazis. Japan's status as enemy, especially as censorship lifted, was compromised by its simultaneous status as a victim of the U.S. atomic bombings. The "commies" in Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War, not to mention the Iraqis of Desert Storm, were all less obvious in their villainy than WWII opponents. The crimes of these more recent enemies and their wickedness toward the U.S. were managed via propaganda and fear campaigns that did not hold up with scrutiny on U.S. foreign policy. Close analysis revealed complexities that did not yield easy "us vs. them" and "good vs. evil" scenarios with America always on the side of right. As Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard noted in *The Hollywood War Machine*, "historical actuality has always clashed with that convenient self image" of American righteousness and innocence.[82] The generalized fear of the "Reds" was less specific than the clear-cut victory over German Nazis who had propagated the most heinous crimes of all time. The U.S. was hailed in popular WWII histories as the nation that saved the entire world from Nazi conquest.

Boggs and Pollard explain that WWII launched the U.S.'s permanent "war" economy and forged the effective misnomer of the U.S. military as a "defense" system. The "military-industrial complex" was already firmly established when Eisenhower coined the phrase in his

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[82] See Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard. *The Hollywood War Machine: U.S. Militarism and Popular Culture.* London: Paradigm, 2007. pp.6.

1961 f arewell s peech.[83] Though hi s w ords c autioned against unhe eded de fense s pending a nd

championed di sarmament, he   conceded that A merican ideals a re c onstituted by the t angled

coalition between certain and continued national crises and war, and the economy of the military

industries. This "complex," t he A merican defense sys tem, maintains American pol itics a nd its

culture, legitimizing America's sense of nation through rampant patriotism—always with a sense

of persecution by an enemy.

One of the "problems" with the war-less Clinton reign was the maintenance of military-

driven ideology i n a time o f "peace a nd pr osperity." B y the t ime C linton t ook of fice t he C old

War ha d d windled a nd K uwait ha d be en s atisfactorily " liberated." C linton w as struggling t o

appear tough de spite the r elative a bsence of a gl obal e nemy, a nd in t he shadow of Reagan-era

national security that was viewed by the public, even by Democrats, as strong and robust in the

face of Communist threat. The Clinton years did not present any "traditional" conflicts, and early

in hi s first term "the 1993 f iasco i n S omalia," further w eakened publ ic view a bout his m ilitary

prowess (Power 66). Clinton's other military operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, though thwarting

genocide in both r egions, w ent largely unnoticed by the ge neral A merican public. Neither were

viewed as prominent events or significant successes.[84]

Samantha P ower e xplains t hat R epublicans ha ve ha d " issue ow nership" ove r na tional

security since t he m id-20th century. W hile t he public trusts D emocrats on dom estic a nd s ocial

issues, they ge nerally view t hem as t he w eak "bunglers" of f oreign affairs.[85] But m ore

importantly, the inf luence of the " military-industrial c omplex" e xtends w ell be yond military

[8]For a copy of the speech see http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/indust.html
[84] See Samantha Power "The Democrats and National Security." *The New York Review of Books.* LV:13. July 17, 2008. pp.66-72
[85] Ibid. pp.66. JFK and LBJ are generally viewed as responsible for Vietnam, and Carter, for botching the Iran hostage situation.

confines, intertwining with civilian life, mainstream values, and the domestic economy. The complex helps to constitute every sector of U.S. life, including the maintenance of gender roles through the manly figure of the defensive soldier (Boggs 7). In that case, times of "peace" are nonetheless subject to militarism as well.

By the 1990s, WWII had been distilled in popular media to a simplistic fight against easily identifiable criminality. World War II became a veneer upon which to project ideas and fantasies about contemporary culture. Susan Hayward, in her discussion of American nationalism, writes that ideological concepts "*masquerade* as a grounded reality, disguising the fact of . . . .imagined abstraction" (89). Boggs and Pollard argue that one of the primary contributions of the "cinematic society" is "patriotic legitimation" (15). In tandem, the imaginary realms depicted in cinema operate in modes that make their political and social functions invisible. For instance, film critic Anthony Lane illustrates the invisibility of patriotic legitimation in his response to viewing *Saving Private Ryan*: "I was practically standing on my seat and yelling at Tom Hanks to kill more Germans, and then, when he had finished killing Germans, to kill more Germans."[86] In popular WWII representation, Germans are killed over and over and over accompanied by a spectator's glee—and without moral or political consequences, or confrontation with complex history (such that killing Germans in and of itself brings no immediate solution to Nazi genocide). The popular imaginary intermingles patriotic troop "support" with a call to duty—not by virtue of enlisting, but through consumption of military materials in the public sphere.

World War II materials in the 1990s took form in multiple media sectors, including the official recognitions planned for Clinton. These ceremonies spanned the years 1993-1995 and

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[86] See Lane, Anthony. "Saving Private Ryan." In *Nobody's Perfect: Writings from the New Yorker*. New York: Knopf, 2002. pp.241.

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were highlighted by Presidential speeches at anniversary events, as well as by Clinton's travel to memorial s ites in Europe, replete w ith formal obs ervance and fanfare. A C ongressional Commemoration Committee w as formed in 1 991 t o ove rsee a nd pl an t he upc oming e vents, extending many of them beyond the military system into the domestic realm. The Committee's partial purpose w as t o recognize m inority pr esence i n a nd c ontribution t o the w ar (especially African-American), as w ell as t o f acilitate public kno wledge and education. D espite t he Committee's int ention to make minorities v isible, they were of ten eclipsed or tokenized in popular renditions and in the c eremonies. In fact, many Americans ne ither knew of the role of African-American troops in WWII, nor that they were segregated from white troops and often used i n " servile" pos itions.[87] Phyllis E . Phillips-Barnes, i n he r r eport on t he C ommittee, summarized the findings on American knowledge of WWII in the 1980s: "a survey revealed that three out of f ive A mericans ha d n o know ledge of W orld W ar I I. S ixty pe rcent of t oday's population was born after that war, and has little or no und erstanding of how or why the most catastrophic and destructive event in history began, or how it has affected our lives today."[88] She cited additional studies with similar findings. The majority of the population, the Boomers and their of fspring, ha d s cant know ledge of t he s pecific hi storical e vents of WWII, t he na tions involved, and which countries were America's allies or foes. This dearth of knowledge, though seemingly lamentable, was crucial in facilitating the imaginary symbolic of WWII that emerged in t he 1990 s. Without de finitive a wareness of t he w ar, i t be came for t he publ ic s phere a n unscreened zone, ripe for political and cultural projection.

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[87] After the D-Day battles, black soldiers cleared the beach and disposed of bodies.
[88] See Phyllis E . Phipps-Barnes. "USA 5 0th Anniversary o f World War I I C ommemoration C ommittee. (African Americans and World War II)." *Negro History Bulletin.* Dec 1993: 7-15.

While historical foreign relations were unfamiliar, similarly, contemporary foreign policy was not a do minant i ssue in t he American publ ic s phere of t he 199 0s. C linton's V -E D ay anniversary speech coincided with troublesome c onflicts s urrounding r elations w ith Iran a nd Russia. He was negotiating an embargo ban with Iran and attempting to convince Boris Yeltsin to s uspend selling nuc lear arms t o I ran.[89] However, the W WII cer emony shifted t he na tional focus to the r esolved conflicts of a distant pa st and distracting t he pub lic from a n identifiable, overt contemporary threat. The V-E Day speech extolled an "extraordinary generation," a phrase that was a prescient sign of Brokaw's forthcoming book pr oject, which placed the focus on t he historical players.

However, Clinton's V -E D ay speech contradicted historic r ecord when he r eferenced Alfred Eisenstaedt's i conic "Times Square Kiss" photo as a cel ebration of the A llied victory in Europe. C linton stated: "in an image that traveled a ll a round the world, a sailor took a nu rse in his arms a nd ki ssed her w ith all the p ent-up, youthful enthusiasm of a p eople forgetting for a n instant the new burdens of adulthood."[90] Clinton's remarks fortified heterosexual convention *and* Boomer psychology. The B oomer generation's diagnosed narcissism emerged in the line about the "burden" of adulthood. When Clinton describes the nurse as "taken," he invokes a standard issue scene of sexual harassment. Through this light, the victory image becomes a representation of irrepressible male desire for nurses, and the release of this pent-up urge becomes an antidote for the pressures of adult responsibility.

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[89] Ibid.pp.11
[90] Purdum, ibid.

The famous photograph was actually taken three months after V-E Day on V-J Day, August 14, 1945 and published two weeks later in *Life* magazine's August 27, 1945 issue.[91] By the 1990s, the term "V-J Day," for Victory over Japan, was openly criticized as insensitive to the hundreds of thousands of Japanese who were killed or injured in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings that preceded the end of the war. Clinton's inconspicuous use of the term in official speeches (though not the one discussed here), eclipsed the dropping of the atomic bombs and focused instead on the "victory" over the Japanese enemy.[92] The ensuing Times Square celebration in 1945 became the emblem for national victory over the "yellow peril," and offered a vision of heterosexual romance as a symbol for that victory. Eisenstaedt's photo became one of many images that covered over the effects of the bombs in securing victory.

Clinton's error in historical accuracy enabled his citation of this image to forge notions about militarism and masculinity.[93] Clinton's description was enough to call forth the image in the national collective memory. The sailor and nurse are conjured in the form of Boym's reflective nostalgia, lingering: "in the dreams of another place and another time" (41). The use of the nostalgic image recontextualizes the historic register for the needs of the contemporary moment that narrativizes a heterosexual scene. When retooled through nostalgia, exhumed from its original context, the image served various purposes. Clinton's "reading" of the image made the V-J kiss about the distinctions between youth and adulthood, between repressed sexuality ("pent-up enthusiasm") and its explosion, and between that expression and forgetting. Just as

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[91] For a comprehensive discussion of the Eisenstaedt's image see, Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites. "The Times Square Kiss: Iconic Photography and Civic Renewal in U.S. Public Culture." *Journal of American History.* June 2007. 121-131.

[92] Rhode Island is the only state that recognizes "V-J" day as a holiday. In the nineties Asian American groups sought to have the name changed to "peace" day or something sensitive to the experience of Japanese Americans and the use of the bombs to facilitate the "victory." Though many found the term "V-J" politically incorrect, a large movement against it did not gain national recognition. Hence, Clinton's easy use of the term during WWII commemoration speeches. See, http://www.pacificcitizen.org/content/2007/national/aug17-lin-vjday.htm

[93] The error must have been his speechwriters' lack of fact-checking, as well.

Clinton "forgot" that the image was taken in August rather than in May, he secured the additional aspects of "forgetting" related to the victory over Japan. In 1995, the image became an iteration both of gender relations and an accessible victory over Germany. Crucial events of V-J Day 1945 are forgotten, as the past is rearranged and restructured. After the Potsdam declaration for Japan's unconditional surrender, there were executions of American POWs and mass suicides by Japanese soldiers, adding to the monumental and horrific aftermath of the atomic bombs.

The commemoration ceremonies and Clinton's speeches enabled a reshaping of WWII's end that allowed the complexities of "endings" and "victory" to seem to have been immediate and definitive. Eisenstaedt's photo and Clinton's inaccurate resurrection of it as a sign from V-E Day, allowed the 1990s public sphere to reconstruct a narrative with a definitive happy ending. Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, in their cultural history of the Eisenstaedt photograph, explain that it emblematized the anxieties of the 1940s in its depiction of gender and race interactions during a usually private act staged in the public sphere. Hariman and Lucaites read the couple's pose as both classical and balletic, but also as imagining a woman being caught by unruly and uncontained male aggression. They also read the photograph as depicting a wholly white public sphere, in that the onlookers and two participants can be read as unproblematically white. Hariman and Lucaites read the image as representing 1940s ideology and the "most explicit tensions of the historical period:" "women are acted upon, rather than acting; relations of class are masked by focusing on individuals; race is effaced as the world worth saving appears to be a white world" (124).

The two central figures convey no specific identity, and come to stand in for ideal American citizenship on an identifiable, marked cusp between war and post-war. They exhibit markers not only of gender and race identity, but also of idealized national citizenship as

signaled in their uniforms. Especially during the war years, the uniforms of nurse and sailor instantly transfer military identities into the public streets. The two appear to have been directly plucked from a warship and a battlefield hospital tent, and plopped into Times Square Manhattan at the moment of victory. Simultaneously, the uniforms seem to be costumes, donned to stage heterosexual romance, Hollywood-style. Hariman and Lucaites describe the image as infused with the air of "carnival" and its associations with disruptive mobs, bawdy sexual expression and boisterous public celebration. The image conveys at once both impromptu social disorder and choreographed performance.

When referenced to serve the 1990s, these "old-fashioned" ideologies are resurrected during the culture wars and their focus on making gender, race and class distinctions visible. From a white male Boomer perspective (i.e. Clinton's), the culture wars could be formulated simply as everyone in society vs. the white male in crisis. This configuration prompted white males (especially in representation) into a competitive stance where they oscillated between maintaining male dominance and feeling as though they must appear diverse and sensitive. This positioning inspired a generational division, igniting a newly-minted version of the age-old conflict between fathers and sons, cast here between the "extraordinary" generation and the Boomers. Honoring the elderly parent became a self-serving atonement. The Boomer generation (embodied by Clinton), which had scorned war during the Vietnam years, was suddenly enamored with military service in WWII.

Christopher Hayes speculates on the use of WWII at the turn of the century American culture when Steven Spielberg (along with Tom Brokaw and Stephen Ambrose) became America's resident laureate for WWII storytelling. Hayes reports:

Explaining w hy he made *Saving Private Ryan*, S teven Spielberg tol d an interviewer, "The most important thing about this picture is that I got to make a movie a bout a time t hat m y da d f lourished i n." D uring t he V ietnam War, Spielberg e xplained, he r esented p eople like h is f ather w ho w ere p roud t o b e American and di splayed t he f lag. " Only w hen I be came older di d I begin t o understand my da d's g eneration," Spielberg s aid. " I w ent f rom r esenting the American flag to thanking it."[94]

Spielberg revises sixties rebellion and counterculture attitudes as the Boomer generation hits middle age. However, WWII reverence is less about honoring the father, than appropriating his experience and turning it into a self-serving narrative for alleviating white masculine crises. Spielberg's move to "thank" the flag masks a narrative tendency that appropriates an experience that is forever lost to the Boomer generation. The fantasy of military service provides crucial societal frills: the honor given to sacrifice and the respect for incurring post-traumatic stress. Previous war defectors and draft dodgers were able to "enlist" and symbolically "fight" via the consumption of Spielberg's highly visceral WWII dramas, in addition to multiple war-related texts including the recirculation of the Eisenstaedt image.

The Eisenstaedt photo allows the fantasy of normality (a kiss) to merge race and gender dominance with sexual fetish—as the "nurse" figure signals the clichéd proclivity for nurse accoutrements, such as white thigh high stockings, their tops barely visible at her skirt's hem. The image harnesses purity and titillation, innocence and aggression so that grasping its meaning is an ever-shifting result of reading: is the nurse taking or taken? By the 1990s, the image had been recreated on numerous kitsch items, enabling its recognition, but also effectively diffusing a

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[94] Hayes, ibid.

close reading of its attributes and contexts. The photo was often republished with the title/mantra "Kissing the War Goodbye" which when used beyond the context of WWII, suggested the war-between-the-sexes and the movie plot notion that conflict is resolved by kissing and making up.

The image also enforces the idea of male dominance being romantic, attractive and military. The couple's pose and the nurse's dangling arm indicate that she is caught and twisted into an unwilling kiss. The sailor's arms connote gripping and binding as much as an embrace, so that the nurse seems to be in a mode of head-lock. Simultaneously, the image suggests that this act is normal—it is what people would like to do if given the chance—kiss a stranger[95] in the public streets at the zenith of a national victory. At risk of seeming a traditionalist prude, I might argue that nurse and sailor (as military functionaries) are what make that fantasy viable and what makes their facelessness bearable. They are no longer strangers because their uniforms function as their (sexual) identity. Their uniforms transform a shocking act (kissing, perhaps by force, an unknown person), into an expression of normalized desire. Normative sexuality aligns with military prowess. To be taken by a sailor is to express patriotic citizenship. Likewise, to *be* the sailor is to function publically in a mode that maintains social structure. To visually imagine the photo, as the President describes it, is to restore the world to its proper order.

In previous chapters, I reference Svetlana Boym's theories about nostalgic action (building a narrative out of fragments), as it desires a pure return to home. Nationalism will use nostalgia to recreate a pure fantasy about the nation-state. The contemporary use of Eisenstaedt's photo presents such a nostalgic fantasy as the couple create a "new" homeland through imaging the original jolt of the post-war period, signaled by the heterosexual actualization of the

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[95] The two did not know each other, as evidenced by the identity of the nurse discovered and proven in 2004. She admits to kissing a stranger, which many people in the Times Square were doing that day.

upcoming baby boom. Susan Stewart also provides compelling arguments about how nostalgia has an ideology building function at its core. In On *Longing*, she argues that nostalgia resides outside of the parameters of lived experience, in the aegis of fantasy. However, nostalgia as narrative has a power that enables it to mimic and affect lived experience because it produces ideology. She writes:

> Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence always absent that past continually threatens to reproduce itself . . . hostile to history and its invisible origins, and yet longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin. (23)

She follows with the argument that nostalgia allows mediated experience and lived experience to coincide. In that sense, the resurgence of Eisenstaedt's iconography in the 1990s, though it always had a cultural presence, fostered an imaginary act of "being present" for WWII victory. To read the photo, as Clinton instructs, as pent-up (sexual) enthusiasm unleashed to forestall the "burdens" of adulthood, is to participate in a cultural reading of the image—one that overlaps with other war imagery and allows identification and narrative logic to emerge. Clinton's line on Eisenstaedt's photo seems to presciently name the "Greatest Generation" uproar, *and* the character of his own, at this time still private, indiscretions with Lewinsky. He offers an excuse: such an expression of masculinity is merely a youthful, brief, and innocent way to temper the adult responsibilities of the presidency. If Clinton was considered "weak" militarily, his heterosexual desire was strong.

The photo reinvigorates the contemporary moment with the lost possibilities of white male sexual freedom (in an age of feminism and sexual harassment suits) as war play. The sailor

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becomes like a *civilian* soldier because he is seemingly stationed in safe Manhattan. This trend was further epitomized by *People* magazine's inclusion of "The World War II Soldier," a generalized composite, as one of the "25 Most Intriguing People" of 1999.[96] This intriguing male persona became a celebrity, a star. The WWII *veteran* was neither as charismatic nor as intriguing. He was regaled and respected, but it was the man he *had been* that captured the nation's interest. The WWII soldier became a reflective nostalgic text, an imaginary generalized young man. In an era that focused on identity politics, the popular imaginary produced a non-specific identity that could be enlarged—that could include anyone willing to identify with white male hegemony.

Hariman and Lucaites read contemporary imitations of the Eisenstaedt image as positive and progressive revisions of 1940s ideology, because in them, "one sees all the old binaries neutralized by parody" (131). They cite V-J Day anniversaries in 2004 and 2005 which celebrate not so much the end of the war, but the snapshot itself in an annual "Kiss In" in Times Square. Kiss Ins were organized by the Times Square Alliance which actively encouraged participating couples to challenge race and gender boundaries in their reenactments. Sailor caps were distributed to aid the performances. Kiss Ins were public expressions of camp that sought to challenge the status of the original image. Oddly, the event was directed at couples in relationships, signaling that organizers did not intend for the kisses to occur between strangers as a part of the imitated ritual—a deviation that crucially shifts the act depicted in the original photo. Couples of all ilk gathered, one or both wearing sailor or nurse costumes and everybody struck the pose. Sailors could pair with other sailors and vice versa—heterosexual normalcy was not compulsory, and judging from photos from the scene, discouraged (130). By 2004, WWII

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[96] As cited in Christopher Hayes "The Good War on Terror." www.inthesetimes.com September 2006

had become kitsch, a trend likely resulting from its excessively earnest renditions in the 1990s and the onset of the real wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the 2005 Kiss In, a sculpture was unveiled, a colorized and life-sized (comedian Louis Black called it "creepified") imitation of the kiss.[97] Hariman and Lucaites read the sculpture, by J. Seward Johnson, as an enlarged imitation of a collectible figurine: "aesthetically linking the event to the collectibles subculture" (130).

Johnson's first "life-sized" sculpture was displayed at the exact spot in Times Square as the original kiss in the weeks surrounding the 2005 Kiss In. In 2007, Johnson unveiled an even larger version, entitled *Unconditional Surrender*, in which his original life-sized sculpture was enlarged to 25 feet, weighing some 6000 pounds (Figure 2.). The sculpture's use of both the aesthetics of the miniature and the gigantic in public space contributed to its display of nostalgia. Susan Stewart theorized the links between spatial dimensionality and nostalgia in sections in *On Longing* related to the miniature and the gigantic. Photographs, unless cinematic or produced on billboards, are usually part of the space of the miniature in such forms as the snapshot and the postcard. Johnson's sculpture enlarged the previously miniature, black-and-white, and two-dimensional image. Though the first scale was "life-sized," it referenced not the actual sizes and bodies of the original nurse and sailor, but the enlarged rendition of a miniature souvenir, a kitsch object, a toy. The spectacle of the Kiss In and the sculpture transformed the V-J-Day kiss into a souvenir within public space. Small souvenirs make the public and the monumental private and bring them into a domestic space where they can be appropriated and preserved. Miniature souvenirs are silent. As Stewart notes, "the souvenir moves history into a private time." In this sense, WWII victory could become the province of individuals who consumed the souvenir, in whatever form—through object or photograph.

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[97] See Hariman and Lucaites, pp.130, note 14.

Johnson's second, 25 foot sculpture disrupted the conventional notions about the miniature and the souvenir in relation to the kiss image. The sculpture, after premiering in New York City, traveled to Sarasota, Florida, and finally San Diego, California where its presence was critiqued and lamented by the local art critic.[98] Stationed near waterfront areas, the "new" Kiss statue allowed the Manhattan "carnival" to travel to popular tourist locales. The sculpture became both a tourist attraction, and a photo opportunity, with countless tourists posing near the sculpture. Some couples strike the kiss pose, others such as the two women in Figure 2., simply stand and smile. Part of the sculpture's allure as a photo opportunity derives from its scale—when photographed the giant object again becomes a miniature captured in a snapshot's frame, and the people photographed become minute, overpowered by the immense presence of the sculpture. Perhaps one of the most bizarre aspects of *Unconditional Surrender* is not only its own aesthetic, but that it can be reproduced in souvenir form for willing buyers. A Styrofoam replica (to precise scale) sells for upwards of $500,000.[99]

In 1989 Peter Blake surmised in *Interior Design* that J. Seward Johnson was trying to be the worst sculptor at work in the U.S.—and he made this statement well before Johnson's most notoriously horrific sculptures of the 1990s and more recently.[100] Critic Robert L. Pincus calls the faux WWII sculpture, among other things, a "sham," a "travesty," and a total waste of San Diego's cultural budget.[101] Since the mid-nineties, Johnson has done a spate of recreations of masterpieces, three-dimensional "life-sized" renditions of paintings by Manet, Renoir and Van

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[98] See Robert L. Pincus "Port Surrenders in the battle against kitsch." *San Diego Union Tribune*. March 11, 2007. http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20070311/news_lz1a11kitsch.html
[99] Sarasota Season of Sculpture, a non-profit organization, takes orders for the Styrofoam model. One in aluminum can be purchased for just under a million dollars. However, if you are going to spend that much you might as well pay the 1.1 million and get an exact replica of the original bronze sculpture. http://www.sarasotaseasonofsculpture.org/GallerySpecs.cfm?id=407
[100] See Peter Blake "Norman Rockwell in 3-D" *Interior Design*. June 1989.
[101] Ibid, See Pincus, cited first in note 99

Gogh among others. At his 2003 art show at the Corcoran in Washington D.C. the public could walk into Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1881). Museum goers strolled "in" to the painting and walked amongst the familiar figures. Johnson's "Rockwellian" style humor contributed to the inclusion of himself and some friends as "wink-wink" members of the party— sculpted and sitting at a table in the back. The aesthetic of these works much resembled the statue of the kiss in Figure 2. They were crude imitations in bright colors that looked like enlarged figurines, or worse, inflatables. Though the Corcoran exhibit was popular, especially among tourists, families and children, critics hated it and were roundly appalled. Johnson's work was credited with causing the museum's reputation to plummet among curators, contributing to its long-term financial duress. The "legitimate" art community did not want to associate with a location that had been stained by Johnson's bizarre and tacky renditions, leading to, as one art connoisseur put, the Corcoran's "fall from grace."[102] However, European masterworks of Impressionism are not the precise equivalent of Eisenstaedt's photograph, though the latter has been lauded over the years for the striking perfection of its composition, which seems to belie an improvised snapshot.[103] Johnson's copy voids the image of its original purview. Though to see the sculpture is to recall the original image, its original context is obliterated by the giant size of the sculpture. While the V-J Day scene and its historical register evaporate, the pose of the nurse and sailor augment heterosexuality, making its representation conspicuous and exposed.

According to Stewart, the gigantic emerges as part and parcel of the public sphere and spectacle. She analyzes the gigantic (always in opposition to the miniature) in literary "giants" of myth and folklore, and representations of colossal figures in painting, sculpture, and public

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[102] See Lynette Clemetson. "Corcoran, after dispute, casts around for new plan." *New York Times*. May 28, 2005
[103] . The contrasts in its use of black-and-white, the "V" shape rendered in the figure's pose and matched in the depiction of the Times Square landscape, and even the absence of the figure's identities in contrast to the smiling onlookers in the street are considered less the result of improvisation, than Eisenstaedt's talent and eye.

space. Conceptually, the gigantic straddles ideas about the materiality of the body and the machinery of the public sphere. It represents both the grotesquerie of the body and the carnival of the public sphere, as it becomes, "a symbol for the abstract social formations making up life in the city" (81). The giant becomes a figure of "collectivity," suggesting that it can represent all, but simultaneously exposing that failure through the enormous "magnification" of what it does not represent despite its size. The gigantic exposes itself as myth, as literal tall tale, as hyperbole and exaggeration.

It is this kind of transference, enabled by the aesthetic of the gigantic, which frees *Unconditional Surrender* from WWII contexts. (Stewart theorizes this kind of move as "transcendence") (102). This shift allows its *other* cultural symbolism to emerge. Stewart theorizes, "the gigantic represents the order and disorder of historical forces" (86). Its primary modus operandi is via its exposure of the "machinery," the infrastructure or ideologies of public life (83). The gigantic also relates to the body of the giant, a grotesque—a feature taken up in Johnson's aesthetic and reputation. Beyond the delights of kitsch, accessible only to knowing audiences, Johnson's works are seen as an affront to social and artistic sensibility. This point is made manifest in the rejection of his work by the art community, and the numerous poor reviews that accompany Johnson's pieces.

Unconditional Surrender, according to Johnson, is not a recreation of Eisenstaedt's V-J Day photo, but rather a rendition of Victor Jorgenson's image, shot at the precise same moment, but from a slightly different angle. Jorgenson, a U.S. Navy photojournalist, shot the couple from the right, cropping out their lower legs and capturing less of Times Square in the background. Nonetheless, his photo was published in the *New York Times* in 1945 and remains in the public

domain due to being taken by military personnel—a tidy fact in Johnson's favor when *Life,* as owner of the Eisenstaedt image, attempted to sue for copyright infringement.

The gigantic transcends conventional ownership; it begins to break through corporate ties (in modern versions) by illuminating the problems with collective meaning. *Unconditional Surrender* wipes out *Life's* rights of possession. By 2007 the image made loose references to Eisenstaedt, Jorgenson, V-J Day and all of its representations. It became an overdetermined sign, at different moments, signaling meanings around nation, victory, nurse, sailor, masculinity, femininity, heterosexuality, camp revisionism, tourism, etc., without being specifically grounded or stable within any. It was national amalgam writ large. *Unconditional Surrender,* precisely due to its garishness *and* popularity, did not transcend the prior meanings, but exposed them as indistinct and disordered. The garishness of the sculpture exposed the similar gaudy quality of WWII memorialism, and the original *Life* magazine spread that covered over Hiroshima, Nagasaki and war events with kisses.

Unconditional Surrender provides a key to the fascination with and belief in national collectivity. The sculpture insinuates the imagined continuity between August 14, 1945 and its commemorations through history, and then obliterates this path. It exposes the connections as nonsensical. Through its grotesque aesthetic, the sculpture points to its function as copy, as imitation, as commemoration. However, via the exposure inherent in its giganticism, it indicates the structure and machinery of the social formations it seeks to copy, to represent.

The giant can only ever be public because its visual aesthetic destroys privacy. As spectacle the giant crushes the private experience implied by the miniature and miniature objects. When giganticism focuses on the site of the body, it exposes what is normally concealed, personal, and secretive. In the case of *Unconditional Surrender*, the revelation unveils the

preoccupation w ith r omantic l ove—an a ggressive, s pontaneous he terosexual "love" be tween strangers. R omance be comes r epresented by a cquisition a nd i ndistinct i dentity—the i dentity provided on ly by a na tionalized uni form. While t his w as t he s ame r evelation i n t he or iginal Eisenstaedt image, the augmentation in its copy exposes those values in a dif ferent way—they become bi zarre. T he i nnocuous na ture of t he or iginal i mage t ransforms i nto monstrosity, fantastically displaying the destructive aggression within white, nationalized heterosexuality that was there all along.

When C linton mentioned E isenstaedt's pho to, i nadvertently or no t, h e r eferenced i ts iconic pur ity a nd i nnocence, in p art, to ove rride pub lic a nxieties about hi s o wn military contradictions. Clinton was always forging connections across diverse terrain: between civilians, veterans and distinct generations. In 1995, Clinton's citation (even with its error in dating) was inconspicuous, e loquent a nd e ffective. B y 2007, t he i mage's r e-eruption i n t he p ublic s phere seemed an explicit abomination of prior WWII commemoration via the garish gigantic copy of the T imes S quare i con, a s i f e xploding t he p rior c ontradictions t hrough t heir e xposure. T he enlarged couple staged the *idea* of a national collective that came together to overcome crisis, but simultaneously the sculpture shattered the possibility of that Clintonian theme –especially since it premiered during the Bush Administration's increasing public unpopularity.

The giant sculptu re *Unconditional Surrender* represents t he n ational i dea of t he Everyman: a m asculine e ntity t hat stands-in f or a ll. T he E veryman is a c onglomeration of collective identity traits. The Everyman, known for representing the ordinary and normal features of the conglomerate also raises up and idealizes "normality" while constituting the natural and the ev eryday. The sai lor be comes E veryman expressing "normative" de sires, dominance and costumed military "play." By 2005, the nurse had a verifiable identity, Edith Shain. Her identity

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was proven through forensic photographic analysis. She attends Kiss Ins dressed as a nurse. The sailor's identity, despite over twenty men making separate claims, has not been verified. He exists in the collective memory as a collection of possible men—as the embodiment of desire and victory. As an object that resembles Styrofoam or something inflated as much as bronze, *Unconditional Surrender* represented hollowness, emptiness and the ghostly quality of the WWII cultural machinery. Even as the sculpture is reviled by trained critics, it is lauded by the masses, evidenced by its popularity, its photographic appeal as souvenir, and even a movement to renew marriage vows before it, as if it were an altar.

Unconditional Surrender has unlikely parallels with the figure of Everyman Tom Hanks in his films during the Clinton era. However, I use the sculpture to suggest possibilities around the meaning of Hank's star persona which was amassing enormous star power during the Clinton presidency. This persona sometimes embodied "gigantic" figures and used the aesthetics of the miniature and gigantic to render visible ideological "machinery." Hanks' characters often seemed ideal romantic partners, though beneath a veneer that disguised aggression. Though Hanks seems, more than anything, an innocuous, ordinary and decent example of white masculinity during the Clinton years, the following chapter proposes that he also exhibited hostility in films that did ideological work in representing the nation.

5.1.1 You've Got White Male: Tom Hanks' Body

> There has been a kind of national consensus about Tom Hanks, abetted by the American publicity machine: he i s o ur c inematic saint ne xt d oor, t he pe rfect ba by bo omer, Hollywood's shining exemplar of unpretentious goodness and decency in an age and an industry where nice guys finish closer to last than first.
>
> Kurt Anderson, 1998[104]

5.1.1.1 Introduction

The cover of *Ladies Home Journal* (April 2001), under the banner "Mr. Nice Guy," featured the chubby-cheeked Tom Hanks, hardly the prototypical erotic white male. Yet, the accompanying article proposed an answer to the conundrum: "Why women love Tom Hanks."[105] More than explaining Hanks, *Ladies Home Journal* formulated the type of woman he attracted. The article, by feminist film critic Molly Haskell, did not provide an adequate rationale for the adoration of Hanks, but rather listed factoids about the actor and reiterated his ubiquitous status as "Everyman." The components of the widespread female worship that Hanks inspired, stemmed, according to Haskell, from his ability in romantic comedy films to relate to children, from his non-threatening sex appeal, and finally, because, "at the end of the day, Tom Hanks is the guy you want to come home to, sit back on the sofa and laugh with" (129). How did Hanks arrive on the collective fantasy sofas of the *Ladies Home Journal* demographic?

This chapter looks at Hanks' significant roles during the Clinton era, examining how his star persona seemed to heal social conflict by offering a solution to the "war-between-the-sexes."

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[104] From a 1998 *New Yorker* article, "The Tom Hanks Phenomenon." December 7 and 14, 1998. 104. The article is published on line at http://www.kurtandersen.com/journalism/nyker/nyker121798tomhanks.html
[105] Haskell, Molly. "Why we love Tom Hanks." *Ladies Home Journal.* April 2001. 128-131.

Consistently, his roles exemplified masculine "niceness" and decency, apparently desirable traits

to women and to the "national consensus." He represented ideal masculinity, but he did so

through roles in which his status as a "nice" white male maneuvered through controversial

cultural war zones such as feminism and homosexuality. Hanks' characters faced "liberal" issues

and demonstrated how white males cope with AIDS, women in the workforce, economic take-

over, and race relations. Hanks' characters did not avoid crises of masculinity, but they each

confronted its anxieties and then prevailed over them—often by projecting niceness that

disguised much more insidious aggression. However, each of Hanks' significant roles

concentrated on representations of his body, especially as it offered an alternative to the popular

"hard body" of the 1980s. Hanks was known for being "average," "pudgy," and alternately

skeletal (when portraying AIDS illness). He gained cultural agency via his alternate, non-ideal

representation of the white male body, as either "average" or suffering. This chapter examines

how the Hanks star text attained its idealized status, and also offers theories about how Hanks

both paralleled and contrasted to Clinton's masculinity at different moments and in different

films. At times, Hanks' "goodness" opposed Clinton's "immorality." At other times, Hanks

seemed to embody Clinton's sexualized "predator" role, "taking" women and ignoring "no

means no." Ultimately, this Chapter argues that Hanks' persona was so influential during the

1990s because of the ways that it interacted with public ideas around masculinity, sexuality, and

Clinton, himself.

One issue with 1990s conceptions of white masculinity was the fantasy of persecution

attached to "niceness."[106] Susan Faludi, in *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (1999),

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[106] This anxiety was represented in several films of the era, notably *Fight Club, In the Company of Men, The Truman Show , L.A. Confidential,* and *Primary Colors* which each portray male protagonists or supporting characters who suffer or are at risk socially from being too nice and sensitive. "Nice" and its associations with even

was sympathetic to 1990s men and boys who were not "permitted to nurture." Instead, she argued that American culture created a political climate that "destroyed the possibility of male nurturance." Her theories are broad and alarmist, but she offered that the only way men and boys could be sensitive was to undergo "feminization," (as many gay men did in her assessment) or fulfill its alternative by becoming predators (151). In popular media, men were either part of the voting bloc, "Angry White Males," or "ordinary" nice guys. Presumably, nice guys rarely caught a break or a girl, and invariably, they finished last. Meanwhile, in contrast to the masculine warriors who roundhouse-kicked their way through popular media (e.g. Jean-Claude Van Damme and Chuck Norris, appropriating Asian martial arts), the lion's share of white American men had unremarkable physiques and clean arrest records. "Nice," was as much a sign of goodness as a trait indicating average. Tom Hanks offered a nice guy whose aggression and predator-like behaviors (toward women and minorities) were disguised amidst benign characteristics of white masculinity: ordinary, average, *decent*. Though the array of ideal characteristics journalist Kurt Anderson assigns to Hanks in the epigraph are not interdependent, in his assessment "average" became intertwined with saintliness. This coalition between "ordinary" and "good," was not only the primary mode through which the Hanks' star text ascended in esteem, but it was similar to Clinton's own political rhetoric that suggested his small town, "ordinary" upbringing meant that the public should, and could, trust him.

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temperament and vulnerability, feminized these male characters and they either succumbed, or in the case of *Fight Club* and *The Truman Show* rebelled and broke free.

Brenton Malin also makes arguments about the sensitive "new male" of the 1990s in *American Masculinity under Clinton* pp.25-27

Many scholars, significantly Judith Kegan Gardiner and Brenton Malin, have argued that the 1990s produced a crisis of masculinity related to cultural shifts and diversity awareness[107] that questioned the hegemonic dominance of white males. Certainly, the 1980s and increasingly the 1990s, produced progressively more African-American stars than the decades before. Masculine figures such as Wesley Snipes and Will Smith in the action genre, and Morgan Freeman and especially Denzel Washington in dramas, were able to secure critical acclaim and box office clout. This emergence, while progressive, still located these men and their roles within a mainstream hegemony (i.e. the "use" of Freeman in *Amistad*). However, the 1990s seemed to revise the "black buddy" regime that categorized such stars as Danny Glover and Eddie Murphy in the 1980s. While these "strides" signaled positive social change, they were imagined, in some cultural sectors, as sources of anxiety that called for a re-negotiation of white masculinity itself. The masculine persona offered by Hanks was an ideal panacea for these anxieties. In his films, Hanks embodied the average qualities of the normal white male, but made these traits powerful, highly desirable, and admired by both women and black males. The Hanks star text often represented the attributes of the man-boy and engaged in nostalgic scenarios.

One facet of the "crisis of masculinity" centered on the problem of "niceness" and its attendant sensitivity, especially relating to sexuality and romance. These traits, previously hidden and eschewed, could, in some cases, be celebrated as non-threatening expressions of "new"

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[107] I intend this "diversity" to include Asian, Latino and additional minority groups though I primarily focus on African-American relations to Clinton and Hanks. While I do not intend to obscure these group's importance, I cannot do adequate justice to an analysis here. Certainly, stars such as Jackie Chan and Jet Li emerged in the 1990s in ways that threatened white masculinity. Latino stars have yet to be allowed to significantly impact mainstream Hollywood cinema, although John Leguizamo, James Edward Olmos, Andy Garcia, Antonio Banderas and others have had significant roles. An ongoing problem in mainstream Hollywood cinema is the representation of minorities. I do not mean to imply that their presence alone secures "progress." Often, an actor will be relegated to playing a role that requires a minority race, rather than one non-specifically raced or imagined as only "white." Often, specifically with someone like Morgan Freeman, his appearance in movies with deeply racist structures, seeks to offset any criticism regarding race. Each instance, has its own specific valences that cannot adequately be unpacked here.

manhood, most potently embodied through Clinton-style empathy.[108] However, there was still

anxiety that being a nice guy was a direct path to weakness. Hanks' star text developed across a

1990s body of work devoted to representations of masculine "niceness." However, rather than

expressing sensitivity or empathy, Hanks' "nice" signified decency, desirability, normality and

trustworthiness. Hanks' performances induced mass love and respect from audiences, but *not*

through empathetic expressions toward others. Rather he became a figure to desire—with rare

and muted expressions of emotion that exhibited outward. Though Hanks did not display a

version of Clintonian empathy, he had ties to the President in both public and private life during

his rise to super stardom—which happened to coincide with Clinton's two terms. However, by

the end of Clinton's reign, in the midst of the scandal, their public bond would break. Both men

were powerful (and often oppositional) registers for negotiations of masculinity in the 1990s, as

described and expanded below.

During his two terms, Clinton walked a tightrope between sensitivity and strength. He

was "evolved" as a "feminist" and agent of diversity, but he also had the rakish sexual appetite

usually assigned to fraternity boys and truckers with stripper silhouette mud flaps. Clinton had

desire, but its expression, while fortifying his heterosexual masculinity, also brought about his

political downfall—or at least threatened it through impeachment. After the Lewinsky scandal

broke and the details emerged during Clinton's second term, the public became increasingly

aware of the minutiae of his corporeal body, its behaviors, emissions, and appetites. With no

aspect left to the imagination, his symbolic body was transmogrified by the literal details of his

physicality. Clinton may have been regarded as a good president, a strong leader, and a

competent economist, but he was not a nice guy—as much was evidenced by the patterns in his

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[108] Malin's *American Masculinity under Clinton* analyzes the President in relation to the conflicted sensitivity of the "new male." pp24-29

treatment of women. While the public could fantasize Paula Jones, Kathleen Willey, and Juannita Broaddrick had lied, their belief in the veracity of DNA gave Lewinsky's stories gravitas.

But even before Kenneth Starr and Linda Tripp's coup d'état, Clinton as womanizer was a widely held American belief with origins in his political career in Arkansas.[109] This "history" was broadcast in the "anonymous" publication of Joe Klein's *Primary Colors* in 1996, a journalistic novel that focused on a Clinton doppelganger's sex scandals during his presidential campaign. The immensely popular novel provided "realistic" inside details that *The Starr Report* seemed to confirm three years later. Hanks was slated to play the President in the film version. The casting made sense—the bestselling book gave it a built-in audience and director Mike Nichols produced reliable and respected films.[110] By 1996 Hanks was solidly A-list and ascending; his participation would have guaranteed box office appeal across widespread demographics. However, Hanks' stardom was still "new," and four films were primarily responsible for the catapult: *Sleepless in Seattle* (Nora Ephron, 1993), *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993), *Forrest Gump* (Robert Zemeckis, 1994), and *Apollo 13* (Ron Howard, 1995). His popularity was bolstered by back-to-back Best Actor Oscars in 1993 and 1994, a distinction that gave his "nice guy" persona a critical legitimacy. He had not played a "bad guy" since *Bonfire of the Vanities* (Brian DePalma, 1990) and that was to be his last significant flop until *The Ladykillers* (Joel Coen, 2004) when his star power began to significantly wane.[111] In the fourteen years in between these two films with meager profit margins, his movies would each

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[109] Juannita Broaddrick's rape allegation first surfaced after the incident in 1978. Rumors always followed Clinton, but Broaddrick did not publically raise the allegations against Clinton until 1999.

[110] Notable Nichols films include: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe* (1966), *The Graduate* (1967) and *Silkwood* (1983)

[111] Hanks' entire career beginning in the 1980s was built on playing comedic leading men who were, at worst, grouchy.

gross e nough t o be c onsidered s olid bl ockbusters, g arnering a t l east 100 million dol lars i n domestic bo x office a nd usually significantly more. In this chapter, I w ill p rimarily e xamine Hanks' 1990s oeuvre,[112] his blockbusters during the Clinton years.

Hanks supposedly turned down the lead in *Primary Colors* for two reasons. First, he did not w ant t o r isk of fending C linton by por traying w hat w as largely a n unflattering p ortrait, a nd second, he di d not w ant t o r isk pl aying a "bad" guy w hich might hur t hi s pr istine re putation. Though Hanks chose not to play the President, his stardom must be read through the lens of the Clinton years, as its ri se a nd fall a ligns w ith that e ra,[113] and with t he man w ith w hom he ha d somewhat s urprising ties. I n r etrospect, the i dea of H anks pl aying Clinton is essentially disjunctive. While they both ha ve s imilar phys ical features (slightly rotund, r ound faces, pudgy noses, wavy hair) and apparently charming demeanors, one exudes sexuality, and the other does not. I n t he 1990s, t hey a lso ha d s urprisingly different va lences w hen i t c ame t o e xpressing emotion. T hough H anks w as a lways " nice," he w as r arely e mpathetic, w hile empathy w as Clinton's pr imary, publ ic m odus op erandi. P erhaps t he m ost i mportant aspect un iting t he t wo was t heir h uge popul arity—which remained s trong e ven when t hey e ach e xhibited s omewhat glaring be haviors a s "not ni ce." Y et, they each remained hugely popular throughout the 1990s, although H anks' ul timate r ise a ccompanied C linton's undo ing—at l east on moral gr ounds. I f

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[112] I do not look at Hanks' voice over work in the *Toy Story* Franchise (1996 and 1998) or at his supporting roles in *A League of Their Own* (Penny Marshall, 1992) or *That Thing You Do!* (Hanks, 1996). I examine *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and *The Green Mile* (Frank Darabont, 1999) in Chapters Five and Six.

[113] After the mega-hit *Cast Away* (Robert Zemeckis, 2000) and the respectable, but lower box office of *Road to Perdition* (Sam Mendes, 2002) and *Catch Me if You Can* (Spielberg, 2002), Hanks films since 2004, after *The Ladykillers*: *Charlie Wilson's War* (Mike Nichols, 2007) and *The Terminal* (Spielberg, 2004) have made significantly less than 100 million. *The Da Vinci Code* (Ron Howard, 2006), was a blockbuster, but the film was a critical flop, almost an embarrassment, ridiculed, much like the success of the book was by discerning readers. As Anthony Lane puts it in his film review: "There has been much debate over Dan Brown's novel ever since it was published in 2003, but no question has been more contentious than this: if a person of sound mind begins reading the book at ten o'clock in the morning, at what time will he or she come to the realization that it is unmitigated junk? The answer, in my case, was 10:00.03, shortly after I read the opening sentence." See "Heaven Can Wait" *The New Yorker*. May 29, 2006.

Clinton became the nation's black sheep, its proverbial bad boy, then Hanks was its flaxen ram—its nice guy *par excellence*.

Clinton and Hanks reportedly had a tight friendship throughout the 1990s that was publically broken by Hanks' open disapproval of the president when the Lewinsky scandal broke. In more than one interview, Hanks lamented "in all honesty" his financial contribution to the Clinton Defense Fund created to help with legal fees to oppose the allegations made during Starr's investigative rampage. He seems to protest Clinton's use of a legal fund to defend a lie, but indicts Clinton for the sexual behavior as well. The critique comes from a long-married, goody-two-shoes type, moral guy. Before Clinton's "fall from grace," Hanks and wife Rita Wilson slept over at the White House three times—a privilege reserved for close friends, major donors, and not incidentally, Spielberg himself. At one point, Hanks was rumored to have purchased a Los Angeles home for the Clintons. Presumably they would need it during Clinton's also-rumored plan to help run Dreamworks Studios once he finished with the presidency. Hanks joked "earnestly" in *The New Yorker* (the issue concurrent to the president's impeachment in December of 1998) that Clinton "ain't getting that house. I'll tell you that right now. Forget it. And he ain't workin' at the Playtone Company, either," Playtone being Hanks' production company. Clearly, Hanks sought to distance himself from a man whom he had in prior days greatly admired. Of their friendship before the scandal, he quipped: "I'm friendly with him. But I don't think I've ever had a true connective conversation with him. I just can't. I'm still too much in the 'Jeepers creepers, he's talking to me' kind of thing."[114]

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[114] From Kurt Anderson's article, though obviously from the interview portions done in Venice in the summer of 1998 for the *Saving Private Ryan* media tour. His stance changes in later e-mails closer to the print date and after Clinton admits to his "inappropriate relationship" with "that woman," Lewinsky.

Jeepers creepers? Hanks' phrase connected his film persona (in multiple roles) with his "real-life" character, and both came across as what Fred Pfiel called "pretty darn simple" (120). In Hank's usage, simplicity shrugs off its negative connotations and becomes an exemplary American value. Pfiel has written the definitive article theorizing Hanks' stardom and career history through 1999. Pfiel argues that Hanks' film roles produced a star persona that went through a series of three stages (briefly, boy, adult male, and father figure), each building on and incorporating the one previous. When Hanks used vintage slang associated both with a child's reluctance to swear and an old-fashioned era, he constructed a star persona that extended over and across generations. Hanks usually embodies a nostalgic figure, like one of Spielberg's man-boys, because he sutures a sense of the American past with his contemporary moment. He is idealized as someone pure, as if to enact a preservation of values and traits already "lost" in the anxieties and transgressions of the present moment.

In "The Politics of American 'Nice,'" Pfiel examined Hank's "niceness" and "normality" in contrast to the previous idealized masculine stars of the 1980s: Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Swartzenegger, and Bruce Willis. Pfiel conceded that Hanks emerged as a contrast to the "angry" and suffering white male victim in other popular films (120). While Hanks' calm simplicity seemed to offer a progressive alternative to the "rampagers," his films also implied that race, class, and gender conflicts had been resolved. Therefore, Pfiel's history ultimately critiqued the Hanks form of "niceness" as an attribute that disguised the more insidious characteristics of his masculinity. In the 1990s, Hanks was still on a rampage, but he did so by restructuring the hegemonic paradigm around white masculinity—in a mode that made its dominance, anxiety and "anger" covert.

The ne xt s ections of t his C hapter or ganize a round r eadings of T om H anks' m ost

significant r oles: t he one s w hich ha d t he m ost potential i nfluence on n ational c ulture i n t heir

valences w ith C linton. I n e ach s ection, I w ill make a rguments a bout H anks' masculinity i n

relation to the myriad of issues raised in this dissertation thus far: boyhood, empathy, nostalgia,

nation, s exuality, a nd t he f igure of Clinton hi mself. M any of t he f ilms he re di scussed r elate

directly to Clinton's policies, official acts, and of course, his private life.

5.1.1.2 *Big Boy*

Big (Penny Marshall, 1988) was the first film to earn Hanks serious consideration by the

Hollywood establishment. He was recognized with a Best Actor Oscar nomination for playing a

13-year old boy (Josh) suddenly in a man's body. Pfiel argued that in *Big*, Hanks represented

three entwined characteristics that would accompany him throughout his later film roles. These

were boyishness, sexual passivity[115], and happiness, especially due to being a "worker within the

professional-managerial class," the upper-middle class (121). I briefly discuss *Big* below

because it "defined" Hanks' masculinity and, due to its critical acclaim and popularity, made

"boyishness" a central part of the Hanks trademark in subsequent roles. Hanks' performance of

boyishness was read as "effortless," and as Pfiel argued, perceptions about his masculinity were

thereafter merged with a sense of his scrappy adolescence and purity. Though the conceit in *Big*

caused emotional duress for the mother (when her son goes missing) and the adult girlfriend

(when the man changes back to a boy), Hanks as Josh came across as innocent and perpetually

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[115] My reading of Josh's sexuality contrasts with Pfiel's. I find it much more predatory than passive. Nevertheless, Hanks' characters are sexually passive in subsequent roles.

lovable. Josh (as a boy in a man's body) maneuvered perfectly, even ideally, into a romantic relationship *and* the corporate environment.

One strange facet of Hanks' acclaimed performance is the way it portrays all levels of childhood without consistent divisions between the ages. Josh does not move like a 13 year old, but with the unsteadiness of a toddler who is awkward on his feet, or when excited, takes to skipping. When he plays with toys he bites his tongue, or alternately his jaw hangs agape as he smashes the toys about as if he has not yet mastered fine motor skills. Yet, at other times he is able to slow dance and nimbly seduce a woman. Hanks seems to have portrayed an adult's recollection of childhood—one without specifics, where incidences, tastes and abilities merge into one age: simply "childhood," without distinctive gradations marking the abilities and milestones of each year. Josh's toys, and his high-paying corporate gig as a "toy-tester," link the narrative to the world of fantasy, not for children, but for adult spectators. As Susan Stewart explains, toys were first the province of adults. Before they were passed down to children, they were part of collections and adult hobbies (57). Toys mark the miniature world of imitation, an inverse of the world that animated the workings of everyday life: the conventions of women's clothing in fashion dolls, the domestic universe in a doll's house, the quickness of transport in hobby trains. Stewart explains, "the toy world presents a projection of the world of everyday life; the real world is miniaturized or giganticized in such a way as to test the relation between materiality and meaning" (57). The toy animates the world, but because it enforces deviation from the normal scale of the everyday, it disrupts thinking—it points to the artifice of the everyday. Stewart surmises that this disruption is what makes toys interesting for adults.

Big's now iconic scene featuring a gigantic piano keyboard on the floor of the supreme American toy store, FAO Schwarz, exhibits the relationship between Hanks' star text and its "materiality and meaning." I use materiality here in relation to the symbolic aspects of Hanks' corporeal figure. In *Big,* Hank's materiality or corporeality, is exhibited in the physicality of his performance: gangly limb movements, "innocent" facial expression, and physical exuberance. These affectations form a set of physical comedy moves that actually contrast to the demeanor of the child actor who plays young Josh before the switch takes place. Hanks' body signifies multiple ages at once: from 3 to 35. He looks like a fully grown man, 30 or beyond, but he moves like anyone between the ages of 3 and 11, portraying the comedic possibilities of a man who moves like a child. When Josh leaps onto the piano, visually, he shrinks. He becomes a miniature, almost a toy, as he plays the rag melody to the simple tune "Heart and Soul" while leaping around on the keys.

MacMillan (Robert Loggia) Josh's boss, eyes the leaping man-boy with nostalgic envy. Though he represents the older generation, 25 to 35 years older than the grown man Josh, they share a similar mentality in relation to this toy. The giant keyboard does not relate to a musician's fantasy; its size would hinder any serious solo performance. Instead, to make a piano gigantic simplifies the artistry and complexity usually associated with the ability to play. When giganticized as a toy for the common man, this difficulty disintegrates and musical virtuosity becomes absurdist. What is usually demanding and arduous, reduces to something effortless and delightful—child's play. As a result, Josh is able to, in seconds, "master" the piano and play a tune. Because the piano is now an enlarged object, notes normally played with fingers must be played by jumping legs. This shift in the scale of normal sizing, allows the keyboard to transform into a visual representation of the "machinery" of the everyday working world *and* the position

of the white male body within this world. The visual disjunction of size discrepancy exposes a visual rendition of social hierarchy. As I pointed out in *Prelude IV*, drawing on Stewart's theory of the gigantic, when an object is enlarged it transforms into an entity that *exposes* the ideological structure of the material realm. As a gigantic toy, the piano represents the "playing field" of the corporate world where the two men's business is, literally, toys. However, previous scenes have shown this world to be aggressive, indifferent, and difficult—especially when it comes to advancement.

When MacMillan and Josh perform a duet together on the giant keyboard, they also perform their white masculine coalition within corporate life. Loggia plays with an adult's waltz-like grace, in contrast to Hanks' boisterous movement. A long shot captures the big floor piano and the full bodies of MacMillan and Josh. The mise-en-scène shows store displays of toys and large stuffed animals. A crowd gathers—mesmerized by the simple tune the men play with their bodies. Josh's ability to "play" with MacMillan secures his instant promotion—he rises to Vice President of a division of the toy company. In some ways, *Big* seems to offer a critique of the corporate world as a simple machine sustained by duties that any child could easily perform. However, instead, the visual presentation of this scene suggests that intricacy and complication are easily reduced to their lowest common denominator by men with the ability to "see" as a child. Just as piano ability is reduced to an easy physical mastery, the interworkings of the corporate environment become rendered in an "easy" way. The piano turns into a horizontal corporate "ladder" that is traversed and constituted by synchronous actions between men.

Climbing the corporate ladder, which in this film is portrayed as especially difficult for qualified women, appears as an easy, but nuanced language that forges bonds between white males as they appear side by side. MacMillan and Josh have shared a similar childhood, with

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enforced piano lessons, but these led not to musical ability, but, instead, to white homosocial

agility. This reasoning is further evidenced by the position of an extra, a black male who stands

behind them, directly in the center of the background. As a figure in the background, in scale, he

appears as a miniature, much smaller than the two men in the foreground, but conspicuously

excluded from their play. Since the scene represents corporate environments, black extras are

similarly absent from that environment.[116] Shot with a telephoto lens, the scene flattens depth

and all the figures seem to be on the same immediate plane. Yet, the crowd just a few feet behind

the pianists, are of an entirely different scale—much smaller. The scene presents Stewart's

theory of the gigantic as a mode that presents the "machinery" or interworkings of an ideological

environment—here white homosociality and corporate ascension exist in a smooth, simple,

horizontally shared space between white men and generational difference.

The two men "share" space not only through the environment, but via their shared

psychology as white males who both "see" as children. Though their bodies present static

representations of male stages (the patriarch, the adult in his prime), mentally, the men are both

boys. Though there are three primary representations of white male stages: the young Josh, the

adult Josh, and the elderly "father" MacMillan, this scene suggests that they each share a

mentality—one that even at 60 plus years old is attuned to boyhood. As in the Spielbergian

sense, the man-boy mentality is a constant throughout adult life. Like the Spielberg version, the

child's viewpoint is comforting, but it eradicates complexity, desire and knowledge from

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[116] The sequence has already established that it is "odd" for an adult male to be in the store without accompanying children. MacMillan is there for "research" and Josh, as a child, is there to play. Therefore the presence of the black man, sans children becomes conspicuous. Perniciously, he may be aligned with the gorilla stuffed animals who climb the wall behind him. *Big* presents an almost exclusively white world, as do most Hanks films, although usually with a strategic use of African-American extras, or as side-kicks and supporting players. Their presence helps to constitute whiteness.

representations of everyday life. However, Josh is not a precise man-boy, but a strange hybrid version because he is an actual boy with a 13 year old mentality. In that sense, he is also a giant.

Josh's body is enlarged magically, like Alice's in Wonderland or the Incredible Hulk's. His mom finds his torn pajamas left in his bed after the transformation. Josh has gotten "big" because he wished to be so at an amusement park the night before. The opening sequence sets up a standard Oedipal scenario in which Josh leaves his parents to go stand near a tall girl to whom he is attracted. His parents stand with a stroller, though Josh's baby sibling is not seen, indicating that he is seeking to detach from his own infantile self. However, when he goes to the girl, his object of desire, he is too short to ride the rollercoaster with her and he is replaced by an older male teen. Further the immense carnie running the ride, harasses Josh for being too short. In that sense, Josh propels himself (through his granted wish) into his future due to burgeoning sexual desire and the pains of pre-adolescence. One of his first moves after noting that he is in a man's body is to stroke the hair on his chest and examine the change beneath his underwear. Conveniently, whatever he sees is "big" as compared to his child-size organ the night before. In this sense, Josh has morphed into a giant, not compared to other men, but compared to other boys. Josh has become a *big* boy.

Josh also deviates from the ideal Spielberg man-boy due to his sexual desire (a characteristic abandoned by the Hanks persona in other films). Rather than depicting the burgeoning desire of a child on the cusp of puberty who suddenly finds himself as an adult, the film's conceit allows a temporal *reversal.* The boy's fantasy of projection into his future, enacts for the audience a nostalgic return to their own fantasized past. This nostalgic return allows scenarios wherein the problems of adult life are re-configured as easy and effortless. For instance, Josh (after transformation) starts out homeless and impoverished then effortlessly rises

to the top of the corporate ladder in a job that is not complicated and involves his ready expertise. He also easily negotiates a love affair with a high-powered corporate woman despite being a child.

Josh's adventures are not necessarily the fantasies of boys, but of men. His exploits "play with" an appealing adult scenario where one can live in an enormous Manhattan loft apartment fashioned as an arcade, have a romantic relationship free of complexity or commitment, and work a high-paying, high-powered corporate job as a tester of toys. When Josh invites his colleague over to his loft, Susan (Elizabeth Perkins) finds herself face to face with an inflatable Godzilla monster. The visual image implies a connection between the two. Godzilla is a giant, and when Susan stands eye-to-eye with the monster she becomes a giant too, but her power is undone by the visual joke that compares her to an innocuous inflatable. In the film, she does represent someone akin to the 50 Foot Woman, or the wife in *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957)—a version of Barbara Creed's "monstrous-feminine." Susan is a scary, ambitious powerful woman who reportedly beds men, then discards them in order to ascend the corporate ladder. In Josh's first scene with her she is raging about the incompetence of her marriage-minded secretary. Though she is presented as smart, aggressive, demanding and attractive, entrance into Josh's toy world apartment disarms her. Strangely, though Josh's companionship is banal and infantile (they jump on a trampoline) and he is unable to have complex discussions, Susan falls for him. Susan's former male partners have so failed her that Josh's sweetness and simple gestures become attractive and satisfying.

The implication is that women should be satisfied with a man like Josh (a boy) as evinced by Susan's approving friends who find Josh "wonderful." During their first night together, Susan expects sex, situated on the bottom of a bunk bed with a "come hither" look. Josh cannot

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interpret her invitation and instead leaps onto the top bunk and says "good night." She scowls, both confused and rejected, but then Josh dangles down from the top bunk and offers a glow-in-the-dark ring to keep her safe. This simple gesture, though trivial, causes Susan to find Josh ideal and different from other men. She wants to commit, something she has been previously incapable of, and imagines a future with him that includes marriage and children. Josh's infantilism succeeds in taming the scary aggression of the empowered woman in the workforce. Their sexual relationship is not represented as criminal and incestuous, though Susan is both the lover to a "minor," and in a mothering position to Josh, especially at work.

Rather Susan appears to be deeply satisfied with their sexual relationship. Though Josh is physically gangly and often awkward, he possesses the erotic dexterity to seduce Susan. The effect of her satisfaction is that it likewise "tames" and simplifies cultural notions about women's sexuality (i.e. if a 13 year old boy can manage . . .), and assuages masculine anxiety. *Big*'s Josh is Hanks' last overtly sexual role until 1999's *The Green Mile*, and the sex scene does bizarre representational work by normalizing taboo. The scene inverts ideas about what is *normal*, and this facet attaches to the Hanks star text as a supremely normal, average Everyman. The scene depicts what would be, under *normal* circumstances, deviant and criminal—sex with a 13 year old. As the adult, Susan is the responsible party though she is oblivious to Josh's mental state as a boy. Though she is a duped person, unwittingly having a relationship with a child, their romance is presented as perfect and manageable *because* Josh cannot engage in adult conversations or the haggling that inevitably brings conflict. The diegetic logic has the sex as occurring between a minor and an adult, but the visual ideological view presents consensual sex between adults. Susan removes her blouse and Josh becomes enraptured with the view of her breasts, slowly cupping one and fondling it with intensive focus. This strange moment causes a

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fissure, a disjunction in which Josh's erotic move signals both satisfying a woman *and* engaging in incestuous desire. Susan mistakes the infantile, Oedipal fantasy of a giant "baby," as pitch-perfect foreplay.

The scene is meant to play as a sweet celebration of sexual fulfillment through an ideal situation for an adolescent boy who would normally not attract the focus of an adult woman. Eventually, like all nostalgics Josh wants to go home, but unlike most, he is actually able to return to his boy self and his waiting mother. He breaks it off with Susan: "I'm a child and I'm not ready for all this." Though the remark is literal, Susan reads it as the regular, normal response of all the men she has previously dated—the lament of the man who cannot commit. In this sense, *Big* does important ideological work in normalizing and making innocent the attributes and behaviors of white males who prefer "no strings" relationships. Additionally, *Big* presents a "how-to" on neutralizing the "threat" of women who work in a man's world, becoming a popular antidote to feminism as well as a celebratory masculine fantasy.

Though Susan forgives Josh for duping her, the males in the film are less easy on the man-boy. Josh's 13 year old best friend, and his rivals at the office each see him as flaky, childish, uncaring, and manipulative. Susan, caught by his boyish charm, is unable to see past his attractiveness to his quite obvious flaws. The film's presentation of this gap seems to correspond to the notion that "image qualities" account for the gender divide between male and female voters. Marie Christine Banwart and Lynda Lee Kaid in "Clinton and Women Voters" try to figure out "why women 'love' Bill Clinton?" That is, why did he reliably garner their support in spite of consistent allegations of sexual harassment (toward women) throughout his two terms? While Banwart and Kaid suggest that his popularity with women was due to a variety of factors, which likely included his support of traditional "women's issues," and his use of a

communication style infused with "pathos," they also attribute it to his image as a "bad *boy*" (emphasis mine 108-9).

Clinton's photographic introduction as a 17 year old boy meeting JFK helped the nation to always imagine him in his youth—one that seemed perpetually present. Journalist Marshall Frady remarked on this somewhat ineffable aspect of Clinton's masculinity, his boyishness, during an interview in 1984 when Clinton was Governor of Arkansas and they were discussing the state's public schools:

> [They were] an authentic passion for him, but within his eager earnestness one also sensed an instinct for close pragmatic computations, and a ferocious ambition already larger than his native state could contain. But he was instantly, expansively likable—engaging, a sort of Twain character (Tom, not Huck) grown into a conscientious young political prince of the South . . . bobbing his head urgently, he spoke with an open, affable sincerity that still hinted of small-town youth. (117)

Frady hits on the essential fact of "boyishness:" its earnestness and *energy*. In the analyses here, boyishness is never static or inert, but rather ambitious and aggressive. "Ferocious," is Frady's term. Real little boys, as we know, are unlikely to accomplish anything of consequence, but the man-boy, he can free "slaves," rise to the top of the corporate ladder, and handily, become president. Both the bad boy and the good (man-) boy are fiercely (and affably) ambitious. Frady was wrong about one aspect though. Clinton was Huck, *not* Tom.

5.1.1.3 Sleepless (and sexless) in Seattle and Philadelphia

Hanks' turn in *Big* was a definitive early text that had a strong influence on his later star persona in film roles and in public appearances, giving him the essence of being a boy trapped in a man's body. In this fashion, Hanks was able to exhibit the ideological qualities associated with the child: naturalizing innocence, purity and the ideality of non-complex thinking. Paul McDonald explains in "Star Studies," that "star images are the product of intertextuality in which the non-filmic texts of promotion, publicity and criticism interact with the film text–the star's image cannot exist or be known outside this shifting series of texts" (83). McDonald also points out that the star's identity, though socially constructed, is commonly seen as natural: "the star image achieves a double ideological closure. It reconciles contradictions and presents what is social as though it were natural" (82). Sean Redmond, building on Richard Dyer, describes how whiteness interacts with stardom; it can shore up ideas around the nation by putting forth a specific national identity. Usually, whiteness is idealized as heavenly, brilliant or other worldly. Blonde white stars such as Marilyn Monroe or more contemporarily, Gwyneth Paltrow, exhibit an ethereal purity that signifies the basic value of white womanhood. Redmond presents Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert Redford as two white male stars who share a similar pure and heavenly quality. Redmond elucidates that whiteness often is presented as a luminous and uncorrupted trait that white stars share, in some ways as "synonymous" with each other as part of a rare tribe, raised above the fray (264). Hanks, as a brunette, becomes fascinating because of his "ordinary" quality. Though he often engages in extraordinary scenarios, most notably in *Forrest Gump*, he does so through a fastidious link to the average and the normal, raising these "low" qualities to a redeemable height. While stars like Redford and DiCaprio seem to dwell beyond the everyday world (Redford in part through the visual effects of soft lighting and back-lit haloes

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in his films), Hanks seems to have wandered in from next door, plain and unstyled. Though he does extraordinary things, such as meeting JFK, he does so with an exacting rendition of commonality. As a star whose persona stitches together normalcy and nation, Hanks constructed a persona so run-of-the-mill as to be patently innocuous. In this way, he exhibited an "under the radar" whiteness, especially during a decade when attributes of whiteness were being questioned. As the culture wars wracked America, Hanks embodied a national identity that was blameless, hiding the privilege of men like Redford under the guise of the normal and everyday.

Mike Hill, in "Can Whiteness Speak?" argues that "white privilege . . . is the omniscient and invisible core which does the 'framing' without ever taking its turn at being 'framed'" (159). Steven Cohan, explains that hegemonic masculinity does not define a proper male sex role for all men to follow so much as it "articulates various social relations of power as an issue of gender normality" (35). The Hanks form of masculinity engages with race, class, sexuality and gender, articulating the power relations between them, but doing so through the characteristic of "niceness," which in part was attained through the boyishness fortified by *Big*. While Bruce Willis in films like *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988) performed a similar "everyday" kind of hero, his persona was more in line with the hard body rampagers of the 1980s. In the film, Willis copes with threats to masculinity such as his wife's success in the corporate world, in addition to European terrorists during the remnants of the Cold War. But he ends up bloodied and injured in his trek to restore conventional order (the destruction of his wife's workplace and her return to his arms). In contrast, Hanks was able to accomplish a quelling of anxiety through, at this point in his career, non-violent means. He accomplished a similar restructuring of masculine order as did Willis, but through romance and niceness. Oddly with Hanks, especially in *Sleepless in Seattle*, niceness signifies blankness—a plain uniformity or tabula rasa upon which a woman's

and a boy's fantasies can project. As a national identity, Hanks represented old-fashioned, nice and simple values during a time of apparent "strife" when women, minorities and gays were beginning to openly complain and make strides.

Sleepless in Seattle begins with Sam (Hanks) as widower. The film opens with a long shot of Sam and a young boy, his son, standing in a graveyard, at what we learn is his wife's funeral. The rest of the narrative concerns the acquisition of a replacement wife and mother for the lonely pair. However, Sam is able to be completely passive in this quest, in part, because he is depicted as the ultimate eligible bachelor. Sam's first lines in the film are "There is no reason, but if you start asking why, you'll go crazy." Though he presumably speaks about the untimely death of his wife, the lines also speak to his own intense level of desirability. There is no reason—that is, no rational explanation for the national furor by American women who desire Sam after hearing him speak a few dull lines on the radio. For instance, he describes his plan for dealing with grief: "I'm going to get out of bed every morning and breathe all day long." Though he describes the most banal and basic aspect of living (breathing), his speech moves thousands of women to tears, most especially Annie (Meg Ryan) who then obsessively pursues him though she has only heard his voice on the radio. Pfiel describes that voice as "a hollow, affectless deadpan" (129). Even so, Annie behaves with flagrant and excessive emotion, abandoning her job and her fiancé (Bill Pullman) to track down the immensely desirable Sam. Importantly, Sam does not exhibit strong emotional pathos in the film; rather than this affectless-ness being a specific attribute of grief (such as shock), this trait becomes a part of his allure. He becomes like a blank screen across which Annie and his son (who helps orchestrate the romance) can project their fantasies.

Sleepless in Seattle continues to present the boyish aspects of Hanks, but couches them in a restrained performance that will show up again in *Forrest Gump* when Hanks plays a man who seems cognitively incapable of emotion. However, the sexual desire that propelled the narrative of *Big* is absent in the "adult" romantic comedy. While Sam does not seem to have a strong desire to meet someone[117], his son obsesses over it, choosing Annie out of the thousands of women who have written Sam letters after tracking him down. Hanks' ascension into normality, actually makes his lack of desire for women "normal." The film seems to replay the problematic issues of *Big* (too much desire) and this time combat female aggression (dimmed considerably when performed by Ryan) by not displaying affect or desire. As bi-coastal paramours, Sam and Annie represent the merger of the west and east coasts to unite the nation. The film (especially via the graphics that show animated plane routes back and forth across a map of America) suggests that "imaginary" bonds unite people.

Additional to Sam, other men in the film are presented as oddly disconnected from emotion. When Annie breaks up with her fiancé, Walter, her eyes tear up, though he appears unaffected. He tells her, "I love you, but let's leave that out of this," and gives her a low-key blessing to pursue Sam who she has not met. When Annie arrives late at the Empire State Building (where she is supposed to meet Sam for the first time), the observation deck has closed. Amidst tears, she pleads with the guard to let her look around the deck anyway. He relents, not because he feels for Annie, but because *An Affair to Remember* (1957), the movie plot on which Annie has modeled her meeting, is a favorite of the guard's wife. In an earlier sequence, Annie and a friend weep while watching the film, contributing to the presentation that women cry,

[117] Sam does date one "aggressive" career woman who he meets through work. When he asks her out, on advice of a male friend, she takes over and plans the evening. She is presented as the "wrong" type of woman: aggressive, phony, somewhat unattractive due to her laugh and ambition, and most importantly: the son despises her. We never see the couple kiss and it is understood that they have not spent the night together.

while men do not—even when their wife dies. The Hanks persona in *Sleepless in Seattle* speaks to the issue of male sensitivity by presenting highly affective scenarios, a wife's death and a new love. Yet, Sam, at the center of these scenarios remains disaffected. However, women still find him highly desirable; he often causes Annie to cry, overcome with emotion—especially, during her tear-filled, eventual face to face meeting with him.

Their meeting occurs after closing hours on the observation deck. Both Annie and Sam convinced the uniformed workers to extend the hours and stay longer so that they can meet, which takes vital import over the lives of the employees. Sam has just pursued his son (who was in search of Annie) across the nation. When he catches up with the boy on the observation deck he is clearly emotive, embracing the child. But in exasperation, he explains that they are doing okay and do not need a woman. He suggests a dog. They get on the elevator and leave. Another opens and Annie emerges, persuading the elderly worker to wait while she looks around. Sam and his son return for a forgotten backpack and Sam and Annie are finally eye to eye—Annie's tear-filled and Sam's quizzical, at most. As Sam gazes at Annie he performs only slight emotion. The scene punctuates what the film has taken pains to project—a vast gap between women's tears and men's emotion. Strangely, as Hanks gazes on Annie, he is shot with the black male worker, waiting and watching, hovering over his shoulder, another miniature (Figure 5.). The couple, as total strangers, signify love at first sight—not unlike the narrative assigned to Eisenstaedt's strangers, except that Sam and Annie do not kiss. They hold hands. First base.

When the new family get into the elevator, the threesome are joined by the black uniformed elevator operator—a nod to "yester-year" and the time setting for the first film, *An Affair to Remember*. Taking place in the late 1950s, it was a time in which, as Ward Sutton put it when making fun of Brokaw in *Prelude I*'s cartoon, "women and coloreds knew their place and

shut up about it." In opposition to Clinton (who had just taken office), Sam exhibited a highly

reserved empathy, a contrast to the "new" sensitive male who would be more prominent on the

cultural scene as the1990s wore on. However, though Sam was oddly non-emotive, Hanks'

performance disguised that strange, blank quality, in part, through earnest boyishness that

accompanied him.

One of the first words spoken in *Philadelphia* is "innocuous." The lawyer Andy (Hanks)

argues a defendant's case in a judge's chambers with Joe (Denzel Washington), and he describes

a threat with that word, then insinuates Joe does not know it means "harmless." This opening

begins the dismantling of homophobic and hysterical cultural notions about the AIDS virus,

which stands out as the film's intention. The word was an apt term for the Hanks persona itself,

and this role depended upon a compassionate portrayal of a gay AIDS victim to avoid alienating

the audience and also to secure their tears of sympathy. Though the two lawyers begin as

adversaries, this opening does not present them as equals. Andy uses sophisticated vocabulary

and represents a corporation; Joe represents a poor community seeking punitive damages in what

is implied as a dubious claim, and he does not succeed in convincing the judge. While Andy's

case is not inherently righteous, he is clearly the more powerful—evoking a white privilege that

accompanies him throughout the film even as his AIDS develops and makes his body

increasingly vulnerable.

Andy is fired from his high-powered law firm because of his AIDS illness and

homosexuality. He hires Joe to represent him in a discrimination law suit against his former

employers. The center section of the film concerns the courtroom trial, in which both

homosexuality, and bigotry against it, are metaphorically on trial. The two men prevail in their

lawsuit shortly before Andy succumbs to AIDS related illness and dies. Though Joe is deeply

homophobic, he agrees to represent Andy only after he is able to feel sympathy for him through

identification with his oppression. The film sets up a problematic analogy between the two types

of discrimination: racial and homosexual. Andy's mother (Joanne Woodward) gives his lawsuit

her blessing through this same comparison: "I didn't raise my kids to sit in the back of the bus."

When Joe agrees to take the case, despite his expressed disgust for gays, it is because he

witnesses Andy's discrimination in a law library. This witnessing comes shortly after his own

experience of being watched and "profiled" in the same library—presented subtly as racial

profiling.[118] When Joe witnesses Andy's similar experience (though for presenting with AIDS),

he decides to help due to his compassion and identification with that experience. This mode

makes discrimination the constant between the two main characters, erasing the differences that

bring about that discrimination. Ultimately, this displacement alleviates complex issues around

discrimination for most of the white characters, and by extension, the white audience. While

Philadelphia uses the trope of Civil Rights and racism to secure sympathy in the audience, this

mode puts pressure on the lead black character to carry the burden of homophobia. It has been

suggested as a positive aspect of the film that Joe represents "mainstream America," though at

the same, some scholars suggest that his casting guaranteed a black audience for a film about a

rich, white lawyer (Greenfield 122). However, Joe does not represent "mainstream America"

unproblematically, and by assigning intensive homophobia to Joe, "mainstream [white]

America" is exempted from responsibility in this oppression. Further, the film employs strong

formal modes to encourage identification with Andy's pain, while Joe is an "other."

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[118] This scene has been misread as ambiguous. I do not agree. Joe eats a sandwich, perhaps against the rules, and a white "monitor" walks past, slows, and carefully observes Joe. The scene conveys a sense of threat and judgment from the monitor. It casts Joe as potentially being evicted from a primarily white space. The presence of the sandwich is another mode to "cover" the racism. See, Greenfield pp. 121

As Richard Corber argues in "Nationalizing the Gay Body," *Philadelphia* mollifies issues related to AIDS activism by presenting a correlation between race and sexuality. That is, it presents both minority statuses (racial and homosexual) within a "discourse of Civil Rights" (108). *Philadelphia* uses this comparison to frame the experience of the white AIDS victim, as commensurate with racial oppression. Corber suggests that the film employs this analogy to assuage fears associated with militant gay activism that instead becomes benign and non-confrontational so as not to alienate the audience. Corber argues, "by appealing to mainstream Americans' pity and compassion, . . . [the film] indicate[s] how the sentimentalization of racism and sexism works to unite a deeply divided people into a collectivity of '(dis)identification," one for whom the distinction between politics and therapy has collapsed" (109). What Corber suggests, is that by producing extreme affect in the mainstream audience, the film fosters a narcissistic emotion that works against actual political knowledge or action. The audience will feel "deep" emotion, but it will be apolitical or privately felt. The audience does not "identify" with Andy, but with their "compassion" for him. This transition between Andy's pain and the audience's affect, occurs through the position of the black lawyer Joe, whose presence enables the film's metaphorical alliance between AIDS suffering and the suffering from racism, "incommensurate modes of oppression" (Corber 110).

While the men in Andy's firm are presented as deeply homophobic, Joe also carries that status. When the white old school lawyers express their disgust at gay behavior, their bigotry is expressed through hyperbolic, unrealistic fantasies about gay life and underground "secret societies" and "deviants." This assessment comes across as paranoid and false. In contrast, Joe's homophobia is presented as more "natural" because his paranoid fears about gays do turn up in the film—making them seem accurate. Joe's biggest fear is not only that AIDS is contagious, but

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that homosexuality is as well. When he expresses his revulsion for gays he imitates feminine affect, then "grinds," simulating gay sex which repels him. He then tells his infant daughter to avoid his wife's lesbian aunt, the implication being that he discriminates even against family. As he delivers this "performance of homophobia" he holds his infant's bottle and a large, raw drumstick that his wife was cooking. He smashes the two props together, enhancing his "primitive," infantile viewpoint.

When Joe agrees to represent Andy it is through his confrontation with his deep homophobia. The first step was to visit his doctor after shaking hands with Andy. The doctor delivers a basic primer on how to catch AIDS. This speech, which is supposed to "educate" Joe's ignorance (and the audience's), also makes the doctor suspect Joe is gay. The film seems to consistently confirm Joe's fear that homosexuality, if not AIDS, is contagious merely by association. In this way, Joe bears the "burden" of bigotry, in addition to his other characterizations as a lesser attorney who contrasts to the "brilliant" Andy. Joe is cheap, tacky and ambulance-chasing. He is presented as the "untrustworthy" type of attorney responsible for frivolous law suits—a characteristic that shades the 4 million dollar punitive award that Andy eventually wins.

Andy's former firm is racist, sexist and homophobic, but Andy's position as white male privileges his gay oppression as the "worst" kind to endure. Strangely, *Philadelphia* sets up a dynamic where both main characters vie for victim status. Though Joe must overcome his homophobia, Andy is presented as a liberal, non-racist person. He has no intolerance to work through. He comes across as innocent of oppressing others, though one African-American paralegal accuses him jokingly of "exploitation." *Philadelphia* clearly seems interested in presenting minority oppression. In Andy's firm, all "servile" roles (i.e. lunch and mail cart) are

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assigned to minorities. Further, Andy's array of friends is populated with an "ethnic rainbow"

who all get along perfectly. As well, Andy's gay partner, Miguel (Antonio Banderas), is Latino.

However, these characters work to enhance Andy's white privilege. A white doctor threatens to

have Miguel ousted from the hospital (gay and race oppression), but Andy's eloquent "legalese"

neutralizes the doctor. Miguel does not have that same power. Further, Andy's white, upper-

middle class heterosexual family (with multiple brothers and a blonde sister) exhibit no

homophobia and appear politically perfect: totally supportive, heart-broken over Andy's

impending death, yet categorically white. Andy also exhibits white privilege when he comes

across as a better, smarter and more powerful lawyer before his illness takes hold and he must

"lower" himself to hire Joe—the 10th attorney he approached. Presumably, since Joe takes the

case purportedly due to his blackness, the previous nine choices would have been white. With

Andy's white privilege unexamined, the film as a whole is able to project a responsible social

conscience, one that disguises its own racist modes. *Philadelphia* assigns all of the "difficult"

issues with male dominance (homophobic anxiety, infantilism, sexism) to Joe, effectively

centering these crises with the black character, instead of the more empowered white attorneys in

the film, including Andy.

In this way, the elderly white lawyers (helmed by Jason Robards) come across as evil, but

out of touch. Hanks' Andy, in contrast, happily worked for these men and merrily pushed their

corporate agenda before AIDS overtook him, and he comes across as angelic and victimized—as

much by Joe (early in the film) as his bosses. Certainly, the most socially "brave" aspect about

Philadelphia was its acclaimed presentation of homosexuality, yet it diffuses that representation.

First, it does so by using Hanks as its star. At this point, his star persona carried with it boyish

innocence and earnestness and also strong heterosexuality as presented in *Sleepless in Seattle*

and the actor's personal life. Second, the film assigned homosexual desire to Joe—a heterosexual married man with a baby.

With Hanks' cast as a gay AIDS victim, the star's white heterosexual masculinity accompanies his gay character who can then exhibit the developing traits of the Hanks star text: average, normal, ordinary and innocuous. AIDS hysteria can be allayed through audience identification with and empathy for, Andy (though as Corber argues the identification is less with the man, then with compassion itself). *Philadelphia* sets up a rivalry between the two socially disparate men who are linked via their "oppressions," and who seem to vie for a position of culturally valued suffering. This dynamic is represented visually in the three-shot where Andy and Joe stand on either side of a "victim," a man covered with injuries (who gets one of the business cards which Joe often distributes indiscriminately hawking for clients) (Figure 6.). *Philadelphia* focuses on the male body as it exhibits both suffering and ecstasy. Strangely, *Philadelphia* makes the gay body absent because it is uncomfortable with presenting overt homosexual desire—especially from Andy.

Philadelphia, perhaps despite its best intentions, does present homosexual desire and sex as deviant, and it does not allow Andy to express his desire or even admit openly that he has had gay sex. Though the film presents homophobic men as bigoted and cruel, it cannot present a loving, sexual, and *mutual* desire between men. As Pfiel has suggested, the relationship between Andy and his longtime partner Miguel is "entirely chaste" (128). Though the film presents a sequence at a crowded "gay party," the guests seem platonic. When Andy and Miguel share a dance (dressed as military officers in white), Joes stares intently at them while they dance. The image seems an overt reference to the then current issue of "gays in the military," and it

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strangely corresponds to the hysteria since the men dance rather than perform duties. Simultaneously, the costumes present the fetish of the "man in uniform." Because Joe gazes at them, the simultaneous threat and titillation they present is displaced. Presumably, Joe is staring at the spectacle of men dancing, but his facial expression suggests a deeper intensity—a passion that is confirmed in the next scene as he stares at Joe "performing" an aria as Maria Callas plays on the stereo. The problem with Joe suddenly expressing homosexual desire is that it does not "out" a formerly closeted impulse. Rather, it confirms Joe's worst fear about homosexuality itself as contagious.

Andy, bathed in red light, wanders around his apartment, his eyes closed, translating the opera in what will be his strongest display of emotion.[119] The scene employs melodramatic modes of excess. Pfiel reads the scene as using "extreme measures of distancing and projection," directing Andy's desire toward the passion in the opera, whose lyrics he translates: "I am divine. I am oblivion . . . I am love." Meanwhile, Joe directs his own love toward Andy, who does not gaze back. Shot with a fire over his shoulder (suggesting burning passion, if nothing else), Joe's face displays strong sexual desire, homosocial love, and barely contained passion. Uncomfortable, after the song ends, he rushes out. Once outside Andy's apartment, he struggles to leave, turning once and almost knocking before turning away again. The scene cuts to an external shot of his modest home, and then inside to his daughter in her crib, and finally his bedroom with his wife. The aria continues to blare, and as it served as the signifier (the displacement) for Andy's love, it signals that that desire is still present. Joe clutches his sleeping wife, but he gazes forward, suggesting that he still thinks of Andy.

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[119] Andy's love of opera is one of many gay male stereotypes in the film.

Joe's desire, rather than liberating a closeted sexuality, destabilizes his entire heterosexual life and identity. Therefore, compulsory heterosexuality is duly called into question, but at the expense of the stability of the black family which the film has previously taken pains to present as loving, supportive, and middle-class. Previously Joe has been scared that homosexuals seek to convert heterosexual men. The film presents this fear as a sound possibility, because as Joe spends time with Andy, he does seem to convert. Further, he is hit on by a gay black man in a store. The incident incites him, and it suggests that his fears were correct: homosexuality behaves like a contagion. Because he represents Andy, he is mistaken for being gay himself. So while the film displaces homosexual desire onto a previously heterosexual black man, it resists presenting Andy as gay. Corber suggests that Andy "nationalizes" the gay body by "dequeering" it (111).

Andy's body is "dequeered" during the very scene that seeks to present the intractable "proof" of AIDS—the court scene where Andy must present his multiple lesions. Not only can Andy not represent homosexual desire, but hints of its expression occur only in tandem with the physical horror of AIDS. In this way, the "love" evinced by the performance of the aria is presented as terrifying, physically horrific, uncomfortable, embarrassing and finally beyond consciousness as Andy nearly collapses when in court he is asked to describe the anonymous one-night stand in which he contracted AIDS. When he must reveal the details, he becomes ill. His mother, watching from the galley, looks down with shame and pain. The camera angles become severely canted as if the film itself cannot bear the awkward line of questioning. Andy answers most of the questions with his eyes closed, rubbing his forehead, suddenly overcome with illness. Andy is not actually "present" for the story he relates—it cannot exist within the narrative space. In this sense, the Hanks star text is preserved as without desire—especially of

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the homosexual kind. Andy is allowed to exhibit suffering, but he cannot perform what the film presents as deviance. After the court case is won, and Andy has died, the film engages in nostalgic discourse to disrupt and recast the "adult" events that have just taken place. The film previously showed Andy's penchant for taking home movies, which seem to capture more authentic moments than the diegetic photography. Andy poses in footage (presumably Miguel is filming) of his childhood home and his boyhood handprints in concrete outside of it. Once inside, the amateur camera remains on Andy's mother's face, and she betrays deep sorrow, a moment that can also move the audience. At the film's conclusion this home movie footage emerges again. This time the footage depicts Andy as a young child of three or four, well before the onset of his sexual self. He is therefore, preserved as boyish, innocent, and pure. Further, rather than dying, Andy is re-animated, living instead in the less conflicted climes of pure childhood running with his mother along the beach.

Philadelphia premiered during a cultural moment when the nation was hysterical over AIDS and Clinton's "Don't-Ask-Don't-Tell" policy. Especially through the "innocuous" presence of the developing Hanks persona, the film was able to engage with controversy and then dispel and displace it. The presence of minority stars, Denzel Washington and Antonio Banderas, were integral to these displacements. Washington's character was burdened with bigotry and homosexual desire. Andy's firm, which seemed to have its own "Don't-Ask-Don't-Tell" policy, would never have hired someone like Joe, except as token. Yet it was a place where Andy worked contently (and would have continued to work) until they discriminated against *him*. The other discrimination, against women and minorities, never seemed to bother Andy, even after he contracted and presented with AIDS.

5.1.1.4 Apollo 13: Body Rockets

While *Sleepless in Seattle* and *Philadelphia,* each in their own way, fortify the Hanks star text qualities of boyishness, ordinariness and asexuality, *Apollo 13* continues to create and project "average" masculinity, through the trope of the vulnerable white male body and its "positive" aspects. The film employs the aesthetic of the gigantic and the miniature in relation to male bodies in order to position it as "equal" to, or larger than, spaces such as the earth and moon. The American nation, through *Apollo 13*'s patriotic plot about space exploration and heroic U.S. astronauts, obliterates the identity of other nations and becomes the singular locale men see when eyeing the ball-sized Earth from space. Based on a true story, the film portrays a NASA flight's failed mission in 1970. Though the three man crew, led by Jim Lovell (Hanks), does not land on the moon, they are still presented as heroes through their team effort with the control room in Houston. Despite the vulnerability of the space modules and the men's bodies, through innovation and invention they are able to use ordinary objects to repair their shuttle and find a way to get home. The film presents the entirely white and almost wholly male world of space travel through a nostalgic return to the anticlimactic launch that came in 1970 after the moon landing in 1969. By focusing on a "successful failure," *Apollo 13* transforms fiasco into heroism, while simultaneously diverting attention from Neil Armstrong's prior achievement. Though Armstrong left Earth and voyaged to new territory, *Apollo 13* presents the heroics of an arduous journey back to square one. The Apollo 13 mission intended a second moon landing. However technical problems forced the mission to abort. The crew was in danger of perishing in space. However, through the ingenuity of American scientists, the men travel safely back to planet Earth, where the United States has come to stand in for the entire global community.

Clinton's policies on the American space program revised its "cancellation" during

Bush's prior term and fulfilled promises made by Reagan (and originally, John Kennedy).

Clinton's space program policies were inextricable from his foreign policy and he intended space

exploration to be an international project and coalition, marking united efforts between Japan,

Canada, several European nations, and Russia. While Clinton's "International Space Station"

(ISS), approved by congress in 1993, intended to maintain U.S. dominance in space technology,

it was also a means to "join forces" with other nations in a non-military pursuit that could

potentially dissuade nuclear proliferation. In this sense, the project was primarily interested in

global peace coupled with global economic competitiveness. Clinton recognized that aerospace

products were potential lucrative national exports and it was crucial for the U.S. to be a leader in

associated technologies. Critics felt the ISS focused too much on industry and not enough on

science. Budget cuts severely limited the capacity of the station's scientific possibilities and the

U.S. ended up providing the bulk of the financial support.[120]

When Clinton awarded Jim Lovell, the captain of the Apollo 13 mission, the

Congressional Space Medal of Honor in 1995, Tom Hanks (having just played Lovell) was in

attendance. This was the first "official" mode through which Hanks gained status as a national

political player. Though his presence was merely ceremonial, it cemented the influential

connections between pop cultural and political players, as evidenced in the press image.

When Clinton introduced Lovell, along with some NASA luminaries, he included Hanks,

effectively bolstering his relevance and importance: "Tom Hanks and his son, Colin, are here.

They're here not only because of "Apollo 13" but because when they make the sequel to "Forrest

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[120] See Genene M. Fisher "The International Space Station" in *Triumphs and Tragedies of the Modern Presidency: Seventy-Six Case Studies of Modern Leadership.* Ed. David M. Abshire. Westport: Greenwood, 2001. pp.99-101

Gump," now he won't have to have a computer-generated President."[121] Clinton's remark drew

laughter, and it also brought Hanks (himself a Democrat and a donor) into Clinton's fold.

Though Forrest Gump was beloved, he was unanimously an openly conservative creature.[122]

Hanks' turn in *Forrest Gump* stitched that titular character's traits onto his developing star text:

boyishness, asexuality, ordinariness, lack of affect, and unflappable patriotism. Clearly Hanks

was publically political, but this Space Medal ceremony exemplified how he became a visual

marker associated with the President after *Apollo 13.*

Hank's Academy Award acceptance speech for *Philadelphia* was perhaps his first

platform as a politicized citizen. His speech famously (and sentimentally) remarked that the

"streets of Heaven [were] too crowded with angels," AIDS victims. His speech linked his

gratitude to the "benevolent creator," God, and who he compared to the American forefathers

when he referenced the Declaration of Independence's phrase about "self-evident" truths,

insinuating that it included gay men as "created equal." This rhetorical mode was similar to the

one Anthony Hopkins's Quincy Adams would use in *Amistad* in 1997. It revised the intolerance

of the past to fortify the political correctness of the present and future. Hanks would continue this

"official" public role after *Saving Private Ryan* when he became a WWII veteran activist and

was integral to the development and assembly of the World War II memorial.[123] *Apollo 13* was

one of the stabilizing ventures in Hanks' political agency as it became imbricated with his star

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[121] See "Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Space Medal of Honor to James A. Lovell, Jr., and an Exchange With Reporters." *July 26, 1995. The American Presidency Project.*
http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=51653
[122] One of the reasons that I do not do an in-depth analysis of *Forrest Gump* here (aside from significant mention in *Prelude II*) is because that film is overtly a conservative, racist, and sexist American paean, and has already been assessed accordingly.
[123] Nicolaus Mills found Hank's dying Captain's line "Earn it," to be exemplified in that memorial, a physical manifestation of the WWII generation's sacrifices. Nicolaus also claims Hanks was responsible for the memorial's eventual approval and creation. See, Mills. T*heir Last Battle: The Fight for the National World War II Memorial.* New York: Basic, 2004. Pp. 219.

persona. The film resurrected the specter of the Cold War, but without the same sense of competition. In that sense, when produced during a time when Clinton's space policies advocated peace, the film enables a different national crisis. Richard Nixon remarked in 1970 that Lovell's mission signified "a triumph of . . . those special qualities of man himself we rely on when machines fail, and that we rely on also for those things that machines cannot do."[124] I read the film's nostalgia for a "failed" NASA mission as an interest in celebrating a triumph over the vulnerable aspects of masculinity and the male body.

Apollo 13 confronts a time "when machines fail" and raises "ordinary," average white males to extraordinary heights through its melodrama of a "successful failure." *Apollo 13* revises the allure of the easy, rampaging victory and instead suggests the heroics of ordinary, flawed men. Granted, astronauts are "spectacular" due to their cutting edge intelligence and space travel, but *Apollo 13*'s astronauts are simultaneously vulnerable. They are robbed of their moon-landing triumph, and must endure the breakdown of their bodies in a broken spacecraft that cannot support life. Their experience intertwines with their "audience's"—the control room's legion of white males who must band together think-tank style and invent new solutions for the unpredicted failure. Therefore, *Apollo 13* presents the masculine prowess of types such as the math nerd and the control room manager—characters who dress in short-sleeved dress shirts, wear comb-over hairdos, and carry a mass of pens in their front pockets.

In this sense, the film fetishizes knowledge, describing it in technical language, the specific meaning of which would be lost on the audience (i.e. "fly the co-ax crosshairs right on its terminator"). *Apollo 13* dramatizes mathematics and physics problems, only occasionally deigning to be comprehensible in "lay" terms (i.e. the spacecraft needs to enter the atmosphere

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[124] Nixon made these remarks when awarding Lovell with the Medal of Freedom in 1970. See the Official Medal of Freedom website. http://www.medaloffreedom.com/JamesLovell.htm

through an opening as slim as a sheet of paper—if the earth is basketball-sized). The science is both awe-inspiringly esoteric and also "primitive" and intuitive. The NASA masterminds employ MacGyver-style resourcefulness creating a crucial "filter" out of "found objects" that are aboard the space module, giving the astronauts explicit instructions on using materials such as a binder cover and a plastic bag. The man responsible for the contraption is called a "steely-eyed missile man" and his achievement is celebrated with back-slaps. Though the "science" seems old-fashioned (including the tin-foil bottom on the moon craft), the film invests this out-dated era of room-sized computers as a setting for male genius that can invent beyond the "limits" of technology. As Nixon suggested, the men overcome their technology's failure. The astronauts eventually have to manually fly the craft while eyeballing the precise location of earth because the computers are down. Lovell gives a soliloquy on the "good luck" of a prior flight's auspicious technical failure. His airplane's lights went out during a military mission. His own eyesight, able to follow sea algae patterns, guided his landing in a superior way to the faulty machinery. *Apollo 13* fetishizes technology, but insinuates that the "simple" innovations of the average NASA man are superior in a crisis.

The control room is populated by a throng of white, average-looking emoters, led by the intense and passionate, Gene (Ed Harris), who holds his emotion in check beneath a sensitive, but stony visage. Following his lead, the men perform anxiety and intensive worry, but alongside a subdued homosocial love and sentimentality. Brows sweat. Jaws clench. Eyes tear. While these men display intensive empathy toward the stranded astronauts, as usual, Hanks' Lovell portrays a steady calmness throughout the ordeal. Like Roy in *Close Encounters*, Lovell is presented with an insatiable urge to disembark from suburban life. However, like all nostalgics, once he is lost in the sky his only desire is to get back home, to the small planet he stares at out the craft's

window. In the meantime, his homesickness presents as illness and the men get increasingly

sicker. Nevertheless, Lovell refuses to be monitored and in an act of insurgence, he yanks off the

"bio-med sensors" the control room was using to scrutinize his vulnerable body. The implication

is that "technology" and normative assessment systems are inadequate measures for the male

body. *Apollo 13* invests in the male body's vulnerability, but simultaneously seeks to represent

its triumph over technology.

An early scene sets up an obvious analogy between the mechanics of spacecrafts and the

human body. Astronaut Swigert (Kevin Bacon) explains to a young, attractive, blonde women

the mechanism for docking a spacecraft in terms that simulate intercourse; he uses the generally

offensive analogy of a beer bottle entering a drinking glass. Though Swigert names these devices

a "probe" and the "module," through the couple's flirtation these objects are stand-ins for

heterosexual relations. A character in the background even yells "liquid propulsion" after

Swigert describes the "slide in, [when] everything's clickin.'" This episode begins the motif that

compares the male body to space craft in the language of standard issue phallicism. When these

analogies invoke the scale of gigantic by comparing male bodies to giant rockets, they work

through anxieties about male vulnerability. In this light, Armstrong's famous line about the

"giant leap for mankind" becomes literal: astronauts do take giant steps.

Apollo 13 depicts the masculine body both as gigantic and also as physically vulnerable

and ordinary. In this sense, the film is able to suture fantastic renditions of power and heroism to

the normal, quotidian aspects of male physicality. For instance, early in the film as Lovell gives a

tour of the NASA facilities, a tourist questions, "How do you pee in space?" Improbably, the

film later takes the time to answer that question in detail, focusing on the astronaut's urine

collecting contraptions and their long "relief tubes." At one point, one of the collection bags

hovers in mid-air due to lack of gravity. Rather than presenting the urological as abject, the film seeks to elevate its fundamental importance—persisting with the motif throughout Hanks' career carrying forward what began in *Forrest Gump* and continues in *The Green Mile* (1999) and *Cast Away* (2000). This motif ties Hanks to the bawdy excesses of an uncontained male body, not unlike Clinton's, but one that is imagined as having a much more heroic proficiency over seeming adversity and abjection. Urine is not "weak" or abject, but rather a means of marking territory—even in space.

The film opens with the "live" depiction of Armstrong's moon landing that Lovell and his team watch on television. This "documentary" footage, like that used in *Forrest Gump*, seems to give the proceedings historical gravitas. But it actually operates as a decoy from the *fantasy* the film deploys. Its investment is not in abandoning weakness, vulnerability, anxiety or the basic and abject, but rather to expand and expose those masculine characteristics. When Lovell and company watch the moon-landing astronauts they are wracked with envy and moved by the power suggested by both the small step and the giant leap. Directly after Walter Cronkite repeats the line, a close-up on Lovell's face cuts to a shot of a giant thumb covering most of the frame with the night sky in the background. The thumb shifts to the side and we see that it covers the moon. The giant thumb repeats the process, repeatedly putting the moon under his thumb, controlling it. Through the visual play with scale, Lovell is able to conquer the moon, manipulating and collapsing its unfathomable distance. He later uses the same technique, from space, to cover over the Earth. What *Apollo 13* seems to suggest is that the moon is not such a big deal after all. In that sense, the film alleviates masculine competitive anxiety through fantasies about the immense strength, size and power of the "ordinary" male. Competitive feelings and inadequacy (the mission did break down) are overcome precisely through failure. As

an antidote to masculine vulnerability, Lovell shows that failure can be more productive for masculinity than conventional success.

5.1.1.5 You've Got White Male

You've Got Mail, a retooling of *The Shop Around the Corner* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1940), utilizes the love-hate formula in the romantic comedy genre to gloss over a corporate chain's acquisition of a small, independent business. The narrative romance follows the trajectory of economic takeover: aggression and then acquiescence, and in doing so a "stalker" narrative overlaps with the romantic one. However, despite the sinister details that pervade the narrative, its investment in romance recasts the also-present aggression in a positive light. The film follows the "plot" and conventional reading of Eisenstaedt's famous photo: a woman is aggressively "taken" by a stranger, but under the guise of fulfilling heterosexual romance. The economic dissolution of a business happens within a story of mistaken identity through two business owners' anonymous e-mail relationship. They each have an e-mail handle, in addition to their real names. Joe Fox (a.k.a. "NY152") (played by Hanks) systematically quashes Kathleen's (Meg Ryan) (a.k.a. "shopgirl") economic independence, and Richard III-style, woos and wins the woman whose world he destroys. Her family business (a children's bookstore) goes under, as her clientele is absorbed by Fox's behemoth chain bookstore. Kathleen's family business is matrilineal; she inherited it from her mother and began working at the store at age 6. Kathleen seems a "girlish" counterpart to the boyish qualities that accompany the Hanks' star text. Hank's character is boyish here, despite being a shrewd businessman, in a sequence when he takes his younger brother and aunt, both children, to a street carnival. *Big*-style, he enjoys the attractions,

riding a small train he can barely squeeze into and playing like a child before the threesome end up at Kathleen's shop. Fox sits with the children for story time, as Kathleen, wearing a princess hat, reads to a group of children. She says later that "what you read as a child becomes a part of your identity," and clearly, her own identity is childlike and innocent. However, herein lay the distinction between boyish and girlish. In Kathleen's case, being like a child makes her simple-minded, hesitant, and gullible. She does not have the wherewithal to negotiate business or romance. In contrast, Fox's boyishness exists unproblematically alongside ambition and aggression.

In the bookstore sequence, Fox and Kathleen have an instant attraction to each other, not knowing that they are already having the anonymous e-mail romance with one another. Similarly, Kathleen does not know that Fox is *Joe* Fox, the corporate CEO who plans to destroy her bookstore. Fox does realize that he will soon put out of business the delightful store-owner whose company he is enjoying. However, he keeps his identity as business rival from Kathleen who rhapsodizes to him about working there with her mother. Fox's chain bookstore, Fox & Sons, follows a patrilineal line, with four generations of Fox males in the film. Mothers are absent from the Fox family, except for Joe Fox's stepmother who attempts to seduce him, but is rebuked. Therefore, patriarchal economic order is reinforced when Kathleen's store dissolves. When Fox takes over her business, he *naturally* must also take *her* over, romantically.

You've Got Mail weaves this story of economic aggression and the loss of a family business through romance that also includes a more veiled "stalker" scenario. These terroristic details emerge alongside the delightful ones, and are veiled by the genre conventions of romantic comedy. For instance, in the first scenes as the credits roll, Kathleen and Joe take to the streets of Manhattan, Joe always a few feet behind Kathleen though she does not notice him. Indeed, she

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never follows him; he follows her. The sequence suggests the romantic scenario that they are close, yet never meet, but it also begins the more sinister motif that Kathleen is followed unknowingly—stalked. Further, when Kathleen mentions her anonymous e-paramour to her friends, the film overtly raises the threat of a serial killer.[125] Her friends declare that he might be the "rooftop killer," a figure making headlines for murdering women. In fact, when the "rooftop killer" is finally nabbed, it is in the very neighborhood the two leads dwell in—just two blocks from their last meeting place. In the accompanying press photo the "rooftop killer" bends his head forward, revealing only dark hair and blue jeans. Though a comedy, the anonymous presence of the killer gives a strange horror to the proceedings. In line with this motif, it is revealed that a colleague of Kathleen's was once unknowingly in love with a famous fascist dictator. Another woman says, "never marry a man who lies," and then giggles inexplicably. Coupled with Fox's constant references to *The Godfather* (Coppola, 1972), including a graphic description of the horse head in the bed scene, the film takes on an ominous sense of violence and/or sinister behavior enacted by men, usually upon women.

When Fox says of his customers "they hate us in the beginning, but we'll get them in the end," he seems to describe his effect on Kathleen as well. She despises him and his "lie" (for not identifying himself when they first met) and feels herself to be in a "war" with him over her customers who disappear once his chain store opens. Additionally, Fox continues to lie to Kathleen once he realizes that she is in fact, the recipient of his anonymous e-mails. Fox goes to meet her at a café, but sends his friend Kevin, (Dave Chapelle) to spy through the windows to make certain she is attractive. Kevin reveals that the woman he is set to meet is the small

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[125] Fox is actually living with another woman while wooing "shopgirl." Kathleen also has a boyfriend, though they do not live together and seem mostly platonic, enjoying a laugh-filled, friendly break-up.

business owner, Kathleen. Rather than revealing himself to her, Fox lets her believe she has been stood-up by her e-mail friend, NY152, and instead meets with her as himself, her rival. Fox proceeds to taunt her. Though she asks him to leave, he remains. Notably, she often looks toward the door, expecting her blind date. Fox notices her nervousness and disappointment, but continues to harangue her. Finally, she insults him and he departs. However, Kathleen feels guilty for her outburst. NY152 had previously advised her to be verbally ruthless, but she regrets it and feels rejected. The scene presents a scenario where the romantic male lead interprets that "go means stay" and "no means yes."

Though Fox is not the "rooftop killer" (as far as we know), the possibility of the killer's existence, instead of providing suspense or fear of strangers, is nullified by the presence of Hanks' prior textuality as the ultimate nice guy. The larger issue of financial ruin is assuaged by the enchantment of romance. Beneath the comic surface lies a terrifying situation for Kathleen that organizes itself around nostalgia. Her business is cast as old-fashioned, "enchanting," as if a relic from the 1940s. It is outdated because it has not kept up with progress in technology and business. However, *You've Got Mail* arranges its interest in "progress" and "updates" against a backdrop in which gender roles stagnate or regress into traditional notions about women's work remaining inside the home. Kathleen's business aspirations become re-cast as out-dated, behind the times, while her own social position is not allowed to advance.

During Kathleen's "shopgirl" e-mail relationship with Fox's "NY152," she wonders about her significance or relevance: "I don't really work, I don't do anything . . . I live a small life." She does not consider running the book store worthwhile, so losing it, almost counts as graduation to adulthood or "real life" rather than the opposite. Furthermore, she considers her e-mail partner to be a vast, though male, emptiness. She send's questions to Fox (NY152)

addressed to "Dear Void," content to be intimate with an unknown. In this way the film plays with identity. It is not that Fox's identity is mistaken; it is that it is a given already (through Hanks' star text) without ever being openly articulated. Though Fox's moniker is NY152 and Kathleen knows little about him, she assumes the "Void" is male and decent. She continually figures him as a romantic partner and defends him against her friend's warnings about the "rooftop killer."

Fox continues to woo Kathleen as NY152, prolonging his "lie" that does not allow her to know that her e-love is actually her sworn enemy. With Kathleen oblivious to NY152's identity, she continues to write intimate letters, which Fox receives and uses to manipulate her. The characters' repressed rage toward one another (Fox calls Kathleen "a real bitch" to Kevin after he learns she is "shopgirl"), creates a tension that collides with the reliability of the romantic comedy genre. Though the genre often relies on love-hate relationships, in *You've Got Mail*, the scenario is more aggressive and even homicidal. Fox does destroy Kathleen's business, and with it her identity and lifestyle. She must accept this loss and love the man who has destroyed her. Fox *is* a serial killer of small businesses. Early in the film, he and his grandfather exhibit their delight in small business takeover by shooting off "air" machine guns.

Frank Krutnik explains the romantic comedy genre as insistent in its "attention to the problems represented by the woman who desires either a life of luxury or a career at the expense of conventional monogamy" (13). The genre adapts to cultural change, but remains consistently conventional, as it provides " a channel of comprehensibility whereby the new can be both bonded to and embodied via, the familiar (to the extent of *seeming* 'commonsensical')(emphasis mine 13). *You've Got Mail*, relies on its status as familiar, much like Hanks' star text does at this point in his career, post-*Saving Private Ryan* (the film detailed in the next chapter). Hanks' Fox

is patently dishonest and deplorable, yet via "common sense" he carries with him his reliable traits as ordinary, boyish, innocent and trustworthy. Though in many ways, it cannot ever *make sense* for Kathleen to end up loving Fox, the film must travel to this absurd outcome. However, alongside this "common sense," traverses a bizarre and absurdist representation of masculinity within heterosexual romance. Hanks' star text seems to have become an "angry white male," abandoning his previously characteristic "niceness." Though it seems this "niceness" has dissipated in Fox, his persona had grown so strong over the course of the 1990s, that the romantic comedy genre permits him, as familiar, to be comprehended as nice—and therefore, the ideal partner for Kathleen.

All along in Hanks' films there has been a root of male aggression that translates, nonsensically, as charming and attractive. This charm ultimately manifests through an inversion whereby "no means yes." Susan Stewart in *Nonsense*, explains: "to engage in nonsense is not only to engage in a state of transition, it is also to engage in an exploration of the nature of transition." Nonsense marks a procedure, but it also defines a state of reversal and/or inversion. Nonsense is often the purview of children's games. It seems innocent and playful, yet it has the power to overturn or reverse everyday parameters that structure social life. For Stewart, nonsense waits on the boundary of "proper" culture, threatening it, by overturning its common sense nature. The procedure of nonsense, of a nether side to the "common," is liminal—it marks the place where deviant can sensibly translate as "nice." The nonsense of *You've Got Mail* explains its transition from romance to terror—never fully completing the transition. The genre parameters of romantic comedy mark the recognizable sense, and Hanks star persona allows these expectations to transform into an expression of aggression or terror—an inversion where

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"no means ye s," and w orse, the w oman w ho s aid "no" is de lighted b y i ts m is-translation as "yes."

Stewart argues that nonsense, though playful, is inherently threatening. It is threatening because "undermin[es] the basis of the procedures used in manufacturing common sense." In filmic t erms, nons ense c an t hen be t hought of as t hat w hich bot h c onditions a nd u ndermines diegetic l ogic or ge nre l ogic. Nonsense r elies upon a r epresentation of t he *inverse*. Fox reconfirms his st atus a s E veryman—though he c ontorts a way f rom " niceness" w hile s till embodying it. The genre relies upon Kathleen's continuous emotional hysteria having a known cause: love, as opposed to fear. That is, the audience translates the romantic comedy narrative in such a w ay t hat he r t ears c an on ly be f or l ove, a nd no t due to economic ins ecurity or f ear. Stewart argues that nonsense attacks the confidence of a "mutual understanding" which underlies "common-sense" pro cedures. These "procedures" em erge as t he gu ides for how t o read genre films. These proc edures m ark genres t hat de pend upon t he audience's built-in e xpectation f or how t o read t he scen arios. Audiences r ely on c ommon sense asp ects o f ge nre translatability: codes of r omantic c omedy w ill be constant, k nown, r ecognizable, t rustworthy a nd obvi ous. Stewart exp lains: "Nonsense unde rmines t he i dea of ' something left uns aid,' so ciety's m ost powerful device for allowing members to believe that they can stand in each other's shoes.' By attempting t o s ay everything, by l eaving no a spect of di scourse unde termined, non sense t akes control of its ow n procedures. It bears t he threat of t he sel f-generating, s elf-perpetuating machine" (89). Hanks' star text exists as and in this kind of self-generative and self-perpetuating machinery. By s ignaling E veryman a nd i ts i dentity, traits and i ndexes, he he lps to pr opel and maintain conventional, hegemonic gender ideology. Fox does "kill" Kathleen's business and all

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her chances for future success. After she is forced to close her shop a friend tells her she has "nothing."

One scene illustrates the way a terrifying and degrading situation is transformed into normal and romantic via nonsense. Kathleen's eyes well up throughout the film, usually to signal sentiment and loss. In this scene, her body also exhibits physical characteristics of hysteria and illness. Kathleen is holed up in her apartment feeling poorly, due to financial ruin and the loss of her business. Fox, her enemy, comes to her apartment and asks permission to enter—she still does know he is NY152 which is not revealed to her until the final moments of the film. She refuses to let him enter. The moment marks the liminality of nonsense. However, due to narrative logic, he *must* enter. The audience, and the plot machinations require her acquiescence to "nonsense." She must submit to Fox. Hanks' star persona enables the romance to continue as harmless and decent despite Fox's obvious behavior to the contrary.

Fox enters the building, sneaking behind an unwitting tenant. His behavior resembles a stalker or criminal who moves stealthily and undetected. Kathleen continues to tell him to go away via the apartment's intercom. He knocks on her door, surprising her. Shocked, she jumps. The moment converts to comedic pratfall, losing the sense of shock and danger. Though she does not want him to enter, she quickly straightens her apartment signaling insecurity and decorum, before opening the door she did not want to open. Fox forces his way in, uninvited, and proceeds to confuse her. Kathleen, emotional and illogical, moves to her bed. She gets in it. Fox follows though she repeatedly asks him to leave. On the common sense level, the scene should convey threat, not the least of which is rape: he has just mercilessly overtaken her business, hidden his identity as business rival (and continues to hide his e-mail identity), and most of all, ignored her multiple requests to leave. The scene renders a performance of "no means yes" between the

sexes. Hanks' star text provides the primary mode whereby "no means yes;" it becomes unthinkable within not only the genre strictures, but within Hanks' own star persona for female denial of his allure to exist. Fox's presence is "wanted" because Hanks is Fox. Hanks, as unimpeachable nice guy, has permission to behave badly without consequence—or notice, despite his rendition of caddish aggression.

Kathleen is so weak and ill that she can barely speak. She tries, but Fox puts his fingers to her lips, silencing her. He then plainly offers the following threat: "Now I can see that I bring out the worst in you, but let me just help you to not say something that you'll torture yourself with for years to come." Kathleen stops trying to speak. Her eyes widen from above Fox's hand, which presses against her mouth. The scene swerves between a sense of romance and threat, as if a prism. Fox continues, "I hope you feel better soon. It would be a shame to miss New York in the spring." It seems he has literally delivered a veiled death threat: if she speaks, she may not see spring? With Hanks' uttering the line, he redefines "nice," as also threatening. The Everyman becomes intimidating. *You've Got Mail* delivers a means through which the ultimate American nice guy can be sexually aggressive. The Hanks star text, though seemingly benign, acquired power through the overtaking of a weak woman. The scene conveys a similarity to the overt garishness of Johnson's *Unconditional Surrender*. It displays Kathleen's unconditional, unmitigated surrender to a total stranger—who cannot exist as strange when played by Hanks.

Steffen Hantke argues that the serial killer version of monstrosity in the horror genre is "physically inconspicuous . . . a bland, harmless, non-threatening man." Commenting on the white male serial killer, Patrick Bateman from *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000) who is "simply not there," Hantke explains that, bodily inscription of the serial killer, no longer apparent on the body becomes relegated to a "separate ontological level, distinct from, and

dependent from the primary level where the serial killers are inconspicuous." Within Hanks' star text, this secondary level relies on misreading of Kathleen's affective physical markers: that her tears indicate sentimental love, rather than frustration, anger or fear. Fox "gets away with murder" not because Kathleen does not recognize his real identity, but because her own affective response, when put in the context of romance, can only mean the inverse, "no means yes."

The film premiered in December of 1998 (the day before Clinton's impeachment), but remained in theaters well after his acquittal in February of 1999, through the subsequent spring. In that case, the film played concomitantly to publicized allegations about Bill Clinton's sexual aggression, not only with Monica Lewinsky which was clearly consensual, but also amidst Juannita Broaddrick's rape allegations. Adrienne Sare in "Presidential Rape and the Making of a Non-Scandal," asserts that the press coverage of Broaddrick's claims were complicit in making the issue "meaningless" and a "non-event." Though Broaddrick came forward (again) in early 1999, all the major news organizations that had access to her story, including Dateline NBC, did not release their coverage until after February 12, 1999, the date of Clinton's acquittal. Sare argues that the lack of attention by prominent groups (including Republicans and feminists) worked to negate the significance of Broaddrick's highly credible story. The story was not buried completely because it met the necessary standards for journalistic credibility, and most viewers who watched the Dateline episode found Broaddrick believable. Sare cites the *Seattle Times* coverage for specifically avoiding the term "rape" for a situation in which perhaps no other word applies. She writes, "[they used] the phrase 'forced her to have sex' [which] works as a confusing verbal sedative. Is a woman 'having sex' when someone is raping her?"[126] Sare's outrage is at the conversion of a crime, into not just a non-crime, but a non-event while still

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[126] See Adrienne Sare "Presidential Rape and the Making of a Non-issue." *Said It Feminist News Culture and Politics.* April 1999 Vol. 1 #2. http://www.saidit.org/archives/april99/rape.html

being ope nly di splayed. N onsense doe s not hi de r epresentation, but e xposes i t, a nd t hrough exposure, shifts, r everses a nd i nverts its s tatus. In t his w ay, B roaddrick's c laims were not onl y irrelevant, they were immaterial, neither here nor there. While few denied Broaddrick's claims, the national response, converted their nature from alleging criminality to uttering what amounted to . . . no thing. In this light, Fox's antics in *You've Got Mail* take on an additional menace. The film see ms t o project t he nons ense t hat S are com plains about i n the na tional r esponse to Broaddrick's tears.

You've Got Mail provides a ke y t o the machinations of iconic white m asculinity, identified by Carol Clover as the default category of western culture, and unmarked in its status as "standard." Hanks becomes the de fault of the 1990s, de fining a verage. B ut this d efinition is based upon misrecognition of hi s a ggression. Where H anks' pe rsona be gan i n c ontrast t o Clinton, t hey s eem t o h ave c aught up w ith one a nother by t he e nd of the de cade. In t he f inal scene, when Fox finally e xposes hi s i dentity to K athleen, he r pe rformance begins t o c rack. Ryan's acting is particularly known for its display of confusion and crinkled brow wonderment. Fox appears as N Y152, the p ersona w hom sh e i dealized and was ex pecting to m eet. When NY152 is now revealed as the man she hates, the one who has ruined her, she begins to cry. Then she breaks i nto a huge smile, which as soon as i t is w rit large, collapses aga in into worried, pursed facial tics. It is a moment of nonsense: disappointment means delight, sorrow means joy. Fox approaches her and says "Don't cry," to which she responds with the last lines in the film, "I wanted i t t o be you. I wanted i t t o be y ou so ba dly." She ef fectively st ates not only, "what women want" but the absurdity of this "want."

You've Got Mail allows a misrecognition of the white male's behaviors to occur, in part, through the heroine's own misrecognition of her love interest's qualities. This mode places the

blame for a woman's poor choice, with the woman. Ryan's performance cues the audience to also mis-identify Fox's appropriateness as a partner. Fox's attributes are obvious, hiding in plain sight and in full clarity. However, audiences miss what is displayed in plain sight: a stalker.

This mode is oddly similar to the popular reading of Eisenstaedt's Times Square kiss photo which holds a visual representation of aggression, but signifies romance. *You've Got Mail* premiered not only near the Presidential impeachment, but during a climactic moment of WWII popularity in U.S. culture, a few weeks after the publication of Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* which was quickly becoming a bestseller. Nonsensically, one of *You've Got Mail*'s final frames held a striking similarity to the archival image chosen for Brokaw's book cover. On the book cover, the dog is cropped out. However, the image is reproduced again on the inside for the introductory pages of the book and the dog's paws are visible in that shot. The iconic cover (discussed previously in *Prelude I*) was designed by Andy Carpenter, and filmgoers may have noticed the similar aesthetics in the images from Brokaw's book and *You've Got Mail*— especially since in the previous scene between Fox and Kathleen they are both dressed in khaki pants and openly referencing the "war" between them.

In an interview,[127] I asked Carpenter how his art direction for Brokaw's book was impacted by market objectives, and why specifically, that "romantic" image was chosen. Carpenter responded that he and his team thought the book would be a hard sell for the "Vietnam generation," the Boomers. However, the publisher did recognize an untapped potential market in the WWII generation and "especially their families." Carpenter said that he wanted to indicate a

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[127] The interview took place via e-mail over the week of August 4th, 2008. I tracked Carpenter down via the credit given on the inside jacket cover and some investigative googling. Carpenter was "fascinated" by my interest, but skeptical about the cover's relevance—and when I first asked, responded that he did not remember what the cover looked like. It had been a decade since he oversaw its design.

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romantic relationship and that he chose the image because of the couple's clothes, "the pleated skirt and crisp pant leg as markers of the generation in their youthful prime." The flag insignia that overlaps the image was a suggestion by the head of Random House to detract from the "fictional" aesthetic of the cover, so that it looked more like *history*.

At the conclusion of this Chapter's Prelude, I talked about romantic love as an antidote for conflict. *Unconditional Surrender* revealed the national preoccupation with romantic love as a "cover" for conflict. This love was represented as occurring between strangers. It was aggressive, spontaneous, and occurred between a man and woman who were identified, primarily, by their nationalized uniforms. The two images present a similar surrender that relies on "love" between unidentified strangers as a representation of national identity. The "war-between-the-sexes" is won by negating aggression and recasting it as romance between an Everyman, a nice guy, and a surrendering woman. *You've Got Mail* goes through the motions of making a woman surrender.

The next chapter further explores the issues of masculinity related to Hanks' star text through an analysis of the cultural and political milieu surrounding WWII and the release of *Saving Private Ryan*, a film in which the Hanks persona works through the shedding and reworking of his own origins.

6.0   WWII NOSTALGIA (CLINTON/SPIELBERG/HANKS)

6.1   *PRELUDE V:* WORLD WAR II "COMMEMORATION" AND FETAL "COMBAT"

In 1999, on a rural highway outside of Rogers, Minnesota I drove past a billboard with thousands of tiny white crosses planted beneath it. The billboard proclaimed that each cross represented 100,000 abortions, so that the spray of white in the miniature graveyard had the quality of being uncountable, especially from the vantage of a car window zooming past. Without a discernable number to multiply by 100,000, the visual impact suggested innumerable masses. Nonetheless, my first thought was not the math issue, but how similar the imagery was to that used in the then recent popular film, *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). The film began and ended with the seemingly infinite white crosses at Arlington National Cemetery—its rows appeared ongoing, plentiful and excessive, marking immeasurable loss.

In July of 1998, the *Saving Private Ryan* premiere signaled a climactic point in the flurry of World War II coverage in mainstream popular media. As previously discussed, the 1990s marked a progression of anniversaries related to that war in various commemorations, and celebrated in multiple facets of popular and political culture: Presidential ceremonies, retro-fashion, war films, bestselling books and a stable of documentaries on The History Channel. The markets for these "memorials" were the WWII generation, "the Greatest," as anointed by Tom

Brokaw, and their "souvenir"-buying offspring. Previously reticent veterans began to speak publically and their encounters were recorded in Stephen Ambrose bestsellers, just as these first hand witnesses were dying off at a rate of millions per year. Both Ambrose and Spielberg were honored for their efforts with Presidential fanfare: National Humanities Medals in 1998 and 1999, respectively. During the 1999 Medal ceremony Clinton thanked Spielberg for being an "astonishing historian" and supporting "righteous causes," but he also referenced his *personal* friendship with the recipient. Clinton paid tribute to Spielberg's national influence, but also his private one: "I want to thank [Spielberg] for all the many times that he and Kate and their wonderful children have enriched our lives and all the things he tells me that keep me thinking."[128] Clinton and Spielberg were often linked in the press in reports of Spielberg at the White House and Clinton vacationing at the director's Hamptons estate, usually with reference to donor events. This was one of the ways that *Saving Private Ryan* gained authority as a "national" text, with Spielberg as the national historian. The two men's publicized friendship also played into public ideas about them. While Spielberg clearly gained political influence through close ties to the President, Clinton was "saved" by association with the "boy scout" who seemed to have an "unimpeachable" character.

Saving Private Ryan was introduced in the press as a tribute to Spielberg's veteran father, and the film dramatized that experience in familial terms. Within the film, the family became the central aegis through which to view the stakes of national conflict as war generals mobilized to return a son to his mother. Likewise, the audience was constructed as familial when much of the surrounding media focused on adult children attending screenings with their own veteran fathers. But the film reached to grandchildren as well. President Clinton suggested that the film should be

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[128] For a transcript of the 1999 National Humanities Medal ceremony See: 1999 Vol. 2. *Administration of William J. Clinton*, September 29th, 1999.

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required viewing in America's high schools after Spielberg personally attended a special White House s creening.[129] WWII al lowed t he B oomers and Gen-X to bypa ss t he ne gative c ultural history of Vietnam and the "uninteresting" one of Desert Storm and engage with the last "great" American war.

Saving Private Ryan became especially influential as a national text, broadcast on ABC on Veteran's Days 2001-2003 until a host of network affiliates refused to air the film in 2004 fearing it violated FCC regulations. The flap was caused by stricter indecency rulings after the Super Bowl's "wardrobe malfunction" earlier that year. *Saving Private Ryan* survived complaints to the FCC, despite its graphic ultra-violence and colorful profanity.[130] The FCC ruling explained that the film's "contexts," which included an introduction by both John McCain and a WWII vet, made it patently "decent" rather than the opposite: "it is designed to show the horrors of war, its presentation [is] to honor American veterans on the national holiday specifically designated for that purpose."[131]

When the film premiered, it struck most viewers as an essential primer on WWII. Catherine Kodat suggested that *Saving Private Ryan,* "presume[d] to school us on the necessity of contextual understanding," and then provided that very schooling (77). Despite under-reported mutterings from veterans who complained about inaccurate history, inauthentic weaponry, and various incorrect details that only a specialist could detect, the film instantly acquired status as authentic, historical truth. This notion is one which nearly all of the reviews and articles in my examination confirmed. Most reviews, even those by women, cited a "personal" lesson or

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[129] See James Bennet. "Clinton Goes to Hamptons To Golf and Raise Money" *New York Times*. Published: August , 1998. An e ditorial i n t he M ilwaukee Herald a lso d efends a father's c hoice t o t ake his 3 y oung c hildren t o a screening.

[130] Since passing the FCC test, TNT regularly presents the film uncut on Veteran's Day and other "event" days.

[131] See the entire transcript of this FCC ruling at: http://www.fcc.gov/eb/Orders/2005/FCC-05-23A1.html.

catharsis accomplished through the viewing. This insight was dramatically different from the ones given by actual veterans, though this gap was not overtly publicized.[132] The veterans articulate that the film did not adequately capture the war—that the war was in fact much worse and much different. Likewise, many of the veterans expressed anti-war sentiments, a sense of loss over those that died (not that they died for a glorious cause), reports of technical and historical gaffes, and a continued sense of trauma and depression.

In contrast the non-veterans who watched had a cathartic reaction to the movie and a new education on the war and its soldiers. Earlier in the decade, Clinton embodied the novice-like ineptitude of the non-veteran, and his ability both to honor and understand military service and combat was questioned. During his 1994 D-Day tour to Europe, (with one notable stop on Normandy beach), Clinton was accused of turning the tour into a publicity photo opportunity, and neglecting the band of veterans dispatched to travel and appear with him. In the *New York Times*, Todd Purdum described the somber ceremony that took place on Normandy Beach. The weather had first been freezing and overcast as was the actual day fifty years previous, and veterans wept. In contrast, as the sun burst through, Clinton "stroll[ed] off by himself and stopp[ed] pensively, apparently to search for a seashell." Columnist Maureen Dowd used this moment as implicit proof of Clinton's narcissism and inability to comprehend the experience of

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[132] One veteran offered, "the problem with doing it in the movie is that movie can touch only outside of people, and, therefore, you can't tell what a person is thinking by photographing his outsides when he is trying to conceal what he is really thinking, what he is going through emotionally. I think the thing that can convey what a war is like for those who fight it best is memoir, people's memoirs, like E. B. Sledge writing about the Marines on the Okinawa-things like that-where he talks about ideas and the movie can't show ideas. It can show people having ideas. But a lot of the experience is internal. That's what I'm getting at." See *News Hour with Jim Lehrer* transcript http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/july-dec98/ryan_8-3.html. For additional examples of veteran criticism See: "Veterans Riled by Ryan" March 19, 1999. BBC News http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/the_oscars_1999/299784.stm and Jonathan Rosembaum. "Cutting heroes down to Size" *The Chicago Reader*.

veterans. Yet, Spielberg's film does important work in revising the impenetrability of the veteran experience for non-combatants.

Similar to the veterans who were trotted out for Clinton's photo ops, those interviewed in *Saving Private Ryan*'s accompanying media material offer subtle contradictions to non-veterans, and are then ignored. Their contradictions do not become a part of the mainstream story. The media hype included the film actors' week-long "boot camp" filled with combat training and simulation of grunt lifestyle as yet another layer in the film's authenticity. Seamlessly, a connection was drawn between the act of performing in the film in a simulated past, and actually having lived through an experience with the events. The seamless connection between the two experiences was integral in creating the film's aura of realism and authenticity.

The film garnered universal acclaim and instant speculation regarding its bid for the Best Picture Oscar. In tandem with entertainment-based media, political and national hype made the case for the film's historical accuracy—its status as homage to veterans of WWII, and its potential as a didactic text with which the middle-aged and younger generations could realize the sacrifice of their fathers and grandfathers, respectively.[133] The film was benighted with a singular status as having revolutionized war cinema aesthetically and technologically. *The Oregonian* (Portland's news daily) bucked their four star ratings cap and gave the film five stars, as if its greatness could not be contained within normative assessment systems.[134] As the highest grossing American film of 1998, *Saving Private Ryan* was the one that *every man* (and many

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[133] See Mark O'Hara. Ugo.Com, July 1998. An illustrative example of the kind of personalized rhapsody that was often in reviews, where the younger generation "spoke" for the vets: "As a boy in the 1960's, playing "Army" with cap guns and real surplus canteens donated to our Scout troop, I saw the Second World War as a romantic adventure. The film reminded me why my father and hundreds of thousands of people of his generation sacrificed their time and their lives. We, their daughters and sons, must live in a free world. We must inherit or cause the eventuality of not having to fight and die ourselves. It's one type of memorial I'm sure our parents and grandparents would want, an anti-war movie viewed by millions."

[134] See Shawn Levy, "Making Private Ryan with a Bloody, Truthful Lens" July 24, 1998. Entertainment Magazine. *The Oregonian.*

others) saw, attaining mandatory status as a facet of citizenship, familial duty, and cultural experience.[135]

Mainstream film reviews tended to reinforce the "decency" present in the film's notoriously graphic violence, attaching this aesthetic feat to the film's realism. In "context," sitting through excruciating scenes of ultra-violence, constituted a patriotic act and a way to forge a link between generations through bearing witness. Gary Kamiya's review for *Salon* noted that though the film's violence was pornographic; it "reveal[ed] WWII's brutal reality, creating a phenomenology of violence unsurpassed in the history of cinema." Kamiya found the battles both "impossible to watch" and "impossible not to watch." Most reviewers forgave the middle, less violent sequences of the film for their narrative schmaltz and focused all attention and energy on the virtuoso battle scenes. Reviewer Scott Renshaw made a similar move to Kamiya when he argued for the transformative power of the violence which allows patriotism to be individually realized: " Spielberg makes accountability in the midst of tragedy absolutely individual. He forces you to stare inward and ask whether you've earned this—this life, this country, this freedom." Similarly, Kamiya concludes by commending the real soldiers of WWII, yet he reveals the solipsism bred from viewing *Saving Private Ryan*. The experience of watching the recreated war created a feeling of "experiencing combat," and ultimately forged a sentimental resurrection of what was a previously latent patriotism. Kamiya claimed, "The next time I stand in front of a field of white crosses, I will have a little clearer sense of just what I am trying to remember."

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[135] Box office stats help to indicate the cultural impact of a commercial product in the age of the blockbuster. They help to construct a pattern of incidence where a certain faction of the population attends, discusses and muses about a certain film—especially as the viewing merges with television ads and trailers, human interest stories, cross promotions with related products, reviews and personal thoughts and conversations. This milieu acts as one hub for how that text operates within a given temporal space, as it gains momentum and subsequently wanes in influence.

Though Kamiya intends to project a responsible critical consciousness (he means that he will think of veterans and honor their sacrifices), he links his memory to the visual of white crosses. What is less overt, but most resounding is that he will recall the *film,* and the experience of viewing it, when he stands before white crosses—under whatever circumstances such a ritual will occur. The reviews by Kamiya and Renshaw are representative of the national reception of the film as "realist," and therefore accessible. This profound and transformative accessibility is made clear in Spielberg's own distinction between the inaccessibility of the Holocaust versus combat, or the distinction between his previous WWII film *Schindler's List* (1993) and *Saving Private Ryan*. Spielberg opined, "I believe the Holocaust is ineffable. I do not believe that combat is" (Hertzberg 32). Spielberg's comment suggested a kind of hierarchy of atrocious representation. In the case of *Schindler's List*, he did not intend audiences to "fantasize" that they were experiencing the Holocaust, but only observing it with reverence. Though audiences experienced sorrow and horror, the inexpressibility of the Holocaust as historical event prevented identification. Whether or not this strategy succeeded has been debated. In the case of WWII combat, Spielberg intended to offer clear expressibility—almost an invitation to experience affect by way of high-impact shock. But the film's technical and aesthetic form opened up vast possibilities for the audience's imagination: reverence happened, but for what and whom exactly?

Saving Private Ryan became a cultural prop for the mediation between an historical event and its fantasized representation in the national imagination. Part of its symbolic register occurred through its contrast between the past and the present, delineated through the frame narrative's contemporary scenes, and the internal flashbacks to combat in France in 1944. These variant times and spaces were distinguished by extreme violence in the battles and their disparity

with the more anesthetic icons shown in the frame narrative: white crosses, the flying American flag, a nd a n e lderly ve teran a nd h is f amily a t Arlington. The f ilm us ed t he c ross s ymbol t o differentiate between the two spatiotemporal locales: the stately white rows in the present, and black torqued cross shapes in the past—the twisted steel shapes on t he Normandy b each which made inadequate cover for the landing soldiers. The film draws on the placid, uniform geometry of the white cross memorial (there are occasional Stars of David there too) as the portal to return to the twisted and visceral representation of the past.

Certainly, the film and its national reception intended the use of "realism" to lead to a re-instigated c ommemoration for ve terans of WWII. Such a c ommemoration is w hat allowed the patriotic t ransformation t o oc cur. But i t w as a t ransformation w hich s ought t o t ransgress t he cultural a nd hi storical barriers be tween generations. The B oomers and Gen-X us ed the film to access hono r t hrough ersatz sacrificial p articipation in a g reat w ar. T hat t his access oc curred while s itting in movie theaters di d not s trike most pe ople a s b izarre. *Saving Private Ryan*'s "realistic" ultra-violence seemed to produce anti-war sentiments, but it courted the opposite. The film fortified the thrill of WWII victory, and created an adulation for war as cathartic, necessary and glorious. The film provided the sense that while battle was hell, as previously thought, it was also profound and personally transformative. *Saving Private Ryan*'s symbolic register provided a portal to the past: a means to go back to the experience of the father. For most of the audience, those bo rn i n t he post-war pe riod, thi s w as a return to a pre-birth z one of or igins. Nostalgic discourses a re i nherent t o c ommemorative a cts. A c ommemoration ha s two f acets: to honor a person or event and to honor the *memory* of the person or event. The latter angle, the honor of the memory, di rects f ocus *back* to those e xperiencing (and c reating) the memory. As nos talgic

discourse shows, the memory of a person or event, will narrativize at a wayward distance from its originary context.

The popular reception of *Saving Private Ryan* provides clues into how its symbology and its use of white commemorative gravestones was adopted by the pro-life movement whose propaganda images usually rely on graphic and horrific images of dismembered and bloody fetuses. Pro-life "fields of crosses" on rural roadsides and in images on billboards seem to have emerged during the late 1990s, gaining prominence during the last decade. The visual symbolism of the mass of crosses harnesses two memorial forms, one officially national and the other related to "folk" culture. The pro-life graveyards at once copy both military cemeteries and roadside markers that memorialize a singular incident, usually a traffic accident. Holly Everett traces the uses of roadside crosses to early American settlement communities. In its 20th century use, it is primarily a rural phenomenon, but one made increasingly recognizable during the 1980s by MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) advocates who memorialized their children's accidental deaths with roadside crosses—each using an identical template, a two foot cross bearing the victim's name and dates of birth and death.

One aspect of the rural phenomenon of cross placement, is its association with the past. Aesthetically, rural fields have a timeless essence as if their nature exists untouched by progress and development. Everett identifies this practice and its proliferation in both rural and urban communities as a network signal of "memory" that mediates religious affiliation and cultural practice. Everett theorizes the cross as a spatial marker, sometimes more crucial than the place of eventual internment, that locates not only the victim's place of death, but for those grieving, the last place the deceased was alive. Of course, roadside crosses are a public visual icon that creates meanings for citizens without affiliation to individual victims. In that case, they interrupt the

public landscape w ith ideas abou t t raffic da nger or f ears of acci dents.[136] The w hite cr oss memorial often r epresents a site, but not a gr ave m arker, b ecause it indicates t he ab sence of a body. Military cemeteries of ten have seve ral crosses that do not ha ve bodi es bur ied be neath them, or in the case of the iconic Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, bodies without identity. Marita Sturken i n *Tangled Memories* reports on the l ong t radition of c ommemorating t he de ad i n the absence of t heir bodi es. B odily r emains f rom w ar z ones a re of ten unr ecoverable, un verifiable and/or p artial (72). T his m aterial absence a dds a nother ga p, a llowing the pur ely s ymbolic t o emerge. Without m ateriality, a nd m ade publ ic, markers be come ope n f or publ ic interpretation and na tional meaning. T hey s ignal p rivate de ath a nd pe rsonalized gr ief, but t hey be come fluid and ghos tly s ymbols f or c oncepts and i deas—whether a bout pa triotism, Christianity, or r oad danger.

In *The War Complex*, Marianna Torgovnick theorizes that the gaps, between materiality, actuality and fact, become a part of cultural memory that "rhetorically shifts," always based on omission a nd i naccessibility, a llowing memory a nd memorial t o f unction c onceptually, r ather than s pecifically (2). Representation a nd s ymbology a lways of fer a m eans of bypa ssing specificity and moving into the conceptual. Icons become such a portal. This is one way the pro-life "fields of crosses" forge connections between highly disparate deaths and absent bodies. On a similar note, the "Billboards for Life" organization's chronology cites 1998 a s the first use of their "Crosses of t he Innocents" bi llboard—their "onl y" bi llboard to suffer de facement.[137] The organization, based in rural Indiana and Kentucky, began a billboard strategy in the mid-nineties, which in 1998 went "mobile" by adding billboard space to tractor-trailer rigs traveling across the nation. Most of their billboards used a drawing of a developing fetus, lines of scripture, and an

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[136] See Everett, Holly. "Roadside Crosses and Memorial Complexes in Texas." *Folklore*. Vol. 111, No. 1, 2000.
[137] See Billboardsforlife.org "The Billboards"

image of either Jesus or Mary. One other billboard used the image of a field of crosses with a manger-like cradle and child in its center, with the copy "3900 LOST TO ABORTION DAILY."

The fields of crosses (whether represented on billboards or present materially on the road) display a surreal likeness to military cemeteries. Through the use of miniature, crudely constructed white crosses, the heavy white marble of military cemeteries is referenced, but rendered in *theatrical* terms like two dimensional set pieces that indicate a three-dimensional realm. The use of overt Christ child imagery brings in religious morality and the confused conceptualization that one or more of the purported 3900 abortuses was possibly Christ. Similar rhetorical visual campaigns, by localized pro-life church movements in the rural Midwest and South seem to originate in the late 1990s and continue to the present—usually using diverse and undocumented statistics as to how many abortions are performed per day and per year and how many are represented by each tiny cross.[138]

The "Delivered by Grace" website explicitly connects American war loss statistics to abortion "casualties." According to them, combined U.S. military deaths (from the American Revolution to the "War on Terror") are about equal to the yearly accrued deaths by abortion in one year. Clearly, the pro-life movement makes connections between combat sacrifice and fetal "sacrifice." In this equation, abortion doctors and mothers are the clear enemy. The cross is one visual marker of the symbolic connections between abortion and warfare, but several scholars

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[138] In 2005 Joe Seng started a website selling mini white crosses of various sizes, ideal for "Right to Life" support. The website also sells stakes for "golf course" and "lawn and garden" needs for partitions. When I called the proprietor with research questions, I got the feeling that I called a personal, rather than business number and that he had not had any "Right to Life" business inquiries in quite some time. Previous to this type of business, Pro-life organizers construct their own crosses, thousands upon thousands. Though crudely made, the practice is time consuming. It is advised that a package of 3600 crosses (this site's statistic for the number of abortions per day) can be displayed upon one acre of land. Usually church properties are used on roadsides, or the site advises customers to use their home residences. The website proclaims "What if displaying the white cross became as customary as flying the American flag? . . . We can use the power of symbolism to save lives. Please consider participation." www.stakestore.com

have noted additional links, especially since movement volunteers make sense of their experience by comparing it to "combat."

Ginna Husting in "When a War Is Not a War" explains how anti-abortion activism in Kansas was figured as a "Civil War," and like "the beachhead in the Heartland" by national news media in 1991. This "siege" at a clinic occurred during the Gulf War, and Husting argues that the media coverage enabled a displacement in the national imagination between the actual war and the abortion clinic protest, since coverage of both often occurred during the same broadcasts and used similar military-based rhetoric. Of course, there is no one-to-one correspondence between the Gulf war and the "war" on abortion, or Operation Desert Storm and "Operation Rescue," but the pro-life movement's activism was figured as the problem of a national community "ripped apart" by abortion and "violence" (165). The two wars worked within the same political, economic, and ideological climate in particular ways. Husting explains that, despite Desert Storm losing importance after Bush was defeated in 1992, during its contemporary moment, "the United States waged a smart war, a high-tech, surgical, clean, highly controlled, rational, man's war on a monstrously irrational, greedy, childish, barbaric, violent, chaotic Iraq" (162). However, this characterization did not persist once the war was over and coverage turned to demoralized vets returning home and ambiguous reports of Gulf War Syndrome (often insinuated as hypochondriac). The abortion war continued to provide the nation with the "spectacle of heated conflict" between pro-life and pro-choice advocates. Interviewed individuals (usually extremists) came to stand metonymically for entire movements, and in doing so elided the complexity of positions within the abortion issue. Husting explains that coverage often focused on how the abortion "war" affected families and noted that in the media: "abortion protest became a war flick with overtones of a melodrama" (166).

Husting goes on to describe the contrast and connections between the abortion war and the censored portrayal of Gulf War violence—palliative images of "bloodless" operations with few bodies of Americans or Iraqis. In contrast, the abortion "war" made the explicit rendition of bodies its primary mode of visual rhetoric. The news segments focused on bodies of pregnant women and of course, fetuses—in both idealized Lennart Nilsson-like imagery and in images of bloody masses and dismemberments often used in pro-life signs and billboards. While the Iraq War bodies were censored, violence toward fetal bodies was in plain view. Husting pointed out one newscast graphic that used the tripartite symbol of the geographical shape of the U.S. colored red, a late-stage white fetus, and a bullet hole as the visual symbol for abortion (171). Bizarrely the image figured the national body as both a fetus and *like* a victim at risk of being shot. Interestingly, Husting argues that the coverage also exposed a third body, the *social body,* or body politic. The social body was usually represented by President Bush and other interviewed public officials who would speak for and represent the "American people," who were victims of the nationalized conflict, the abortion "war."[139] Husting argues that Desert Storm: "shored up a flagging national identity that had been not only emasculated through the tremendous losses of the Vietnam war but disempowered through the social and economic problems that threatened to engulf the 1990s" (164). When the abortion war was figured as a similar struggle, with a similar power for national reinvigoration, it allowed the "virile national body" to become *like* a late-stage fetus in the line of fire. In this way, the bodies of *men* could become symbolically present and prominent within zones where they have no practical place: as a pregnant body or fetal body. Strangely, pro-life activists often described their experience within the movement as a combat narrative.

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[139] Husting quotes a long, typically nonsensical remark from G. H.W. Bush that is political, vague, and obscurely pro-life, but which also backpedals from direct support for extreme pro-life activists. pp.172-3.

In "Commandos for Christ: Narratives of Male Pro-life Activists" (1995), Carol Maxwell and Ted Jelen present research wherein they interviewed male pro-life activists and discovered that those who narrativized their experiences in military and war-like terms, were far more active and participated in more frequent "rescues" than those who did not. Maxwell and Jelen explain that it is popularly thought that women are more prominent in the pro-life movement, a position that eclipses men's involvement (often in leadership roles). Male participation has been steadily rising since the 1960s (120). Often activism derives from a religious foundation, but Maxwell and Jelen asserted that ideological beliefs often propelled these men into more politically active roles in the movement (119). In this case, uses of "warfare" imagery in the men's descriptions of their experiences (i.e. "in the trenches," "doing battle," "marching orders," "on a mission," etc.) fortified a larger goal in socializing their senses of masculinity (126). Over half of the men interviewed couched their activism as war-like, in a war that endangered the U.S. Many found their participation to be like a "sacrifice," that also forged a sense of camaraderie with other men. Sixteen percent explicitly admitted to an identification with fetuses and "babies" (123).

These collapses and confusions between commemoration and combat, fetal bodies and male bodies, and national war and social "war," help to explain why, curiously the fetus (on a purely symbolic level) becomes a central figure in the WWII commemoration film *Saving Private Ryan*. The fetus becomes central only as a site of metaphoric transfer, and its value in this regard derives from its lack of subjectivity and absent body. As has been previously argued, WWII hoopla in the 1990s was a public screen for cultural projection. The fetus (as a casualty of "war") becomes an image projected on that cultural screen. The following chapter takes up this theme by examining the "bodies" beneath commemorative crosses and what they portend for

masculinity as sites of both absence and materiality within the discourses of a national, nostalgic

imagination.

6.1.1 "The Spare Parts of Dead G.I.s:" Masculine Metastasis and the use of the Maternal in *Saving Private Ryan*

Macbeth: I bear a charmed life which must not yield
To one of woman born.

Macduff: Despair thy charm,
And let the angel whom thou still hast serv'd
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd.

Macbeth, Shakespeare 5.8. 12-17
(The battle in which Macduff slays Macbeth.)

. . . The troops were muddy and wet in their capes; their rifles were wet and
under their capes the two leather cartridges-boxes on the front of the belts, gray
leather boxes heavy with the packs of clips of thin, long 6.5 mm. cartridges,
bulged forward under the capes so that the men, passing on the road, marched as
though they were six months gone with child.

A Farewell to Arms, Ernest Hemingway

6.1.1.1 I. Introduction

The analogous corporeality between soldiers and mothers is evident in a long tradition of

metaphorical alliances, as the excerpts above suggest. Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies*

attempts to make sense of the symbolic mire between warfare, women's bodies, and the

production of masculinity in both historical and representational terms. His two volume tome

examines soldiers in post WWI Germany, the *Freikorpsmen,* who eventually populate, and help

to raise up, Hitler's armed forces. Theweleit's history of these immeasurably brutal troops traces

the links between 20th century fascism and misogyny, a connection "already implicit in the daily relationships of men a nd w omen," a r elationship c aught i n ideological g ender i nequality (Ehrenreich xv) . T heweleit's s ubject is located within th e hi story o f N azism a nd offers a trajectory of German troops' behavior that partially explains the Holocaust, to the extent that it can be expl ained. However, Theweleit's theories ar e r elevant be yond t heir h istorical con text because they bring together the relationship between misogyny and warfare which in many cases feminizes victims so that killing them becomes a gendered act. The mindset of a soldier, and his impetus towards killing is imbricated within sexism and its ideals as a lways part and pa rcel of nationalist aims. When the enemy is dehumanized to make its murder palatable, the process of objectification is m anifest across c onventional ge nder ca tegories so t hat so ldiers' m asculinity becomes stronger as they destroy the "feminine" in their opponent. Likewise, the nation is made through t his pr ocess of obj ectification of t he feminine, e specially if i magined a s a vi rile, masculine body t hat fortifies itself t hrough fantasies about the female body a nd i ts a cquisition and uses—especially in relation to reproduction.

In Theweleit's work, Freud's "all-purpose Oedipal triangulation" does not fully account for the "fantasies" that connect the *Freikorpsmen's* "perpetual war" with their obsessive hatred toward women (Ehrenreich xv). Theweleit theorizes misogyny within warfare through corporeal details and the relationships between the bodies of self and other (24). Warfare, and the national fervor that ne cessarily gui des i ts participants, de pends upon protean not ions a bout male and female bod ies. Theweleit con ceptualizes t his s tance as the d issolution of t he female body as a means of constituting or creating that of the male: "Relationships with women are dissolved and transformed i nto ne w m ale a ttitudes, i nto pol itical s tances, revelations o f t he t rue pa th, e tc. A s the woman fades out of sight, the contours of the male sharpen . . . i t could almost be said that

the raw material for the man's 'transformation' is the sexually untouched, dissolving body of the woman" (35). T his c hapter w orks t hrough the de tails of s uch a " transformation" i n a n examination of Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan.* My analysis f ocuses on the f ilm's i nternal diegetic regime that allows for a re-writing and total reconfiguration of the Oedipal triangle, via a look at the cultural and political context of the film within its late nineties popularity surrounding WWII nostalgia.

Though ba ttlefields m ay s eem a n a dverse a nd u nlikely s etting f or e ngaging t he pa iring between masculinity and motherhood, r eproductive imagery and maternal motifs often pervade battlefield violence and cha racterizations of so ldiers. *Saving Private Ryan* expresses conc epts about reproduction (both aspects of the maternal and the "reproduction" of masculinity) through its depictions of c ombat. I mprobably, *Saving Private Ryan* obsesses o ver w omen, espe cially mothers, who despite their speechlessness, have a palpable, nearly constant presence in the film's symbolic terrain in both overt and covert ways.[140] The motherhood motif infiltrates the ranks of soldiers as t hey c onverse dur ing ba ttle a nd i n t he s cenes s urrounding battle a bout a ll t hings maternal. Additionally, the rhetorical trope of the national sacrifice of mothers during war shapes the primary narrative drive: the return home (the saving) of Private Ryan.

The f ilm f irst r eferences " mother" overtly i n the ope ning D-Day battle, as a sold ier moans and calls for his mother as he lies horrifically injured in the chaotic mise-en-scène. After this soldier cries for his mother, two other soldiers similarly moan and cry out and they seem like vulnerable c hildren t oo. A s a r ag-tag uni t e ventually r endezvous up t he be ach C aptain M iller (Hanks) a nd hi s r ight-hand Horvath (Tom Sizemore) di scuss M iller's mother in the m idst of

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[140] There is a grandmother/wife character in the outer narrative frame who speaks and a hysterical civilian village mother/daughter set who wail in French. Several military secretaries and Private Ryan's mother herself are seen, even seen talking, but their words are not heard.

shooting at far-off German artillery. Miller jumps into enemy view as a decoy and Horvath remarks, "Captain, if your mother saw you do that, she'd be very upset." Miller responds, "I thought you were my mother." But Horvath is not Miller's mother, nor does he officially play a maternal role in the platoon. The line's sarcasm is the beginning of the film's "argument" that Miller actually does not have a mother; he is not "of woman born." In a sequence shortly after, members of Miller's squad tease a rookie: "The Captain doesn't have a mother. He's made of the spare parts of dead G.I.s." It functions as a throw-away line, meant to suggest camaraderie and jokes among the cohort, but it plays into the obsessive theme about Miller's origins. Ostensibly, the central narrative involves the journey to find Ryan (Matt Damon) with several false starts along the way. However, one of the conceits given to the characters in this small band, is their obsession with the mysterious origins of Miller: who is he, where is he from, what did he do before the war? The men have started a betting pool, the winner being he who can crack the mystery of Miller's origins.

Miller's characterization as a motherless enigma, corresponds to his status as Everyman, explicated in Chapter Four. The Everyman is a "gigantic" social body, appearing to contain the natural attributes of the average male citizen. The nonsensical disjunction between Hanks as Everyman and Miller as cipher is neutralized by the intrinsic legibility attributed to the Everyman trope: that it is utterly familiar. The film's conceit, that Miller is mysterious, might play as irony, if not for the moral rectitude that accompanies the Hanks star text. Hanks seems to be beyond tricks or double-talk, and despite the fact that he shoots a lot, his character Miller never seems to be a "killer" or the kind of Frankenstein monster who would be made from dead soldier parts. Miller's worst trait seems to be crankiness when the squad does not follow his directions closely. Even his grouchiness is rendered as brief outbursts of comic relief within the

horror of the violence. Carparzo (Vin Diesel) is killed by a sniper while arguing that the band should rescue a young French girl, of 8 years old or so. After the sniper is subsequently killed and the team is ready to move on, Miller angrily quips: "This is why we don't take children!" This sequence, when Carparzo attempts a paternal role and is killed for it, is one of the ways that paternity is nullified in the film. These soldiers are not conventional fathers, though they are "acting" as the fathers of the Boomer generation. However, they are not paternal in the conventional sense—at least not toward external objects/children. Miller has a wife at home, but no children, and the squad's mission does not include helping children encountered along the way. Though Ryan is like a "child" purportedly being "saved" to assuage his mother's anguish, the symbolic trajectory of the film will show that he actually enables a different function: the fortification and "reproduction" of the Hanks/Miller figure.

Within the narrative, and in the extra-diegetic media material, Hanks/Miller acts as a spokesman for both generations, eventually embodying several fictive and actual positions of both father and son (by being the Boomer son of a WWII vet and playing a such a "vet"). Hanks says in an interview, "I think that war has a kind of mythical memory connected to being kids and having fathers who were in the war as well as the influence of those television shows and movies. For the younger generation, it's ancient history." Hanks indicates both a reverse look to the generation of his father and a look to the future generations who are utterly disconnected to the war, because "it's been thirty years since a real chronicle epic of that war has been made." Echoing Spielberg's similar theory, Hanks indicates that the experience of his father's war can be understood through the film.

Hanks, in a more visual way than Spielberg, came to embody a kind of drag attire, as the son "dressed up" as the father, play-acting the experience as if it were a fiction. Damon, the star

referred to during the *SPR* press releases as "the Next Big Thing," (which he duly became) commented about Hanks, "He is at the top of his game, as successful as anyone could hope to be, and he handles it with total class, all the time. That made [working in the film] great because *everybody wanted to follow him*" (Banks, emphasis mine). Working on the film intertwines with the narrative details since in the final battle, Ryan follows Miller closely. The press material puts into play in the cultural imagination the notion of these two actors competing in a symbolic terrain. They enact a parent/child rivalry both in the film and in the entertainment industry—a narrative about one of the most successful actors ever performing with the young new thing hot on his heels, the latter reverent, but taking much of the spotlight.

　　Saving Private Ryan presents the homophobic desire that accompanies the war genre as men "joke" about sexual longing for each other.[141] Miller has a wife, but he does not reveal desire for her; in fact, he refuses to give any details. When Ryan tells Miller about a memory of his brothers, he relays a story where he and two of his brothers convinced the fourth brother *not* to have sex. Presumably, the girl was too ugly, but the tale also suggests a total lack of desire for women. Hanks is often figured through his lack of sexuality and average physical normality. Hanks' charm comes from the precision with which he exudes white normality. He embodies an Everyman, in part, because of his physical ordinariness. Rather than ascribing his appeal to personality and charm that overcomes this ordinariness, he attains his stardom due to the ordinariness in previous films (e.g. as the average man Sam in *Sleepless in Seattle* or as the dullard Gump in *Forrest Gump*). By "embracing" weakness, he gains the power to influence. This becomes part of the construction of Miller's mystique, as a fantasy of masculine prowess,

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[141] One soldier jokes that Horvath "likes it up the ass" and later, Horvath jokes to a soldier translating opera that he is "aroused" by him.

Walter Mitty-style. When his profession is finally revealed, Miller is a high school English teacher—an innocuous and trustworthy figure.

Hanks provides part of *SPR*'s doctrine of realism due to his normality, a more realistic identity connection for white American citizens (men and women). His physical "insufficiencies," such as a slight pudginess, receding hairline, rounded jaw and average face make him an embodiment for the clichéd insecurities of Boomer males who at this time were hitting "middle-age." Hanks' body is a contrast to the stealth, sleek, musculature of both younger and more *unrealistic* action stars such as Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Swartzenegger whose sweating biceps and "hard bodies" embody a certain "phallic erethism," an overt performance of the phallus.[142] The mise-en-scène of *SPR*, despite the presence of such classical phallic tropes as the gun, is not populated by phallic symbols; instead it languishes in feminine maternal symbols such as fluids, blood, and others associated with feminine corporeality. Sarah Hagelin argues that the film presents the soldiers as having "vulnerable bodies" in contrast to other films of the war genre. The men are partly "feminized" by the violence which she finds an undercurrent to the jingoism of the film as whole (107). Yet Miller, through the theme of his "mystique" is able to make the Everyman (known for inherent decency) into an icon of bravery and power in combat. But the film seems (through its obsession with the maternal) to want to buck the purely patriarchal dynamic of father/son conflict. The Oedipal scenario (which Theweleit finds at the heart of combat) opens this conflict to two parent positions: the mother/father and child simultaneously. Hanks' Everyman, (as a brave, killing, soldier) is able to morph into separate positions effortlessly. Hanks' star-text enables such a transition. Hanks is father/son

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[142] I am indebted to Susan Jeffords for the first notion and Eve Sedgwick for the second who writes of Walt Whitman's phallic erethism (performance of the phallus) in *Between Men.*

simultaneously in Mi ller's soldier drag. However, as m otherless, Miller b ecomes his ow n maternal de vice, creating himself. H e e mbodies pa rent *and* child, simultaneously, a s i f a hologram that morphs when held at different positions.

Judith Roof's, *Reproductions of Reproduction* analyzes the symbolic realm of the paternal. She not es t hat t his sy mbolic st ructure is t ied t o psychoanalysis as well as t o bourgeois f amily values, pa triarchal structures, and male-centered hierarchies. She w rites ho w pa triarchal hierarchies "jealously protect the realm of metaphorical figuration by which order is understood" (11). In this sense, the symbolic realm, even beyond Oedipus, becomes a site of constant cultural and pol itical ne gotiation. B y " symbolic or der" R oof r efers t o t he i deological s et of " rules a nd language that comprise the soc iocultural order i n its largest sens e" and for w hich the pa ternal is emblematic (10-11). T hough t he O edipal na rrative de rives from t he ps ychoanalytical, its force is also profusely social. These structures, however, are not static; they can and will metastasize into new and different formations: "It is possible for the Symbolic to change and, in doing so, manifest its transformation through symptoms t hat app ear in the representations t hat con stitute a cu ltural imaginary" (Roof 10) . R oof c ites instances in f ilm a nd literature th at us e va mpires, aliens, bodybuilders, a nd " Frankenstein" a s e xamples t hat a ppropriate f emale cr eative pow er and transform it into the aegis of the paternal and male. In *SPR,* Miller inhabits such a transformative body, as a Frankenstein, built from spare parts, he both avoids maternal origins and re-structures the dynamics of creations and origins. *SPR* works through an instance of symbolic change.

Roof expl ains t hat p atriarchal s ubjects ar e able t o "change" t he at tributes and characteristics of t he soc ial ord er w hile ke eping its po wer st ructure essent ially male-based. Through t he j ealous p rotection w hich pa triarchal f igures e nact in the s ymbolic z one, M iller infiltrates the symbolic (here a battlefield). Though disguised as a pure tribute, a commemoration

enabling public understanding of WWII, SPR actually restructures the symbolic (a social register modeled on psychoanalytic paradigms). In the symbolic landscape, Miller metastasizes into newly patriarchal, insidious, and powerful formulations. Strangely, he accomplishes this through a maternal impulse in which he gives birth to a new version of himself. However, instead of doing this through a precise adoption of maternal characteristics, the metastasis is accomplished through an obliteration of the symbolic maternal body, imagining instead a vulnerable, extra-uterine womb and the vulnerable body of a fetal-like "soldier." How does Hanks as Miller come to embody this reproductive positioning and what exactly is its method of metastasis?

6.1.1.2 II. Fetality

First, I want to outline a clearer understanding of the symbolic attributes of the fetal icon before I can argue that it is at play in the battles of *SPR*. Lauren Berlant, in *The Queen of America goes to Washington City,* delineates the unlikely connections and similarities between notions of the nation, ideal citizenship, and the fetus. She argues that the fetal right's debate was one mode through which victim status could be achieved—through identification with the imaginary fetal person, vulnerable and in danger. Previously, I have argued that "victim" status was a desirable position during the 1990s milieu of the culture wars, with sympathy being given to such marginal groups as gays and minorities. Berlant offers a similar argument and links this desire to the impetus to be an advocate for the fetus:

> It embodies how strongly the subject position of the national victim has a cultural dominant in America: in this moment of mass nationality and global politics, power appears always to be else-where, and political authenticity depends on the individual's humiliating exile from somebody else's norm. A

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nationwide estrangement from an imagined hegemonic center seems now to dignify every citizen's complaint. (100)

Recall, Tyler Durden's unbounded whine, arguing that males were the ones displaced by oppression. Berlant finds that there was a drive to seek out "minority status" as means to gain political agency; minority status brands a person "exceptional" (104). Although, the fetus is almost always imagined as white,[143] male and Christian, it is, at the same time, a vulnerable potential "victim" of women's "choices." The fetus as potential ideal citizen, can be imagined as defenseless, but exceptional. Despite the preponderance of national fetal life at any given time, the endangered fetus is a minority among the larger mass that will grow to term without risk of abortion.

In Berlant's thinking the fetus and the celebrity have a strong interconnection in the ways that they both circulate in the cultural imagination. Both have, at her suggestion, iconic personhood. She writes:

> Since the Second World War, the American Movie Star, has to come to embody the fantasy form of iconic citizenship, of a large body moving through space unimpeded, as only a technologically protected person can do. . . . This explains why . . . the culture of the star has become so central to fetal personhood . . . (104)

She argues that, in the age of identity politics, the fetus offers the promise of a pure, unfractured identity before "history" and culture plague the fetal body once it is born. This purity is a lie, since the fetus often operates in a male-centered pro-life visual register: as the Christ child, as a "casualty." The idea of saving "babies" transmutes their gender, and refers to a legion

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[143] Carol Mason explains that the babies lost through abortion are often figured as white babies in "Minority Unborn" (166) in *Fetal Subjects Fetal Bodies*.

of sons. Part of this register coalesces with the commonality of wrinkled newborns resembling the elderly. As most are bald, they look "male." In Berlant's thinking, though antithetical, grown males and fetuses are adjuncts in the national imagination as it relates to the politics of reproductive agency. Berlant describes the model American citizen as follows: "normal— straight, white, middle-class, and heterosexual" (36). She regards this citizen also as "infantile," inchoate, embodying "a space of possibility that transcends fractures and hierarchies of national life" (27). This citizen is infantile because he puts all his faith in the nation. He loves the nation like a familial or parental source and has faith that it will represent his best interests. The infantile citizen, much like a Boy Scout, attempts to cover the cracks in nationalism and ideology which inevitably occur with a more mature, discerning and critical mind set. The "infantile" citizen, is not fetal, because it has graduated through birth; but fetal purity is its point of origin.

I rely on Berlant's theories because she eloquently evokes the power of national fetal identity, a symbol, detached from actual women, that becomes like a flat screen or tabula rasa onto which the symbolic can be projected. She explains:

> The celebrity fetus is among us now, starring in political documentaries, Hollywood films, commodity advertisements, and home videos. Like all celebrities, the identity its body coordinates exists fully in a public sphere of superpersonhood, where it radiates authenticity and elects strong identification-- in part by the miraculous auratic ways its own magnificent body can be represented and in part by its displacement from an authentic voice. For although the fetus may be a living thing, it is also, as a representation, always a special effect. (124)

The E veryman cel ebrity emits si milar cha racteristics. Hanks *radiates* authenticity a nd elicits strong identification. Physically, the fetus does not possess specific traits, it emits a blank whiteness, unable be cause of i ts unformed qua lity t o embody ethnicity, or i n i ts us ual physi cal pose, a ny c lear s ign of sexed ge nder. I t i s onl y a n i dea of a pe rson, a n i dealized a nd pe rfect potential. In the nostalgic sense, to identify with a fetus is to project oneself into the future and into one's perfect, untainted past simultaneously. As a superperson, the fetus is also a pre-person, existing i n the pow erful s pot be fore bi rth a nd t he r equisite l oss of pow er t hat a ccompanies infancy and childhood. Berlant uses the following image in her Citizenship Museum of imagery. This c artoon pow erfully s uggests the pol itical a dvantages a nd de sires pr esent i n t he f usion between white adu lt m ales and the f etuses f or w hich they advocate. T he car toon melts the opposing po sitions of e ach i dentity, and s hows how a dult males c an symbolically m etastasize into fetal b odies. Metastasis expl ains t he pe rnicious gro wth of t his sy mbolic t ransference, especially in r elation t o voi ce. I n its c artoon rendition, the fetal "adu lt male" w ears a suit and stands at a microphone, indicating that its a dult a spect g ives voi ce to its f etal id entity. The merger ha s less to do with "saving" babies, than with appropriating the special status they have in the public imagination.

Many s cholars pl ace t he e mergence of fetal i conography i n t he publ ic s phere a t t he moment t hat L ennart N ilsson's phot ograph of a n 18 w eek fetus a ppeared on t he c over of *Life* magazine in 1965 (Berlant 107). Meredith W. Michaels notes that the photograph introduced the image to middle America with "the simultaneous ontological devaluation of the maternal body" (117). The entrance of the fetal image, coincided with and seemed to confirm the erasure of the necessity of the mother's body t o fetal life. Interestingly, Berlant exposes the fact that while the Nilsson photo on the cover of *Life* was of a living fetus photographed with a teensy tiny camera

on the end of a surgical scope, the photos inside the magazine depicted miscarried, aborted, dead fetuses outside of the mother's body (105). Berlant also reads the magazine cover as a conflation of " nationality, c elebrity, a nd i ntimacy, t he ba by c irculates a s t he tabula rasa of c onsumer nationalism, as an object consumed and as a citizen recast" (106).

This icon was so potent that it was instantly appropriated and deployed by a number of groups, m ost pr ominently t he pr o-life movement, w hose a genda ha d t he c ontrol of w omen's bodies a t its cent er (Michaels 116) . Carol A . Stabile, in her a rticle " The T raffic i n Fetuses" delineates the modes w ith which "the r hetoric of t he f etus-- the un born, t he pr eborn-- [was introduced] into a national vocabulary" (142). Through her close analysis of right-wing political movements, Stabile est ablishes t he pro -family pr opaganda w hich t hese gr oups e spouse, but which contradicts the ir a ctions a nd policies tow ard living families—women a nd c hildren. S he notes t he "absolute d iscrepancy between the [political] r ight's r everence f or t he f etus and its policies t oward c hildren" (151). S he a lso p oints a t the "benign, paternalistic interest" w hich "conservatives are able to feign" (150). In fact, as Stabile states, "the issue of abortion, which is at thi s hi storical m oment ine xtricable f rom th e im age of the fetus" is a ble to mark a he uristic symbol upon which various reproductive issues, sexual politics, and gender representations can covertly ensnare (150). These t angles oc cur, as t he scho lars ci ted above show, on symbolic as well a s cultural, political a nd material le vels. Stabile f inally asserts that " the r adical r eligious right is presently reinventing itself around a form of 'born-again' masculinity" (155).

As t his cha pter's *Prelude* suggested, pr o-life pr opaganda increasingly de pends on t he combative and soldier-like status of those in the movement, both its fetuses and male operatives. This masculine identity relies upon the illusion of masculinity as an enactment of fatherhood, but it is a strange form of fatherhood, forged against the pa limpsest of an erased m other. On local

Portland, Oregon radio stations during 1998, a public service announcement listed prosaic characteristics of childrearing: "go to the park, give a bath, read a book" and then ended with the decree: "It takes a man to be a father." This propagandistic message reinforces the idea that masculinity is forged through the family. However, it obfuscates the notion that anyone could perform the duties it prescribes for fathers, and which are conventionally performed by female caregivers and mothers. The line comes across as absurdist if the genders switch: "It takes a woman to be a mother," which simply relays practical fact. The final line of the announcement references machismo and what it takes to "be a man" and advises these activities not to promote engagement with children, but to fortify masculinity, to "be a man." In that case, the line, "It takes a man to be a mother," makes sense. Much anti-abortion rhetoric resonates with these same tones—the commitment to children occludes methods with which to achieve individual, masculine power.

The final issue in fetal representation is its violent iconography which underscores the pro-life movement (but which is "cleaned-up" in the "field of crosses" imagery mentioned in the *Prelude*). The pro-life fields "bury" violence and censor bodies in the similar mode of military cemeteries, though of course, the movement depends on the equivalence between war "casualties" and fetal "casualties." Stabile presents a pro-life flyer which describes the methods by which "babies" are dismembered and shredded and by which fluid is "suctioned" from the amniotic sac and replaced with a burning salt solution (146). Monica J. Casper indicates that "once a coat hanger symbolized abortion in the United States, now proliferating images of . . . torn apart fetuses, with blood-soaked body parts splayed graphically" represent abortion (104). In the anti-abortion video *The Silent Scream* (1984), a fetus screams in agony, (presumably a cry to its mother). The short film also shows a photo of a garbage can filled to the brim with tiny,

severed fetal arms. The movement is likened to a war, a battle rife with bombings, murders, death threats, arson, blockades and protest (Casper 103). These graphically violent images, as well as the image of the free-floating, comfortable, living fetal icon, impede the cultural imagination. Citizens imagine the ideal fetal body, and the constant threat to that body—without recognizing the threats that might face its pregnant mother.

Theweleit offers a concept that helps to explain the strange incongruence between soldiers and fetuses in his theory—that of the "not-yet-fully-born" ego that he finds attendant in representations of combatants. For soldiers forced to rationalize extreme violence, their egos are constituted by the institutions and ideologies that are outside of their bodies, not within. The military way of life conditions and constitutes them in hatred and brutality which fragments any sense of stable subjectivity. "Adult" status such as critical consciousness, guilt or responsibility rests with the "men in command" and with social institutions not the individual (259). The soldier becomes innocent, not-yet-fully-born, unfinished and free from responsibility to himself or others. This psychic state emancipates soldiers from responsibility for the horrors in which they engage, and perhaps both enjoy and despise. To be not-yet-fully-born allows victimizers to be victims. Of peculiar interest, is the fact that this state is not achieved through "regression," by going back to a previous stage like "infancy or the fetal situation," but instead by *change*:

> In the not-yet-fully-born, what we witness is not regression (which, in individuals whose psychic functions are more integrated, proceeds relatively slowly, stage by stage), but a staccato shifting between various psychic states between which, in contrast to states of regression, there is no qualitative difference. (259)

Without hitting stages or developmental phases, the soldier ego re-narratives its changes and shifts. This shift forgoes conventional temporal design, re-creating a pattern where the

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psyche can go from adult manhood to not-yet-fully-born without interim stages. Like nostalgic acts that do not go back, but turn sideways and elide conventional time zones, this shift occurs more like a metastasis. I use the term metastasis because the shifts necessarily occur through corporeal violence. As a metastasizing masculinity, these changes are both staccato and organic, acting like a disease that metastasizes in the body, spreading and changing locations. These psychological "locations" are symbolic appropriations. In my reading, these symbolic transfers change through nostalgic discourse. That is, they occur like all nostalgic acts, wherein recollection recreates a new history or "reality." The seemingly disjointed positions connect by way of the pernicious ailment of longing: whether for home, nation, or purity. As introduced in Chapter One, nostalgia emerged as a medical condition specific to soldiers fighting abroad who longed for home, for *nation*.

Nostalgia was originally imagined as a physical disease that spread throughout the body and presented with symptoms of illness. It was an imagined "disease" that produced the anguish of patriotism in afflicted soldiers. In its 1990s American variation, it uses a similar pattern to restructure the conditions of power. Though Theweleit writes of German soldiers in the 1920s and 1930s, they have striking connections to some cinematic soldiers. The symbolic visual nature of cinema, including the "staccato" shifts of editing, allow representations of Theweleit's shifts and changes that can be observed in images. *SPR*'s narrative follows the persistent drive to return Ryan to his *home*, the idyllic Iowa farm where his mother dwells. Though the not-yet-fully-born are still entombed within a pre-birth state (before critical consciousness), this place is not associated with the maternal body. In *SPR*, both Miller and Ryan emerge in "not-yet-fully-born" ego positions—they are guiltless killers, innocents just following orders. They also both change positions in the narrative (as will be explained) and most of all, Miller's psychic state is

presented through dream-like episodes during battle when he is able to experience shifts in space and time.

6.1.1.3 III. Triangles

The representation of Mrs. Ryan (Amanda Boxer), the mother, seems to present the ideal rendering of iconic American life, and yet, this is not the zone to which soldiers in the film want to return, as demonstrated by Pvt. Ryan who refuses to go home once he is found. The Ryan farm, described as "Rockwellian" in one article[144], resembles pastoral farmland with an *American Gothic* aesthetic. There are fields of rolling green grass, but the modest white farmhouse suggests decades of simplicity, hard work and basic values. The father is absent, but Mrs. Ryan is first shot from behind as she collects dishes and washes them. The next shot cuts to her face from just outside the kitchen window. As she looks up from the dish basin, the reflection of the white picket fence which surrounds her farmhouse cuts across her face—a row of white crosses. The ominous form of a car with a stream of exhaust fumes drives across her face in the reflection. In this singular tableau, her face is framed in the window, seen through the pane, and obscured by the white crosses and dark stream of black smoke. This kind of "busy" image effectively objectifies her grief and sacrifice. Posed beneath the picket fence/white crosses, she becomes the representation for the conventional cliché of sacrificing maternal grief and the loss of sons. However, she is also herself a graveyard, a "field" of crosses.

Because the framing so contains and obscures her, individual subjectivity dissolves. Like the composite "mother" in real history whom she portrays, she widens and becomes a symbol. This scene's aesthetic rendering of the mother presents her as a purely symbolic entity. In that

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[144] See Frank P. Tomasulo "Empire of the Gun: Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* and American Chauvinism." In *The End of Cinema as We Know It*. Ed. Jon Lewis. NY: NY UP, 2001. pp.123

way, she can align with the use of the maternal to symbolize soldier psyche's not-yet-fully-born status. Because that ego-position appropriates some representation of maternal (extra-uterine) space, entirely separate from a woman's body, the images in this scene force the character into a purely symbolic space. The mother becomes object, de-subjectified.

The next shot cuts to behind Mrs. Ryan again, featuring her overly ample, hyperbolic hips that exaggerate her "maternal" figure as she steps just beyond the domestic frame of her doorway onto the porch to sit down between two men. (She sits awkwardly because of her immense girth, as if the actress has been padded). The men arrive to deliver the news of the deaths of her three sons. She makes no sound, in contrast to the wails of soldiers on the beach. The few women in the film are mostly silent.[145] In the previous sequence, a series of secretaries, shown in close-up, type the "casualty" form letters written to parents of dead soldiers. The content of the letters is read by a man in voice-over. The short scene suggests that women are essential to communication that occurs between men, but they themselves have nothing to communicate, the message travels through them. Though Mrs. Ryan is represented as the intensely corporeal embodiment of sacrificial mother, she is oddly disembodied without a voice, spoken lines, and indeed no frontal representation, except as a face obscured by other symbols.

This home, purportedly where the "saved" Ryan will return, is a site of death and silence. Miller also longs for "home" in the film. And though he longs for the rose bushes in his wife's garden, he refuses to give the details of his memory to Ryan, who has asked to hear it. Miller responds curtly, "No. That one is just for me." Miller escapes vulnerability both by being motherless, and by refusing to give details about his mother or "home." To return "home" in *SPR*

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[145] One strange additional aspect of feminine "silence" occurs extra-diegetically in the credits. In the opening scene, a male and female couple with four children follow the elderly veteran through the cemetery. When the man calls the vet "Dad," their relationship is established. The couple have three daughters and one son, who does not have any lines. The credits list only the adult son and the grandson as characters in the credits.

becomes a conflicted desire about a doomed location. This site is exposed in the return to the Ryan homestead which becomes one of two scenes set in America in the film, in addition to the cemetery in the frame narrative. In this way, the home longed for in *SPR,* though overtly, the American nation, is visualized as a graveyard. As a "graveyard," there is nothing of value there for nostalgic longing—which opens that desire to other, better possibilities for imaginations of "home." Though we see a soldier cry for his mother, we recognize it as a death cry, in part because his body is torn beyond repair—he screams with gusto despite entrails splayed across the beach. For survival, soldiers must escape the journey to this home—the home of the mother, the destination of the death letters. The mother's home and body equates to certain death.

In the case of another soldier, Wade (Giovanni Ribisi), he similarly calls for his mother after he is shot, insuring his death. He also says, "I want to go home," but it is the wrong home, a site of death and negation. In an earlier scene, like many of the soldiers in the film, Wade relates a story about his mother (the mother motif is extreme). Wade's story reveals a deep conflict with regard to his mother. Though Wade longs for her to appear in his doorway at night, he would pretend to be asleep once she arrived. He relays the story with a stoic horror, wracked with guilt by both his desire for her, and his rejection. He resolves the guilt, by crying for her as he dies, reaffirming the film's theme that the desire for maternal love or protection equals death. However, symbolic logic needs it both ways: it needs to revel in a maternal positionality (the fantasy of the nurtured fetus or the not-yet-fully-born), while seeing this location as a force and place of death. The problem in the diegetic terrain becomes: how does one maintain the not-yet-fully-born position of moral innocence and still survive? The answer lies in the denial of the maternal body and its necessity. If one is not of woman born, he can create himself. In this sense, the film engages in a fantasy that disavows the necessity of maternal bodies and origins. The

"home" nostalgically longed for, is separate from mother and nation. It is a different, inchoate purity, not unlike the fantasy of fetal existence, of being a tabula rasa and starting over. It is a position that not only avoids death, but also middle-age and fatherhood.

The film's narrative trajectory allows for a "new" return home. However, to obliterate origins and create a new one, soldiers also must appropriate the father position. I have already argued that the 1990s WWII nostalgia and the media climate of *SPR* engaged in familial conflict between generations. Susan Jeffords finds this kind of conflict integral to the war genre. Though she writes on a Vietnam film, the genre conventions persist in *SPR*, and when father/son conflict (and commemoration) invades the public sphere. Jefford's work on masculinity in *Platoon* (Oliver Stone, 1986) provides a description of the father/son transference which combat allows:

> The increasing violence of the combat sequences can be seen as a direct result of the increasing ambivalence of the masculine character as it is severed from the previous forms of stability and identification. The combat sequences are eruptions of the anxiety about this ambivalence as well as forums within which the tension of that anxiety can be dispelled and "new" masculine roles can be tried on. That anxiety decreases and is arrested as the masculine subject becomes stabilized through the adoption of the position of the father. The resolution of the father/son tension is then not coincidentally but structurally tied to combat scenes because it is through combat sequences that the son is enabled (often through the literal death of the father) to adopt an altered paternal role. The deterioration of the masculine subject is halted only by the son becoming the father. (1057, 1988)

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Similar dynamics of transference come into play in my arguments about the specific methodology for the metastasis of masculinity which father/son power dynamics instigate. The metastasis allows change that reconstructs origins, eradicating the need for both a mother *and* a father. It is not enough to avoid the home of the mother, one must overtake the father's war too. Jeffords and other scholars have long acknowledged the movement which such competitive relations require. They usually occur through a triangulation, normatively Freudian and Oedipal, but beyond a psychoanalytic reading, triangulation illuminates narrative structures of return, restoration, and nostalgia.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men*, writes that triangles provide " a sensitive register . . . for delineating relationships of power and meaning, and for making graphically intelligible the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment" (27). Sedgwick's work on triangles theorize homoerotic exchanges in which a woman is used in order to forge homosocial or homoerotic bonds between men. In her work on Shakespeare's sonnets, Sedgwick depicts the seeming symmetry which the triangle affords the bonds it illumines: "the figure of the persona who can be 'halfway between' male and female will recur as an important topos for the fiction of gender symmetry, but in a form that finally reveals the tendentiousness of the assertion of symmetry" (47). The geometry of a gender triangle will never be equally-sided, but only have the illusion of being so. While Sedgwick's work in *Between Men* ultimately examines gay male relations, it also reveals the ways in which male bonds are forged through women, and especially the ways in which uses of women constitute men. For instance, Sedgwick writes, " Even when men . . . formed overtly sexual liaisons with other men, they seem to have perceived the exclusion of women from their intimate lives as virilizing them, more than they perceived their choice of a male object as feminizing

them" (207). While Sedgwick's work primarily concerns homoerotic and homosocial bonds in mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century British literature, it is also useful in its presentation of the triangular paradigm as a tool for understanding gender and the ways in which it is constitutive.

Sedgwick's triangular formulation has many sources, one of which is Gayle Rubin's influential, and much earlier work "The Traffic in Women." The most powerful implication of Rubin's formulation of exchange is that it places the oppression of women within social systems (175). Women represent the problematic but necessary role of the mother in the familial triad. Rubin's analysis successfully locates the symbolic or psychoanalytic realm in a social construction. Her ultimate goal is to dislocate the oppression of women from an essential, natural, or biologic framework, and place oppression as well as gender characteristics, and sex systems in a socially constructed arena.

My use of the triangular formulation, which will explicate the metastasis of masculinity, relies heavily on the foundational work of Rubin's and Sedgwick's notions of triangular exchanges. I also aim to show how the dynamics which Jeffords presents morph during the 1990s as evidenced in *SPR*. My formulation of the triangle elucidates the way that one man, via the reification of his masculinity, moves to occupy the three nodes of the triangle: father, mother and son. However, the triangle does not operate in a purely geometric form, it is rhizomatic and organic. The positions of the Oedipal triad morph through a metastasizing process. The son position vies for the mother position to co-opt its reproductive potential. My triangle has the same primary components as the Oedipal family romance triad which entails a rivalry between the father and son which enacts itself via the mother. However, I am most concerned with the erasure of the mother or female figure in the center of exchanges, an erasure which allows a

male, fetal-like subjectivity to emerge. The triangle enables self-generation, a way to be the father and the son concomitantly, in order to work against the tenuous power the female mother indicates: both her power as reproductive agent and as a prior producer of the son and the father. The metastasizing triangle foregrounds the mode in which the woman is obliterated from the configuration. "She" is the central point on the triangle, but she is actually an illusion. In a similar way, "mothers" appear to be central, but, in symbolic registers, often have little presence that is not male-situated, oriented or defined. The visual technologies of the fetus enable this erasure, but locating the fetus within a war zone, nostalgic for a "good" war and a pure home, nostalgically places these figures onto a battlefield where women are absent.

After a provisional metastasis, the three figures of my triangle become the father, the son, and the fetus, exposed and alone through the erasure of the maternal body. The erasure of the mother, allows the masculine body to produce its own fetal state, through imagination. Berlant's fetal person lives on its own without normal physiological needs (such as a womb, etc.) The father and son vie for dominance over the fetal position. The father and son, forced into combat due to the social institutions that reify masculinity and the mythology of war, each seek dominance. The desirable fetal subjectivity becomes the position to vie for. The fetus symbol torques through the changing paternal symbolic which Roof explicated. The celebrity fetus with personhood and status of its own, exists outside of the mother's body, being simply, a valuable miniature minority, and vulnerably sacred version of Everyman.

Through the narrative of *SPR*, I will show that the figure of the fetus and its appropriation and exchange become the mode for transfer of power and identity between father and son and son and father. The fetus is a replacement for the mother and a phantasm for the obsolete maternal that exists beneath ideal masculinity. As Sedgwick organizes the triangle, it is

homosocial and homoerotic and takes place between men. The father/son triangle of which I speak is rather auto-erotic—the formula, and symbolic narrative movement has become one of self-preservation, self-extension, self-generation and self-identification. Though these characteristics sound unlikely, my forthcoming reading of the battle scenes in *SPR* will argue that the Oedipal triad does mutate there and become narcissistic.

This mutation is partly due to the problematic aspect of becoming father, only to find a stream of sons ready to usurp the position. The son ceaselessly aims toward the position of the father, only to attain it and find that power fleeting. The way to override this conundrum is to be "both." This happens through the appropriation of reproductive agency of maternal and female bodies in order to produce, and simultaneously become, the fetus—to give birth to oneself, in a reverse reproduction, a nostalgic move, which allows the polymorphic embodiment of all three subjectivities: mother, father and son. This acquisition becomes possible and comprehensible via *SPR*'s battleground setting where individual agency is contested. To die in battle is to die for another person's or nation's advancement and cause and to sacrifice your own. Sacrifice is one action which masculinity does not entirely celebrate, but mourns through an uneasy "honoring."

6.1.1.4 IV. Metastasis

SPR begins and ends with an opaque American flag flapping in the wind. Ensconced between the flag images, there is a frame narrative with two scenes taking place in a veteran's memorial graveyard where infinite rows of white crosses mark the deaths of sacrificed soldiers. During flashbacks, there are bookended battle scenes that open and close the internal narrative. The center of the movie, flanked by these balanced opening and closing scenes, concerns the

mission to find, in order to send home, the last surviving son in the fictional Ryan family (a composite of real people and fictional individuals.)

In the opening contemporary graveyard scene, slow moving point-of-view shots follow an elderly male through the cemetery as his family follows. He walks a great distance ahead of them, alone. The man walks to a grave and falls to his knees. His family, a wife, grown son and daughter, and four grandchildren rush to aid him. The man looks up and the camera zooms in on his eyes. The film then cuts to ocean waves crashing against black iron cross shapes.[146] This twisted geometric shape contrasts to the stark, neatly rowed white crosses of the previous scene. Theweleit's conceptions of the ocean as representative of the mother allow this battle scene, which depicts the "storming of the beach" on D-day, to be read metaphorically as an exemplar of the not-yet-fully-born soldier ego traversing both the "birth canal" and the "amniotic" comfort of the vast, terrible mother/ocean in the quest for individuation.

The triangle theorized above occurs, overlaps and immerses within Theweleit's conception of soldiers and their relation to and interaction with women and the feminine. According to Theweleit, one aspect of soldiers' combative and misogynistic attitude toward women, occurs because soldiers occupy a not-yet-fully-born position. Theweleit explains the not-yet-fully-born position as that which has not "individuated" from the mother—it is a position that "needs" the feminine in some form. This position may also need a fetal vantage—one that remains innocent, pure, and free from knowledge of consequences. Furthermore, this stage is described by Theweleit as an "extra-uterine birth." Theweleit further discusses this stage as obsessed with reclaiming and reconnecting with the body from whence it came—the symbiotic, maternal body. Problematically, reconnecting with the maternal is less a psychoanalytic drive,

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[146] Aside from their "cinematic" aesthetic, I do not know what these objects are—some sort of obstruction to prevent Allied boats from landing, perhaps?

than one by which to gain autonomous power within adulthood. The position of the soldier symbolizes the precarious responsibility of adult knowledge and the moral difficulties of violence and killing.

James Conlon, in his article on the military film *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986), summarizes this portion of Theweleit's theory of soldiers as being: "perpetually trapped as it were in the birth canal" As he notes, "the soldierly ego struggles to free itself from a symbiotic union with the mother. He views the soft, fluid bodies of women as representing both an enticing call to the womb-like bliss of the past and, by the same token, as a harrowing attack on such an identity" (22). Notably, like the pro-life movement imagery, the feminine maternal, though seemingly erased from reproductive scenarios, here transforms into pure symbol. When the maternal is only trope, adversarial narratives, locations and occurrences (such as battles) become symbolized by maternal corporeality. Theweleit explains, "First comes la mer, then la mère," so that an ocean (extremely unlike a female body, even an amniotic sac), turns motherhood into a symbol (vol. 1, 292). Theweleit traces the method by which the relationship between the not-yet-fully-born individual and its other half, the mother, can become symbolized by one of domination and revenge. Theweleit further explains that this "half" has little interest in the father, and is more obsessed with again becoming one with the maternal body, taking over its attributes (vol. 2, 213). These fetal persons revere the mother outwardly (similar to the overt reverence of mothers and their national sacrifice in war times). However, desire for the maternal within themselves (technically a physical impossibility, hence a symbolic representation), replaces reverence with a parasitism that obliterates, that metastasizes into a new form, one that does not need a mother.

Theweleit summarizes both the triangular paradigm and the fetal person's relation to it:

The ego of the not-yet-fully-born has no psychic point of reference within

the triangular configuration of the family; more concretely, the father

agency, and the mother as person, mean nothing to it. The not yet fully -

born explodes beyond the boundaries of the family . . . in terms of its

psychic construction, it is an anti-familialist being. (vol. 2, 252)

Ultimately, the not-yet-fully-born seeks to eradicate the family and the triad. The not-yet-fully-born soldier is like a Boomer in crisis in the nineties. Recall the multiple reviews of *SPR* that espoused the intensive identification that the film produced—as audience members felt that they had "experienced" combat. To "identify" with, elicits a form of becoming. During an era when masculinity was in "crisis" and white masculinity was in question, "individuation" became a mode through which to heal fractures. Individuation or "growing up," requires not just separation, but eradication and the usurpation of the eradicated's positions, subjectivities and agencies. Such a move occurs through the citizen soldier Miller in *SPR*.

The first battle scene begins with narrow U-boats arriving at the shore. As in Theweleit's birth canal, soldiers get "trapped." The first soldiers at the opening of the vessel are instantly shot and killed. The survivors, including Miller, stationed at the rear, dive into the ocean over the sides of the boat. Once submerged, the noise of gunfire stops, as the ocean seems to offer safety. But in this terrible place, soldiers drown, weighted down by their gear or are shot to death in the water. Later, on the shore, one soldier refers to this experience. He says, "that bitch tried to drown me." It is unclear if the "bitch" is his gun or the ocean. Miller makes it ashore, but just as he emerges from the ocean, he faces an explosion. The fervent, "realist" pace of the film halts and a surreal episode begins. The sound stops and the pace retards, cutting to slow motion photography. Miller first gazes at a soldier who cries soundlessly (a silent scream) and tries to

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maintain, amidst the chaos, a fetal position. The soldier is posed against one of the black iron set pieces; he has dropped his weapon and struggles to pull his knees to chest while crying.

Next, Miller watches soldiers perish in two ways that recall abortion methods used in prominent pro-life imagery. He watches soldiers burn on shore and then watches a U-boat burn as men try to scurry off and take refuge in the water. These deaths by burning recall the use of saline solution injections as an abortion method in which "babies" are said to be burned alive.[147] The safe vessel of the boat transforms into a deathly inferno. The scene similarly might be seen to represent late stage abortive methods, in which fetuses die in the birth canal. As Theweleit and Conlon suggest, the battlefield is a birth canal; since soldiers cannot make it ashore, they are effectively and symbolically "aborted." Next Miller watches an armless soldier bend and pick up his lost arm, an image which recalls not only the photographic image of the heap of tiny fetus arms, but the visual rhetoric of the anti-abortion movement, which offers dismembered, mutilated, torn apart bodies as part of its visual campaign. Many acts of dismemberment occur on the beachhead, including the iconic soldier who cries "Mama" while clutching his red guts. In light of the connection between battles and symbolic birth, the soldier's cry can be read as if begging the mother to stop, instead of aid. Ironically, this moment was particularly critiqued by veteran viewers, one who countered that if soldiers cried out at all it was for their Dads. Steffan Hantke, notes that despite the attempts of another soldier narrative (*Starship Trooper*s, Paul Verhoevan, 1997) to metaphorize masculine corporeality such as ejaculation through weapon and battle representations, the narrative "keeps sliding back toward connotations of infantilization, pregnancy, and the trauma of childbirth" (499). It seems maternal corporeal

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[147] See http://www.mccl.org/Page.aspx?pid=295, the website for Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life. Their description of a saline abortion is representative of pro-life rhetoric focusing on babies burned alive, scalded and "born" with missing skin.

symbology cannot be ignored in combat representations, and depictions of masculinity revel in nostalgia for origins.

Soldiers, as representatives of those not-yet-fully-born, embody the symbolic fetus, and thus the combat on the shore becomes representative of abortive attempts on their lives. Indeed, soldier sacrifice is much like the process of "selective reduction" whereby mothers may elect to terminate some fetuses so that others might live. It recalls the concept of military sacrifice— giving one's life so that others may survive. I necessarily read this opening battle scene, as the process by which citizen soldier Miller returns nostalgically to a fetal ideality, fighting against and amidst attempts on his life that mimic abortion methods.

As Hantke asserts in his work on the soldier's body in contemporary science fiction, battlefields often suggest the "interior of the soldier's body that tends to become a metaphor for a state of mind more than a distinct geographical or topographical designation" (496). Therefore, the extended battle in *SPR* recalls not just the psychological impetus to revise a birth trauma, but especially to survive and avoid a birth trauma in which there is the constant threat of the mutilative perils of intentional abortion. Therefore, in this scene Miller, not yet fully "born" when he arrives on the beach, makes the individuation move, through survival in the journey from the U-boat to the top of the shore and the end of the filmic battle. Because the mother's body completely dissolves as the ocean, her triangular position is instead represented by the infinitely pregnant womb of the ocean which delivers countless fetuses to the shore, the most important being the celebrity Hanks qua Captain Miller. Therefore, the fetus takes precedence and stands in as the physical representative of the mother— her body's crucial aspect being its reproductive potential. In this way, the fetus becomes an agent and essentially a subjective participant in its own return to idealized origins. It "returns" not to the womb, but *changes,*

metastasizes into an innocent soldier—in Miller's case, a motherless, pure superperson, made from "the spare parts of dead G.I.s."

In this famously excruciating scene for spectators, Hanks (real life son of a veteran) plays a father (to the Boomer generation) and also survives intensive perils and threats to his body and, by extension, his masculinity. By surviving, Hanks/Miller goes back to the site of origin, beyond his own birth, to a pre-birth place before the Baby Boom. I allow a slippage here between Hanks' star text and his character Miller because the extra-diegetic landscape is part of the film's appeal and affective force. In a way, Hanks/Miller negotiates his own orphan status, excising parents and the generational conflict between him and them. The audience, if they identify with the famous Everyman Hanks, can negotiate a similar fantasized path. Honoring the father, obliterates the mother, allows one to become their own origin—using history to obliterate that origin as well, setting it up for endless transformative renewals. Arguably, the obliteration of history is what fictive reformulations do, revising the accurate record and making fiction seem both real and true.

After the opening battle, Miller leads the platoon in search of Ryan. Miller has become a man (a fetal man), an individual, mysterious and revered. However, once the small brigade locates Ryan, he refuses to go home. Ryan orders Miller to tell his mother he is with the "only brothers he has left" whom he will not desert. Ryan's move plays as supremely decent and also bucks Miller's orders and his authority. Previously, Miller let a German P.O.W. escape execution because it was the "decent" thing to do. At this point, Ryan seems to be a better man than Miller. He is also a survivor of maternal destruction, as the only son to avoid the deathly grave of the Iowan farm seen earlier. The final battle, plays out as a conflict between Miller and Ryan (and Hanks and Damon as potentially rivalrous stars).

In the closing battle scene, Ryan follows orders to stay no more than two feet away from Miller, as if linked umbilically—especially since two feet is the approximate length of the average umbilical cord. This connection establishes the plot device of Miller being determined to send the boy home alive; but also, it allows him to keep and control the son figure, especially since he will symbolically usurp his body at the end of the final battle. Most of the original platoon die in this scene, save for Ryan and one other soldier who quips before battle, "I was born lucky." This comment has a significant ring to it, and again references the maternal, and a "good" birth in war zones.

The final battle scene also contains a surreal episode in which the combat noise stops and the action slows. This time Millers looks toward Ryan who having "disconnected," from the two feet order, sits far away in a tight fetal position, rocking and appearing to engage in a silent, primal scream. Though Ryan has dropped his weapons, stopped fighting, and clutched his legs defenselessly, he survives. Miller does not—not in the conventional sense. However, Miller does survive through his appropriation of Ryan's body, as I will explain. Miller, as an appropriator of the fetal/maternal position on the triangle continues to change and shift. He metastasizes this time, not into a different version of himself as fetal, but into Ryan's valuable, younger position. Miller's usurpation of the female maternal via the occupation of the fetal persona appears to have given him this "advanced" status—to be able to morph identities and survive anything. Not long after, the surreal moment "transforms" back into the realist style, Miller sits wounded, his legs spread open, as if having just delivered a baby. A large enemy tank crawls toward him and Miller shoots at it with a pistol—one which seems to destroy the tank with a loud, booming brio, though actually an overhead airplane has dropped a bomb. Ryan approaches and stares down at the dying Miller, who tells him "earn it . . . earn this." However,

he arguably is speaking to himself. To earn is "to gain a position through hard work and the accumulation of experience, often in the face of difficulties," which is what Miller has accomplished all along. He has earned and therefore acquired "positions" through appropriation, usurpation, and individuation. Earn does not necessarily carry the singular meaning "to deserve," here, but in alignment with layered positions and symbols, it signifies "to overtake." Parasitically, Miller has taken from that which allowed his creation, the maternal, and that which he has become, the paternal. He successfully uses the family triangle to maintain his existence at all costs by metastasizing into and through the three familial positions, which in turn layer and metastasize into one another.

However, as Ryan hovers over Miller staring down at his open-eyed body, Ryan morphs via a special effects digitization technique into the contemporary old-timer who began the movie and whose memories the narrative beheld, memories of the boats at D-day. Miller, unwilling to die in battle and relinquish his life to the son, instead transubstantiates into him. Miller oscillates between multiple ages, spaces, and times. The audience has believed that the elderly fellow who begins the film is Miller because their eyes or perspective are connected with him via a match-like cut that suggests it is the elderly vet's memories on the beach at Normandy that we are viewing—a locale, boat, and beach, where Ryan has never been. This older figure is both Miller and Ryan, Ryan's body with Miller's point of view. The domination of Miller's memory is able to usurp Ryan's subjectivity. In a sense, Hanks/Miller/Everyman occupies the in-between-ness of the two positions: in between Damon and the older contemporary man/actor, and "in between" the young son and the grandfather. The key to survival is the slippery transport between the two positions of father and son-- a transport made possible via the occupation of the "fetal as maternal" position.

Ryan dissolves, and Miller becomes the overriding version of both characters—primarily because the audience will "remember" his representative memory that began the film. As the film lingers with the morphed creature, the elderly vet, his wife walks over and simply states, as she "reads" a grave stone: "Captain John Miller." The statement fortifies *his* presence, Miller's. This is the subject alive at the end. Hank's Everyman, Miller, slips in between Damon/Ryan/elderly vet and appropriates each aspect of the narrative and interestingly the cultural frame as well, by being the primary star. His celebrity position outside the frame performs a similar move as that of the son. Hanks plays the father, and also is a "father" rivaling a son, the actor Damon. Oddly, however, Hanks is the star with which Everyman can identify.

His fetal status remains as well. The elderly vet turns to his wife and asks: "Am I good man?" She replies: "You are." The man looks for confirmation that he has "earned it," that is, his survival. But the question and answer also exonerate the problematic moral position of soldiers—as killers who follow orders. The film asserts that good men and a great generation emerged from the terrible acts and violence that marked WWII combat with the enemy. More than resolving any great moral issues, these lines at the end of the film reassure the audience that they are also "good" for having "lived through" the visceral horror of what was widely hailed as one of the most upsetting and violent films of all time. Finally, "saving" *privately*, Ryan, means to take or keep—to save, "private" memory in a public mode. The audience gets to do this through the eyes of the lovable Hanks, who gives the public view of "Ryan's" memory and makes it readily accessible.

6.1.1.5 Afterword

> I know that *Platoon* is being acclaimed for its realism, and I expect to
> be chastised for being a woman finding fault with a war film. But I've probably
> seen as a much combat as most of the men saying, "This is how war is."
>
> Pauline Kael

The popular genre of the 1990s WWII film emphasizes the battlegrounds of masculinity: its reproduction and representation that somehow govern national obsessions. While I hope to have shown that the masculinity here discussed uses and requires appropriations of the feminine, especially with regards to reproduction, I do not write about women, but more so the appropriation of femininity, the female gender, and reproductive agencies usually associated with women. Therefore, I do not write about men, but only representation of masculinity. I have argued that white masculinity requires the status of "victim," in order to soften its larger identity as oppressor. However, white males are victims of symbolic regimes and ideological institutions from which none of us can readily escape.

Most important to my argument is the interrogation of the "use" of women in symbolic representations. If they flood the triangles of which they are the distant center, than the surest way to stunt women's continued elision from discourse is to push to the fore the methods by which masculinity-making projects use, exchange, traffic in and eradicate women in their ever-shifting, and covert, metastases. As Rubin reminds us: "if there were no exchange of women and if there were no gender, the entire Oedipal drama would be a relic" (199). I hope I have adequately pointed to the ways the Oedipal drama is becoming a relic, not because it has ceased, but because it morphs in ever new ways. Homosocial, homoerotic bonds become autoerotic bonds. Why? In one sense, to override the tenuousness of a rivalry in which there lies the risk of defeat. Father/son dynamics, let alone the precarious, terrifying problem of being "of woman

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born," impede the masculine project in the 1990s, a decade engaged again with "birthing the nation."

7.0   NOSTALGIA AND THE SUFFERING MALE BODY: CONCLUSIONS

7.1   PRELUDE VI: EXECUTION AND THE BLACK MALE BODY

> The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being . . . will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.
>
> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*
>
> In any case, whether you like it or not, these white lynchers have helped decisively in creating the world you live in, that you profit from or most definitely don't, according to racial walls they were instrumental in helping build.
>
> Eric Lott, "On *Without Sanctuary*"

I have chosen not to reproduce "lynching photography" here[148]. Instead, I have covered over a photo of the 1911 lynching of Charlie Hale (hanged in a public square) with a copy of a customer review for the book *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, posted on Amazon.com . [149] Eric Lott suggests that "lynching photography" participates in the act of

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[148] The image is printed in Amy Louise Wood's article "Lynching Photography and the 'Black Beast Rapist' in the Southern White Masculine Imagination" in *Masculinity: Bodies Movies Culture*. Ed. Peter Lehmen. NY: Routledge, 2001. Pp.193-212. It is covered with a customer review posted on Amazon.com's home page for *Without Sanctuary*.
[149] The excerpted review is featured on the book's Amazon.com home page. It appears first due to having been voted by customers the "Most Helpful Customer Review" for *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America."* New York: Twin Palms, 2000. The review has been featured first since at least July 2008. The review is

lynching, making looking itself a violent and contributory act.[150] Lynching images exist, in part, because taking photos of victims during and after their murders was a part of the ritual of terror and violence. The photographs, which were circulated as postcards and souvenirs of the events, served as both a terroristic warning to black people, and as a form of nostalgia for whites.

Susan Sontag's philosophical contemplation on the ethics of viewing images of suffering bodies, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), concludes that such photos cannot adequately convey the experience which they represent. She writes about the viewer's position: "we don't get it . . . Can't understand. Can't imagine" (125-6). Though I doubt Sontag's title references the jargon meaning of "others," its academic definition for those who are usually non-Anglo and marginalized by dominant hegemony, her conclusions are especially true for this designation. Sontag mentions a gallery exhibit shown in Sarajevo in 1994 by the English photojournalist Paul Lowe (112). He showed two sets of photographs, one set depicting the horrors of the current war in Sarajevo and the other portraying suffering in Somalia which he had taken a few years prior. Sontag explains, "the Sarajevans, though eager to see new pictures of the ongoing destruction in their city, were offended by the inclusion of the Somalia pictures" (113). This incident raises a tangle of intertwined issues related to the "proper" way to display atrocious imagery. For the Sarajevans, (as reported by Sontag) "twinning" their suffering with that of another nation, worked to both demote their horror and make it incidental—as just another example of global, non-stop calamity. However, there was also the strong tinge of racism in their feelings of affront. In this case, the equivocation of Sarajevo's experience with an African nation's, threatened the

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excerpted. For the full review see:http://www.amazon.com/Without-Sanctuary-Lynching-Photography-America/dp/0944092691/ref=pd_bbs_sr_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1237492053&sr=8-2

[150] See http://www.firstofthemonth.org/culture/culture_lott_sanctuary.html Lott's "review" of the *Without Sanctuary* exhibit quoted Barthes' remarks, which I have re-quoted here after reviewing them in their original context.

preservation of its "European" nationality. From Lowe's perspective, the two locales were connected by *his* eye, and were suitable for joint exhibition because of his authorship over both sets of images. Sontag concludes the anecdote by explaining the intolerability of having one's own horror compared with another's. Perhaps the primary characteristic of much atrocious photography is that the persons portrayed in them have no authority over their use and display—that responsibility remains with those still alive.

Roland Barthes' oft-quoted comments, used here as an epigraph, rhapsodize about the transmission of corporeal, "umbilical" ties between those viewing photographs and those in the photographs. However, his remarks take on an especially problematic gleam when the images are engaged in ideological work—as is the case with lynching photography in America. Lynching photography was instrumental, during and after Reconstruction, in "stabilizing" racial hierarchy in the U.S. As this hierarchy is continually challenged, the specter of lynching also continuously "returns," such as with the 2000 publication of *Without Sanctuary* which had an accompanying traveling museum exhibit. Though lynching seems to reference a long ago, primarily Southern, historical violence, representations of it had continual recurrences in culture in the 1990s, often in popular forms. This final chapter draws certain conclusions about issues of white masculinity, nostalgia and nation in the 1990s through a reading of the Tom Hanks film *The Green Mile* (Frank Darabont, 1999), a story about prison officers assigned to death row in a Southern penitentiary in the 1930s. Because Hanks plays an executioner of "others," (the three men executed are Native American, French, and African-American), this *Prelude* aims to contextualize the stakes of representing white masculine violence during the late 20th century, especially as it resonated with Clinton's stance on crime and racial politics, considered in the second part of this conclusion.

Michelle Wallace in "The Good Lynching" reads the "black brute" Gus (played by white actor, Walter Long, in blackface in *The Birth of the Nation*), as " the first black to show aggression toward whites in cinema"—at least until the 1960s (89). Gus is considered guilty of "killing" the young, white girl Flora (Mae Marsh) who actually jumps off a cliff to avoid Gus's "unthinkable" embrace (88). When Gus is lynched for his "crime," Wallace describes the scene as presenting a "good" example of lynching, a clean, orderly ritual that contrasts starkly to the news reports of lynching in 1915, the photos and postcards that were circulating in the U.S. at that time, and the historical images reproduced in *Without Sanctuary*. Both kinds of depictions were stylized, the real ones and staged ones in *The Birth of the Nation*, and both did important work in establishing lynching as a constitutive part of the American nation. Lynching photos depict unspeakable savagery and torture. Continued cultural fascination with them stems, in part, from the normalcy of the white people who often surround the victim. Lynching photography depicts the victim, but it also usually shows the average, "ordinary" quality of the whites in attendance.

Amy Louise Wood's "Lynching Photography and the 'Black Beast Rapist,'" explains that the act of photographing lynching scenes was an integral part of their ritualized terror. The act of taking the photograph both prolonged and extended the deeds. Photos were often staged: the victim's body arranged, and the "audience" posed. This "aesthetic" made the body of the victim sometimes less a focal point than those of the lynchers who surrounded the body. Often the victim's body was to the side or in the background, so that its degraded form functioned as part of the setting for a visual presentation of white supremacy. While the white mob in the photographs often includes the presence of women and children, their staging and the act

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depicted were usually the dominion of men and thus engaged with the constitution of white masculinity.[151] Black masculinity was imagined in excessive modes as hypersexual, criminally deviant, and ultra-strong. Torturing and destroying the black male body (often including castration) was a way to control and contain the imaginary traits of black masculinity, and being able both to recognize and destroy these traits became integral to the constitution of white masculinity. Wood puts lynching photography into the same aesthetic genre as hunting photos in which huntsman pose with the slain bodies of their prey. Wood explains, "Framing a lynching as a hunt not only underscored the dehumanization of the black man that the torture and killing itself enacted, but it additionally served to reaffirm the heroic masculinity of the lynchers" (202).

My use of the "Most Useful Customer Review" on *Without Sanctuary* as a "cover" for a lynching photograph, intends not to censor or repress the history of lynching, but to make visible the popular contemporary fascination with consuming it. The "review," by someone with the moniker "David Sheriff," takes the form of a "thank you" letter written to his adult children for giving him the book as a birthday gift. Undoubtedly, the *Without Sanctuary* book and gallery exhibit aimed to educate and enlighten the popular masses on the terroristic history of white on black violence in America. Experts were assembled to contextualize the images and try to facilitate responsible viewing. However, the book's cover itself aestheticized lynching horror, by using a black background with a blood red stripe across it. Crossing through both color panels is a rectangular photo in which the body of a very young black man hangs from a noose suspended over a crowd of white men and a white boy. When this victim is made a part of the book's "marketing," his body became "naturalized" into an image regime that was part of consumer culture. While simultaneously enabling comfortable consumption, the image also extended the

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[151] White women often participated through accusations of alleged sex crimes attributed to mostly innocent black men.

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violence of the lynching—especially because its presence in a book store display or on a coffee table, or in a personal *collection*, re-animates the original intention of the taking of the photo itself. As Wood explains, the taking of the photograph prolonged, extended, and in many cases, if the victim's body was re-arranged, recreated the violent act. Certainly lynching scenarios were never quick, but were long processes of hunting, capturing, torturing, and prolonging death. Often, a victim's body was desecrated after death in order to *re*-kill the victim. Furthermore, Woods argues that when the white participants gathered together to pose with the victim's body, they created a sense of group solidarity, a visual representation of participation in and collaboration with whiteness: "it needed to be performed and witnessed. White supremacy, was in this sense, a spectacle extraordinaire" (199).

Sheriff's letter, while aiming to heap praise on the book which he calls "excruciating," actually constructs a lesson on his own personal history, ancestry, and white status, one that is openly betrayed when he presents the victims as "others," as separate from the pronoun "we" used to designate his own group. He writes, "The victims . . . were people you might be afraid of just because of the way they looked. *We* can all identify with that fear" (emphasis mine). In this way, he suggests an identification with the white figures in the images (such as the ones on the book's cover), rather than with the victim. He goes on to treat these photos as similar to those that depict a "thousand other atrocities" throughout history that "would look much the same." Certainly, his "review" glosses over, and perhaps cannot begin to understand, the significant differences between these photos and those of other atrocities, a distinction that would and must disable "sameness." Ultimately, Sheriff's fascination is with the hidden identity of the perpetrators whom he imagines might have been "KNOWN" to his grandparents or their

neighbors—or even have been them. Though duly horrified, Sheriff's concern is with his own possible connection to the atrocity, which fascinates him.

His letter and the passage from the expert that he quotes, while appearing to admonish the white people in the photos, continually focuses on their ordinariness and normality. The expert, Leon Litwack, also focuses on the everyday or quotidian quality of the mobs and perpetrators, "good, churchgoing folk" who were following their belief system—which equated black people with pests, and lynching with pest control. While both Sheriff and Litwack find these ordinary folk "disturbing," they do not recognize or report that their "ordinary" quality is, in fact, not *ordinary*. It is savage, brutal, violent, inhumane, criminal, depraved, and ignorant. By repeatedly focusing on the ordinariness or normality of the bystanders, they exonerate them as "average" people trapped within an ideological regime. This ideology is critiqued, but by focusing on it, rather than its participants, normalcy becomes exempt from critique.

The concept of the Everyman, the ordinary, average figure who could stand in for the larger population was particularly popular towards the late 20th century when Tom Hanks embodied that type and was celebrated for it. Past chapters have considered his "normality" as a disguise for more destructive qualities. Here, I want to draw attention to the way that "fascination" with lynching photography was sometimes enabled by conceptualizing the perpetrators and mobs as ordinary and normal. This mode, perhaps unconsciously, halts a focus on perpetrator responsibility (predominantly lynchings were not prosecuted), and instead recasts the participants as themselves victims of their belief systems. These same beliefs are then considered to be historic "relics," as over and done with.

Despite the prominent contemporary notion, that "racism is over" (popularly thought by the mainstream in the 1990s)[152], and that lynching was a historical tendency of the distant past, contemporary representations of lynching both existed and enacted a similar set of problems as those present in Sheriff's "appreciation" of *Without Sanctuary*. As one example, I cite the front page of the Style section of the *Washington Post* from July 6, 2000. I was originally directed to this document through my research for *The Green Mile* that led to an interest in popular representations of the electric chair. My concern was with Rowan Philip's piece "Death Row at the Arcade," a story about a popular arcade ride that simulated "execution" in the electric chair. Notably, the accompanying photo depicted a young black boy, Brett, 10 years old, while he endured the ride and suffered its effects. His face is contorted into what appears to be pain or discomfort, rather than straightforward glee. Philip describes Brett's experience as follows:

> His mother . . . winces slightly as his feet suddenly jerk and shake to the sound of shrieking static. Watchers see the boy's mouth turn into a harmonica and the cords stand out on his neck from the effort of holding on. Then—unbelievably—a thick curl of smoke rises, seemingly from Brett's hair, after about 15 seconds, followed by a flat line on his "heartbeat monitor." (C01)

The article describes other people's experience in the chair, but the accompanying photo depicts the black child, who Philip describes as enduring a realistically simulated execution. The article, in fact, makes overt reference to the death penalty issue that the image covertly hints at. Brett's mother remarks, "You know, there is a lesson to be learned from this machine. They

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[152] One of the ways this idea was codified was through the huge popular support of Clinton by the black population—at variant moments around 70% and 80% during the Impeachment scandal. Blacks are one voting group (as opposed to whites) who vote together in a uniform bloc. The statistics for black support for Clinton were often bandied in the press, giving the sense of the group's general satisfaction with their national life. However, as Wadden points out, the support could be less for Clinton and more so due to blacks being more likely to be Democrats and vote accordingly. Clinton was merely the lesser of two evils. See pp. 146.

know i f they ge t i nto t rouble, t hey might j ust f ace t he r eal t hing." P hilip i nterviewed a nother patron and asked what he thought of the didactic potential of the ride: "'I am a police officer, and it sounds good to me,' [said] Officer Jerry Hampton of the Hyattsville, Maryland, police—maybe joking, maybe not . . . 'The electric chair is a symbol of law enforcement.'" The article seems to be written with a humorous, wry tone, yet its details reveal a more insidious narrative. B rett's mother's remark references t he st atistical r acial bias t hat her son could expect i f he w ere a defendant: "death sentences were more likely to be imposed in cases with white victims than in those w ith black victims, and death s entences w ere m ore l ikely to be i mposed on bl ack defendants than on white defendants."[153]

Alex Wadden in *Clinton's Legacy* explains that lawmakers were well aware of the racial discrepancy i n de ath p enalty s entences dur ing t he 1990 s. T he C ongressional B lack C aucus sought to include the "Racial J ustice A ct" in Clinton's 1994 c rime b ill, one that w ould ha ve limited the institutionalized overuse of the death penalty in cases where defendants were black. However, t he a ct di d not ha ve e nough s upport i n e ither the House, t he Senate or w ith C linton himself, who was at that time politically consumed with appearing tough on crime. The political milieu a round t he pa ssing of t he c rime bi ll pi tted D emocrats a gainst Republicans w ho w ere unwilling to budge. Bob Dole, gearing up f or his Presidential run in 1996, criticized the bill for "emphasiz[ing] social theory over law enforcement" (142). In the end, the Racial Justice Act was dropped f rom t he bi ll t hat, r ather, i ncluded ha rsher s entencing gu idelines a nd pr ovided unprecedented funding for police. The bill was intended by Clinton to re-establish his power by taking the "tough on c rime" mantle from the R epublicans, especially in light of the then recent

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[153] See S. Phillips, "Racial Disparities in the Capital of Capital Punishment," 45 *Houston Law Review* 807 (2008). http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/studies-racial-disparities-capital-capital-punishment

failure of the Health Care initiative and his dire political misstep over gays in the military which stigmatized him as "soft" (143).

Philip's "Death Row" article, perhaps due to its publication in a Washington D.C. newspaper,[154] seemed, quite bizarrely, to engage with the political issues related to the death penalty. The article even mentions the then recent film, *The Green Mile*, which would have been newly released on the theatrical circuit, and was a significant blockbuster and acclaimed Best Picture nominee during the final year of Clinton's second term. Finally, by quoting the police officer who aptly describes the visual symbolic of the electric chair (that it "represents law enforcement"), the article accurately references the institutionalized regime that metes out justice in racially unfair ways. This point would be more ambiguous without young Brett's photo—an image that simulates the execution of a young black male. Worse, it uses this image as a "fantastic," carnivalesque, representation of the arcade crowd—rather than making prominent its depiction of simulated lynching. I use the term lynching here because the young age of the black male in the photo makes clear in the simulation that he is a victim, and undoubtedly not a lawfully convicted adult "offender."

When I took a closer look at "Death Row at the Arcade," I was struck by the visual composition of the entire Style page of which the image and article were a part, almost an "anchor" on the page's bottom half. Weirdly, of the five articles featured on the front page, four had an overt presentation of "blackness," and the fifth, due to its placement within this visual array, seemed likewise to be an additional cog in the Style page's overall composition. The feature story and image were a profile of the esteemed black poet and academic, E. Ethelbert Miller, on the occasion of the publication of his memoir *Fathering Words*. When I read the

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[154] The article was also sold (with the same photo) to several other major newspapers during the month of July 2000 including the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* (where I first discovered it) and, in Canada, *The Ottawa Citizen*.

accompanying c opy, I was s truck by t he s trange w ay M iller w as f eatured a nd de scribed. T he

article by L inton Weeks[155], a white m ale, opens with a list of M iller's ro les in society and his

myriad accomplishments and titles:

> poet, f ather, hus band, pr ofessor, major ne tworker, di rector of t he A frican
>
> American R esource C enter a t H oward U niversity s ince 1974, f ounder and c o-
>
> chair of t he D.C. Humanities C ouncil, a dvisory e ditor of t he A frican A merican
>
> Review, founder of the Ascension Poetry Reading Series, winner of the 1994 PEN
>
> Oakland-Josephine Miles A ward f or hi s poe try a nthology "In S earch of C olor
>
> Everywhere," editor of several other anthologies and author of five collections of
>
> verse and the memoir "Fathering Words." C01

Granted, M iller i s pr ofoundly accomplished, but W eeks' r hetorical choice t o frontload

the prof ile w ith Miller's resume, comes acr oss as an i nstance of manic l egitimation.

Simultaneously, the l ist m inimizes his   accomplishments by collapsing together t itles an d

personal positions (husband, father) in one overwhelming list, that does not highlight or address

the c omplexity of t he i ndividual a chievements,[156] but f unctions a s bl urb (not t he nor mative

profile i ntroduction). F urthermore, Weeks e nds t his l itany by obj ectifying t he a uthor, " E.

Ethelbert Miller *is* a poem," a line that appears to complement the man, but strangely aligns his

entire existence with, and as, a text. Miller's memoir, *Fathering Words*, the subject of the profile,

recounts h is pe rsonal ex perience as a black man i n America as he ne gotiates hi s familial life,

professionally and artistically, from childhood during the post-WWII period through the 1990s.

His memoir explores the political and social aspects of black experience, though Weeks' profile

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[155] Washington's Unsung Poet; Ethelbert Miller Spent a Career Giving. And Now It's Getting to Him." *Washington Post.* July 6 2000. C01. I ascertained Weeks' race via a google image search.
[156] A quick perusal of several other author profiles by Weeks, of highly accomplished authors, do not begin with a similar litany.

does not focus on this. At one point, Miller writes about African identity within a system that nearly mandates criminality for black American youth. In tandem, he theorizes the political power of giving his son the African name Nyere-Gibran:

> How sad to read the newspapers and see black boys being arrested with names like Kwame and Sekou, being captured as if it were slavery all over again. Black boys in jails like ships, packed. Bed to bed and cell to cell. Another long voyage like slavery? Police catching and taking away black boys like slave traders. Give them names to hold when everything else is taken. (141)

In light of this passage and the book's larger themes, "Death Row at the Arcade" and its accompanying image, takes on an additionally violent and pernicious tone. The layout of the page centers on the profile of an accomplished professor and artist who writes about the history of black oppression, especially toward black male youth, and the photo beneath his own depicts a black boy enduring an "execution."

The additional articles and images in the layout become similarly conspicuous. In the upper left, a review of the television show "Big Brother" uses the phrase "Black eye" in its headline in a metaphorical way—to indicate a poor review of the show, but one that has no relation to the injury referenced or the color. However, the use of the word "black" and the phrase "black eye," that indicates an injury, seems strikingly to align with the additional themes on the page, that attach that color (as a racial descriptive) to violence. The other two articles also are linked in an eye-catching way. Strangely, Frank Athen's article on the Williams' sisters, tennis stars Venus and Serena, describes their upcoming match in an extremely violent way, diminishing their extraordinary athletic talent and achievements. The two sisters were set to play each other in a Wimbledon match and Athens opens his reportage with the notion that if the

sisters were men there would be "a live, televised murder on Centre court." While the article opens with a violent image (one imagined as occurring between two black "brothers"), the headline reads "Love-all," a play on tennis scoring that interacts bizarrely with the headline directly above that references "porn." It seems that the extraordinary achievements of the Williams sisters and Miller are visually and textually undercut by being framed and presented with details and stories that reference insidious racial stereotyping.

While this reading began through research on the electric chair in late 1990s media, a closer look at execution's popular representation, has proven, and I think, in clear and overt ways, that its imagery is still ensnared within the array of aggressive representational schemes that historically have accompanied lynching photography. Importantly, a newspaper as text has a function of being quotidian, everyday, fleeting, and transient—invested with an aura of temporariness. It strikes me that the "everyday," "average" and "ordinary" are important locales for racist ideals to lurk. My research on the electric chair was related to my interest in the cultural and political context of *The Green Mile* (a film which has notable ties to issues surrounding Hanks, Spielberg and Clinton). The reading of it that follows is interested in the way that that film also forges important conceptualizations around white masculinity. *The Green Mile* presents white males as they participate in the institutionalized "lynching" (via electric chair) of a black man whom they know to be wrongly accused and innocent of his crime.

As lovely as Barthes' remark is in its idea about the transmission of light that traverses through images of photographed people, linking them to the person looking, invariably it implies a certain violence. Barthes imagines that the "light" of photographic technology enables a photo's subject and viewer to share "skin." Richard Dyer, in "Lighting for Whiteness" has indicated that the technology of photography itself privileges and constructs whiteness (95). In

that sense, Barthes phrase about photographic "light" as the "delayed rays of the star" becomes highly problematic. Though he does not refer to the white film star, his lines raise important issues about the racial politics of viewing images. Because Barthes' metaphor of the "umbilical" recalls Capt. Miller's symbolic corporeal link to Private Ryan, I am reminded that the symbolic of corporeality also allows a mode of temporal travel. In the case of "lynching" photography, in whichever form (and there are precise differences), either actual or simulated, Barthes' notion of the connective cord between subjects and viewers indicates a mode of nostalgia. To consider his cord, modeled on a corporeal metaphor, allows viewers (via the "delayed light," the whiteness) to travel to a moment that made clear and stable a regime of racial hierarchy.

Sontag points out that the *Without Sanctuary* gallery exhibit euphemized the verb "to look" with the more clinical one, "to examine" (92). But ordinary looking is not absent from idealized examination. In Barthes' terms, to look is to confront a photographically captured person, and weirdly, to embrace it and live in it as if it were one's own body. However, as Sheriff's response to lynching photography indicates, white viewers may not and cannot identify with the black victim. And Sontag confirms, even if they wanted to, this method would be a futile mode for ethical understanding. The "umbilical" seems aligned with the discourse of nostalgia; it sutures the past with the contemporary moment. Barthes is right that there is a strong materiality in looking at photographic images. But that "material" covers over the image. In the case of lynching photography, it covers over it with shame, but also with a fascination with one's own shame—a fascination that seeks to alleviate guilt.

7.1.1   Impeachment: The Green Mile, White Masculinity, and Sentimental Shame

> even here in upstate new york/ the stillness drives a fear/
> through my heart like mississippi/ or history and i cannot walk/
> without hearing the barking of dogs/ or the yell from some redneck/
> screaming "there he goes"
>
> <div align="right">E. Ethelbert Miller, from First Light[157]</div>

African-American c olumnist I da E . Wells, l esser know n t han nove list T oni M orrison
(who "knighted" Clinton "the first black president"), named Clinton an "Honorary Black" due to
the ha rsh treatment he r eceived b y t he m edia, c onservatives, and i nvestigators during t he
Impeachment scandal.[158] Bizarrely, in her column that explained the strong support for Clinton
by black Americans during that crisis, Wells referenced the murder of James Byrd and used its
details metaphorically in her defense of Clinton:

> The right wing has not rested in its shameless resolve to drag Clinton, his wife
>
> and unforgivably, their daughter, through the . . . gutters of America. In the
>
> process they are decapitating the office he holds, and the constituencies whose
>
> will he embodies, as surely as the good ole boys down in Jasper, Texas last June
>
> reduced d ecency, hum anity a nd c ompassion t o bl oody c lumps of t orn f lesh
>
> littering a country road. (5)

Wells w as r eferring to Byrd, a 49 ye ar ol d b lack m an, w ho w as m urdered i n Jasper,
Texas in June of 1998 by three white supremacists who tortured and prolonged his death in what
was w idely re ported as a lync hing s tyle m urder due to its s imilarities w ith that "tradition."

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[157] Quoted from the poem "A Walk In The Daytime Is Just As Dangerous As A Walk In The Night" from Miller's
first book of poetry, *First Light*. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994. pp.114-115
[158] See, Ida E. Lewis "Bill Clinton as Honorary Black: To Those Who Fail to Understand Why the Majority of
African-Americans Do Not Support the Removal of President Clinton." *Crisis*. Sept-Oct. 1998.

Awkwardly, Wells used the very details from Byrd's murder (which happened the summer after the Lewinsky scandal broke) to symbolize Clinton's experience. Byrd was beaten, then while still alive, dragged down a country road from the back of a pick-up truck until he was decapitated. Pieces of his body were found in innumerable locations, scattered along the road and countryside. Wells' "argument" relied on the analogy of the national body politic and the presidential position of "head of state." Because Clinton was felt to "embody" the "will of his constituencies," the black community (as argued in Wells' entire column) likewise felt harassed. Sharon D. Wright, in "Clinton and Racial Politics," was supportive of Wells' stance, arguing that blacks felt that Clinton was attacked because he had been sympathetic to their social position and political needs—an outlook thought to be intolerable to the right wing. Clinton's politics of empathy appear to have been effective enough that the "will of his constituencies" became the thing "harassed" by impeachment.[159] Of course, only under nationalism could such an analogy work. The fundamental incommensurate connection between Clinton's experience and Byrd's is smoothed over by the metaphorical relationship between the body politic and the presidential body and its "head of state." Strangely, in this case, there seemed to be an odd correlation between Clinton's "hypersexuality" and the "imagined" hypersexuality of black males. Lynching represents the most terroristic way that the black population has been oppressed since the abolition of slavery. Ironically, Clinton was not empathetic to the issue of blacks in the penal system or on death row—subjects that had much more appropriate ties to lynching than did the Starr Investigation.

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[159] Clinton's decision to use African-American leader Jesse Jackson as his "spiritual advisor" throughout the ordeal seemed a deliberate choice to align himself with the black community.

In this conclusion, I will attempt to make my examination of *The Green Mile* engage with, rather than definitively resolve, the issues around masculinity, nostalgia, and nation that this dissertation has raised thus far. While my focus previously has been almost exclusively on white masculinity, here, I hope to illuminate the ways that it depends upon imbrications with black masculinity—especially through violence toward the imaginary "crimes" perpetrated by the black male body. First, I present how *The Green Mile* intersects with issues around Clinton and the death penalty. Second, I reengage the issues related to Spielberg's notion of boyhood and its "wonder" because those themes are displayed so prominently within the death row setting of *The Green Mile*. Last, I reconsider Hanks' corporeal politics. My previous readings of Hanks' star text concerned his asexual, "ordinary" corporeality, and in my reading of *Saving Private Ryan*, his symbolic relationship to corporeal maternal and fetal politics. *The Green Mile* marks his return to sexuality and a "new" co-option of stereotypical attributes of the black male body while he plays a white death row "boss" in the South during the 1930s. This Chapter's Afterword briefly considers how racial politics intersected with the 1990s obsession with WWII commemoration.

7.1.1.1 Clinton and the (Southern) Nation

In *The Green Mile*, adapted from Stephen King's 1996 bestselling novel, a giant-sized, but childlike black male, Coffey (Michael Clarke Duncan), is convicted of the rapes and murders of two blonde white sisters who appear to be around 5 and 6 years old. The film begins with slow motion footage of a white posse who search for the missing girls. The group bears a striking resemblance to a quickly assembled lynch mob: ordinary men of variant professions running through a rural backwoods with shotguns and pitch forks. Their visual presence, which connotes

lynching history, helps to locate the film in it historical time and place: Louisiana during the 1930s. The story concerns the eponymous "Green Mile," the death row block at a rural prison and the relationships between the penal officers who work there and the prisoners they guard and eventually execute. Coffey is transferred to the prison to await execution and the prison guards, headed by Edgecomb (Tom Hanks), discover that Coffey possesses magical healing powers. After using Coffey to heal the warden's ill wife, Edgecomb discovers that Coffey is indisputably innocent of the crime for which he was convicted. Though Edgecomb has profited from Coffey's healing "power," he chooses to proceed with Coffey's execution rather than try to secure a new trial or acquittal for him. Like the narrative structure of *Saving Private Ryan*, the Depression-era prison story is framed by scenes set in a later time period that involve the elderly Edgecomb in a nursing home. We learn that Coffey's powers were so potent that Edgecomb's "healing infusion" from Coffey has caused him to live to be well over 100 years old, with the potential to live on indefinitely.

Film scholar Linda William's reads *The Green Mile* as part of her project to trace "how basic the melodramatics of racial suffering [have] been to the very process of citizenship in American history" (16). She argues that the two notorious jury trials during the 1990s, of Rodney King's police attackers and O.J. Simpson, each engaged with "racialized affect" in which American citizens could watch, judge, and feel. She contends, drawing on the work of Carol Clover, that these trials in particular transformed their courtrooms into sites of melodramatic entertainment. The "law and order" film genre has always been prominent in the U.S., but in the 1990s (also due to Clinton's Impeachment "trial"), the nation was especially engaged with judging the male body—in variant ways in each of the three trials mentioned. In King's case, despite the obvious visual proof of his assault, the slap-on-the-wrist outcome for his attackers

enabled widespread sympathetic affect in the American "audience." Williams offers that despite being a white woman, her sympathies were with King. The circulated video presented the mainstream with indisputable evidence of white assault on a black male that the nation could not deny. Alternately, when O.J. Simpson was acquitted it was "proven to be the great exception to the rule of black incarceration and execution" (Williams 20). Yet, America was torn apart and many were enraged. Similarly, Clinton both got off for his alleged crimes *and* was "dragged through the gutter," depending on who was judging and from what perspective. At any rate, each of these trials inspired widespread affect across the nation, whether sympathy, antipathy, rage, or sorrow. Many 1990s films were "courtroomless" courtroom dramas as they "turn[ed] the audience into a jury" (21). *The Green Mile* was one such film. It avoided presenting Coffey's trial, but encouraged the audience to "judge" him, delaying the confirmed revelation of his innocence until two-thirds of the way through the film which then evoked great sympathy. Despite Coffey's innocence of the crime, his sentence was still imposed, raising the specter that he was still "guilty" in some way. Indeed, when he is asked for his final words before electrocution, he says "I am sorry for what I am."

The Green Mile is both "realistic" and bizarre in its presentation of carrying forward with an execution despite the indisputable innocence (and moral virtue) of Coffey. The white guards proceed with the execution for reasons that are both confusing and inexcusable. That is, there is no *reason*. The film suggests that Coffey's death will provide satisfaction to the white community who witness and require it. Though the guards cry at Coffey's death, Edgecomb encourages them to hide their tears from the watching audience—the implication being that compassion for Coffey would impede the revenge pleasure the townspeople get while watching Coffey "burn." The film briefly presents an ethical dilemma for Edgecomb once he knows of

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Coffey's innocence. He cannot sleep and presumably cannot imagine any solution to his conundrum. Perhaps the revelation of Coffey's innocence would require exposing Coffey's magic to the public, but it is unclear why that would be an issue. The warden and guards were sympathetic to Coffey after they witnessed his power. The actual killer, on death row as well, is shot and killed by the weak and feminized guard, Percy (who himself has been magically effected by Coffey). In that sense, the murders of the girls have been avenged, but apparently not enough. The community requires another death: if not the public death of the actual killer, the death of the imagined one. Edgecomb approaches Coffey about the "problem" of his innocence, but in vague, nearly unspoken terms. The issue is resolved by shared looks and nods. Coffey indicates that he prefers to die rather than be set free, due to his pain (which presents from magically taking on disease from the white characters) and his "guilt" for being what he is. More than any other reason for the execution, is the film's investment in the machinery of the penal system—it requires the unfair killing of a black male so the white characters unproblematically move forward with this expected procedure.

When the posse finds Coffey he sits against a log clutching the bodies of the two young dead girls and moaning loudly. The mob descends upon him angrily, weapons raised, then stops right before attacking. After the dead girls' father punches Coffey twice, the sheriff steps forward and tells Coffey, "Boy, you under arrest." Of course, this last bit breaks starkly with the history of lynching. During the 1930s in the South, it was far more likely that a captured black male accused of this kind of crime would have endured an immediate and prolonged lynching without any hope of a fair trial. The film depicts the beginning of a lynching scenario and then aborts it, through its depiction of the crowd merely arresting Coffey. Because the film cannot

depict an actual Southern lynching (which might seem "uncivilized" or retrograde at this point), it instead resolves that tension (the desire to lynch[160]) through what becomes an organized, thorough, and bizarrely, humane lynching in the form of the electric chair. Therefore, the "Green Mile" becomes a setting in which a black man can suffer and be killed while his white executioners remain humane and virtuous. Williams writes that the film's "establishment of white virtue rests upon a paradoxical administration of pain and death to the black body so that white people may weep" (20). Williams explains that the film is interested in asserting that not *all* whites are racist. However, in this attempt it fails, since the whites in the film, solely males except for two wives, engage in racial stereotyping and the systematic execution of "others."

The film's use of nostalgia, through its affectionate portrayal of good white men in the Old South, attempts to disable the potential problem with its own obvious racism. Its nostalgic return to the 1930s South, both revises and revels in racist history. This register enables a conflation of the Old South with a more "politically correct" contemporary moment. Death can still be administered on a simultaneously guilty and innocent black male, but not through disordered, outdoor mob violence. Instead, it is administered through the organized, uniform-wearing, "kind" white males, led by Edgecomb (invested with the unimpeachable star persona of Hanks), who gains considerably from Coffey's execution and suffering. (Through Coffey's magic, Edgecomb's own body is infused with vigor, but this comes at the expense of Coffey's weakness.)

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[160] I was struck by a remark by the actor playing Coffey, Michael Clarke Duncan, in the DVD's "Making of" documentary. About the lynching scene, he mentioned that though he knew the mob was "acting" he was "scared to death" on every take. The moment disrupts the jolly back-patting that usually marks these short films. Duncan's feelings point toward the continuation of white terrorization of blacks in the present day. Also notable in the DVD is actor Doug Hutchinson's remark that the director seemed like a "cherubic, excited boy" each day on set.

In t his w ay, t he f ilm pr esents a s cenario a nalogous t o t he r acial pol itics of t he 19 90s, marked by bot h ga ins and setbacks. According to Wright, "despite hi s m istakes and personal shortcomings, P resident C linton m ade a significant a nd relatively po sitive impact on racial politics in America" (237). However, Clinton's racial politics were highly paradoxical during his campaigns a nd pr esidency. O n t he one ha nd, dur ing t he 1992 c ampaign he i mpressively mobilized s everal m inority gr oups (notably African-Americans w ho were a de sirable vot ing bloc[161]) with a platform that promised to alleviate unfair treatment of marginalized groups a fter 12 years of Republican presidential control. Clinton had a personal history of involvement with the black community and as Governor of Arkansas (and later as President), he appointed a record number of African-Americans t o ke y pos itions w ithin both a dministrations. A s a pr esidential candidate, he ran on a platform that promised to improve the domestic situation for the middle-class and families, in programs that would inherently help the impoverished as well: better public schools, more jobs, universal health care, welfare reform, and urban revitalization (Wright 224). On the other hand, Arkansas's own records that related to civil rights law and African-American poverty w ere ne arly t he w orst i n t he na tion on bot h a ccounts. A s P resident, C linton's ra cial politics w ere s imilarly contradictory, r esponsible f or a c onstant c ombination of s trides and setbacks f or m inorities.[162] His w elfare r eform pol icies w ere d isastrous f or i mpoverished black mothers and their children, and Clinton's stance on crime was particularly devastating for black men—especially due t o t he w ell-documented fact t hat t he American justice and penal sys tem impose institutionalized racial bias against non-whites.

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[161] In 1992, Clinton's ability to win the black vote in Southern states was integral to his victory over Bush in those states.
[162] For instance, while Clinton's early policy proposals on gays in the military sought to make open service possible, his later Defense of Marriage Act sought to outlaw gay marriages. Uniformly, Clinton was believed to have ignored and alienated Latinos during his two terms.

The most overt example of Clinton's political use of the death penalty occurred during the 1992 campaign, when he proved, perhaps beyond a reasonable doubt, that he would use the conviction and execution of a black man for political purposes. Clinton was first elected governor of Arkansas in 1978, at age 32, and his first term was marked by a "reformist exuberance," that was considered to have cost him reelection to a second term, as he lost to a more conservative Republican candidate (Frady 107). When Clinton ran again, and won, it was with a revised mantle, most especially on crime since his previous loss was thought to be due to his purported softness toward criminals. The loss of his second consecutive gubernatorial term was said to have provided Clinton with a nearly "metaphysical lesson:" "never to range, whatever his own impulses, too far beyond the standing disposition of the general populace" (107). In the early 1990s, support for the death penalty in Arkansas was around 80%. Clinton learned early on in his political career that Democratic candidates needed to have a tough disposition when it came to offenders, prisoners, and the death penalty. A candidate's stance on discipline was overly valued as a key to his character and strength in all other areas of governance. This was made patently evident in the notorious Willie Horton advertisements used by George H.W. Bush in his Presidential campaign against Democrat Michael Dukakis in 1988. Horton was a black convict released for short periods of time as part of a prison furlough program. While on leave, he subsequently committed armed robbery and rape. Bush seized on Dukakis' support for the program as a means of effective rehabilitation for most prisoners. In campaign ads, that featured Horton's mug shot, Bush exploited this attitude and asserted Dukakis' direct responsibility for Horton's crimes. Clinton's advisors were determined to avoid being "Willie Hortoned" in the 1992 campaign.

As it happened, Clinton made significant strides in this regard during the 1992 campaign just after Gennifer Flowers emerged with allegations of their long-term affair. Clinton's poll numbers began an immediate plummet and the tabloid and mainstream media were obsessed with the lascivious scoop. Flowers' allegations occurred just days before the scheduled execution of Ricky Ray Rector, a black 40 year old man, convicted of two murders and sentenced to death in Arkansas. After he shot his second victim, a white police officer, Rector put his gun to his own temple and shot himself. He survived, but with significant, debilitating brain damage, memory loss, and the inability to understand "content and meaning" (Frady 111). According to many reports and experts, he was a "child," with an I.Q. of 63 at most (the celebrated Forrest Gump scored 75). Rector was found incapable of comprehending his situation and unfit to stand trial, let alone be convicted and executed. Rector's defense rested on two fundamental laws related to the death penalty: first, that the accused must be able to assist in their own defense, and second, he must be able to comprehend his sentence and why it has been given (112). By most objective accounts, Rector's mental capacity met neither of these standards. Nonetheless, the mostly segregated, small, rural, community where the murders occurred was in an uproar and prosecutors and the judge were urged to accept nothing less than the death penalty. Rector's attorneys were willing to accept life without parole to avoid the trial that the public was demanding. However, Rector was convicted and sentenced by an all-white jury. Nevertheless, his case and scheduled execution had elicited only "minor" national concern and opposition mostly from African-American groups. Clinton took a special interest in the case after the Flowers scandal broke.

Marshall Frady's eloquent and devastating expose of Rector's legal struggle and execution, "Death in Arkansas" was published in *The New Yorker* one month after Clinton had

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taken his Presidential oath of office. The article paints Clinton in a particularly detrimental light, though it came out after his election was irrevocably secured[163]. Rector seems to have been described by everyone who came into contact with him, including prison guards, as a child, and a mentally disabled one at that. The evidence that he was incapable of understanding his execution seemed irrefutable by clinical assessment and also less "official" details, such as the fact that on the night of his execution, he placed his pecan pie under his bed to save it, intending to eat it upon his return. He did not seem to grasp the concept of death, let alone execution for a crime of which he had no recollection. Rector's death by lethal injection was particularly grisly and prolonged despite the ostensible clinical humanity of that method. People in the viewing chamber, behind the drawn curtain, heard Rector cry out eight times over the course of an hour before he was finally pronounced dead. One of Rector's medications caused his veins to collapse, so the technicians had to repeatedly poke Rector, who struggled against it, searching for a viable injection site. Finally, they had to cut into his arm to locate a vein. He died 1 hour and 9 minutes after the execution process began.

News of the delay was reported to media outlets and one of Clinton's friends managed to get through to his phone line at the Governor's mansion. She reported to Clinton that Rector was still alive. Though Clinton's response was reportedly one of aghast devastation[164], their conversation veered to the Flowers affair, which his campaign had just been strategizing, and his immediate need was to talk with Hillary who had just returned home. The friend admits to telling Clinton that he had endured "two executions" that week, Rector's and his own—the latter a political execution (Frady 130). However, Clinton managed to use Rector's execution to draw attention away from the all-consuming Flowers affair and simultaneously crush any Republican

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[163] Also, it might paint a positive depiction, depending on one's opinions on crime and punishment.
[164] At other points, Clinton is reported to "choke up" in conversations about the death penalty.

chance of painting him as soft on crime. Frady reports that, as one political commentator put it, "[Clinton] had someone put to death who had only part of a brain. You can't find them any tougher than that" (132).

Rector's case has startling similarities to the story presented in *The Green Mile*. The two scenarios are similar in the way that each focuses on a very large (Rector weighed 290) black male who *is* a child. Coffey is presented as childlike, to the point of not being able to understand or assist in his defense. When Edgecomb suspects Coffey's innocence and visits his defense attorney (Gary Sinise), he learns that the man considered Coffey to be like all black men, a "dog" who seems docile, but then bites—indicating that Coffey received an unfair trial due to his attorney's racial bias. Clinton also "knew" that Rector's trial had been politicized. Rector's defense attorney, Jeff Rosenzweig had grown up with Clinton in Hot Springs (the Arkansas town Clinton moved to after Hope, at age four). Clinton took Rosenzweig's call a few hours before Rector's execution. Rosenzweig urged him not to use Rector as his example of toughness on crime because Rector was a child and it is not appropriate to execute children. Rosenzweig relayed to Clinton the fundamental problems with the entire case (Thurgood Marshall had been the one dissenting position when a reconsideration was rejected by the Supreme Court). Like Clinton, Edgecomb knows the problems with the justice system, but chooses to carry forward with Coffey's execution anyway. Finally, Edgecomb's life is indefinitely invigorated through Coffey's death and suffering. Similarly, Rector's execution reinvigorated Clinton's campaign. Though Clinton endured "execution" during the Flowers crisis, and was "decapitated" by Starr's investigation, in both cases, his suffering was compared, incommensurately, to the suffering and

death of black males. Rector's death especially, resuscitated his political career during sexual crises[165].

7.1.1.2 Spielbergian themes and Nostalgia

Ricky Ray Rector seemed to embody one of the prime tenets longed for by figures like the man-boy and the not-yet-fully-born man. He did not suffer the anguish associated with adult responsibility. He was unable to comprehend his own crime or its consequences, and after injury, lived his days with the outlook of a young boy. Of course, the enabling of this state was caused by the destruction and removal of Rector's frontal brain lobe and he was not spared the penalties imposed by law makers and ultimately enforced by the Governor. Curiously, though a penitentiary seems like a locale for, if nothing else, adults, *The Green Mile*'s setting bears a strong connection to themes of boyhood. This section considers the themes of boyhood and magic in *The Green Mile*. Though Spielberg had no connection to this film it draws upon the themes that are associated with his signature. Heather Hicks in "White Men's Work and Black Men's Magic" explains the film's use of boyhood as part of its interest in rationalizing the marginalization of black men. The Green Mile, death row, is named so for the green linoleum that covers the floor of the prison block in a faded mint color. Most of the film takes place at this

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[165] Clinton was reported to have avoided some havoc with the press by leaving the campaign trail and holing up in the Governor's mansion in Arkansas—for the purpose of "overseeing" an execution, though the presence of a Governor in their home state is not a requirement for an execution to be carried out. The implications were that Clinton would not have headed to Arkansas if he had not been dodging the media consumed with Flowers' allegations. Though ostensibly at the Governor's mansion for Rector's execution, Clinton's campaign used it as an isolated "war room" and planned a *60 Minutes* "damage control" interview that aired two days after Rector died. Incidentally, this *60 Minutes* episode was the same one referred to in *The Man From Hope*—which Chelsea watched, therefore absolving Clinton of moral wrongdoing in that film.

location; and the "death chamber" seems to be a barn-like place that is attached to the main structure. When the prisoners walk the Green Mile to their death, they are traveling from one room to another. The setting becomes an allegorical zone for working through ideas about masculinity, and as Hicks argues, it is fashioned as a "cradle school," where "time-outs" are dispersed and punishments meted out. The film employs a motif whereby the prisoners, and one of the guards, the antagonist Percy (Doug Hutchison), all exhibit signs of boyishness: wetting pants, belief in magic, "naughty" behavior, and being referred to as "lad," "big boy," and in one prisoner's case "Billy the Kid," who is like a "problem child."

The film also employs a mouse character, Mr. Jingles, who does circus tricks. Edgecomb and the guard, Brutal (David Morse) tell the inmates the story of "Mouse Town," the carnival community for talented animals they will drive Mr. Jingles too after his caregiver Delacroix (Michal Jeter) is executed. The rhapsody on Mouse Town is similar to Richard Attenborough's character's comparable revelry in *Jurassic Park*. The elderly scientist whose dinosaur experiment has gone badly awry, affectionately recollects the flea circus of his boyhood—the innocent inspiration for the now-rampaging reptiles. "Mouse Town" functions similarly in *The Green Mile*, by bringing a delightful, dream-like narrative into a vicious location. Coffey listens intently to the story of Mouse Town and relishes details of the locale as he walks the Green Mile to his death. Coffey is especially immature. He is afraid of the dark, spells out his name like a pre-schooler, and is costumed in too-short bib overalls, the outfit of a toddler. Rather than functioning in the Spielberg sense of the man-boy, boyhood functions in this film as a characteristic of the truly infantile. The boyish prisoners and the immaturity of the one flawed guard, function to characterize (through contrast) the manhood of the white guards who watch over them.

In this sense, the Green Mile is spared from seeming to be a rough, murderous location, but appears to be rather a clean, wonder-filled place that Edgecomb is ideally fitted to oversee. Also, Hicks argues that though the film is set in a nostalgic locale, its interest is with postindustrial economics. She reads the film's affectionate portrayal of the executioners as a meditation on the "endangered status of white men's work" in the 1990s. The film revels in an era when "working as a guard . . . provided white men with prestige and a decent wage" (38). It allows the position of executioner to seem esteemed and managerial, rather than working class and brutal. In that case, it dislocates contemporary social issues by returning to a time zone that is pre-civil rights and feminism. Hanks' previous turn in *You've Got Mail,* had a similar function, but in a contemporary, urban location, and his character Fox was a high-powered corporate business man. Hanks' Edgecomb brings a similar "power" to his work as an executioner. Edgecomb runs the Green Mile with military attention to detail, as evidenced by his ornate and multi-layered uniform. His punctilious and organized concentration on the procedure of execution is fetishistic. Two sequences languish over "practice runs" and focus on moment by moment measures that lead through the process. These sequences are literal "how-tos" for the audience and the shots present close ups of the macabre details of the chair, and materials associated with the "science" of electrocution. These sequences only attain their veneer of civility and perfection through Hanks' star persona that infuses Edgecomb with ordinary, unimpeachable niceness. His job is further cast as "nice" due to the prisoners' childlike state, and the simple kindness he displays toward them (despite killing them later). It is as though he were running a daycare, and, as his previous roles show, he radiates decency. *The Green Mile* seems to adhere to the political mantle imagined for liberals (such as Dukakis' "weekend passes" for

prisoners), while simultaneously presenting the conservatives' unbending toughness toward criminality.

The Green Mile's interest in re-characterizing the penal system as pleasant and decent is further accomplished through the conceit of magic. Films that allow the infiltration of magic into everyday worlds inspire intense feelings of wonder and emotional rapture in the audience. Andrew Gordon, in his book on Spielberg's fantasy films, *Empire of Dreams*, argues that they have been over-criticized through a critique that stems from the devaluation of the realm of emotion itself (8-9). Spielberg had nothing to do with the production of The Green Mile, though the film uses his signatures around boyhood and magic. By that I mean that the film's themes invest in a tripartite representational scheme: boyhood, "excessive" affect, and the magical. Both Hicks and Williams in their readings of *The Green Mile* argue that it uses magic (here located solely with Coffey, though presented as well in Edgecomb's "Mouse Town") in order to enlighten the white characters and allow them to weep—an atonement that "washes away" any problematic racism within the film. While the film presents Coffey, at first, as a spectacularly vicious criminal, his magical qualities allow any "fear" or revulsion the audience may feel to be suitably nullified and tamed when Coffey is docile. I have argued previously that Spielberg's use of boyhood in his films similarly flattens complex issues and allows for highly emotional and sentimental affect to "tame" and displace social and cultural complexity.

7.1.1.3 Hanks' Suffering Body and Masculinity

The Green Mile's most important mode of displacement occurs through the bodies of the two main characters, Edgecomb and Coffey, and their experiences of suffering and ecstasy. In

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this way, the film obsesses with white and black male bodies and alternate "imaginaries" about each. As I have previously argued in Chapter Four, Hanks' body in the 1990s became idealized for its ordinary qualities—its traits as regular, vulnerable, and white. In Chapter Five, I suggest that this "normality" actually enabled Hanks' character Miller in *Saving Private Ryan* to appropriate the symbolic "power" of mothers and fetuses in order to strengthen himself and self-generate. In *The Green Mile*, a similar symbolic transference occurs through the Hanks character's appropriation of the stereotypical virility of the black character that ultimately enhances Edgecomb's virtue and sexuality—and eventually makes him immortal.

In contrast, Coffey represents the standard stereotypes usually attributed to black male bodies by white supremacist ideologies: hyper-sexuality and hyper-strength that causes criminal deviance toward white women/girls in the form of rape and murder. The film plays with these clichés while at the same time disabling the threat they pose to white masculinity. At first, the guards are shocked and worried that they will not be able to contain Coffey due to his immense size and strength. Yet, after he moves with docility into his cell and asks for them to leave a light on because he is "scared-a the dark," they breathe easier in their office, speculating on whether or not their prisoner is retarded. The film fetishizes Coffey's immensity, often photographing him in shots where he dwarfs the prison guards, but the camera also minimizes the threat by likewise filming him behind bars and in shackles. The severe scars on his hyper-large biceps suggest a violent past and almost a slave-like history since they resemble the raised, long skin wounds left by lashes. The film consistently displays Coffey's enormity and fantasized might, then contains and halts it. Furthermore, the film enacts a mode whereby these fantasized traits, especially sexualized virility, can transfer to white bodies through Coffey's magic. However, Coffey's suffering increases whenever he facilitates a transfer—pain he is more than willing to

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endure. Coffey's magic manifests through his ability to transfer "essences" (stereotypical traits of black masculinity), between his body and another's.

Edgecomb's introductory scene concerns his excruciating inability to properly urinate. Like the characters he played in *Forrest Gump* and *Apollo 13*, Hanks' Edgecomb is "ordinary" enough that the film presents the mechanics of his urination—a corporeal detail usually kept off screen. Most diegetic universes (in mainstream Hollywood) are not concerned with the corporeal functions of daily bodily life: eating, sleeping, urination, etc. Characters do not stop the narrative movement in order to deal with these basic human necessities (although, characters do often "stop" to have sex). However, Hanks' characters during the 1990s exhibit a strong and peculiar motif around urination (one that continues with the addition of a defecation scene in 2000's *Cast Away*). By presenting what is usually kept private, this motif activates an alternate set of representations around Hanks' penis (which is never shown, but only imagined). This focus on urology seems to align with Hanks' character's relative lack of sexuality; negating the notion of a sexualized penis, with one overly engaged with quotidian corporeality. It almost seems as if the Hanks start ext resists engaging with masculinity under the more conventional symbolic structures around phallicism and ejaculation. This resistance is another mode through which Hanks contrasts to Clinton, whose penis and ejaculate were made public, exposed and circulated in reports, as evidence, and through testimony. Clinton's political power was threatened by this exposure. Could the Hanks icon have been avoiding sexuality to stay out of this very type of conundrum?

In *Images of Bliss: Ejaculation, Masculinity, Meaning*, Murat Aydemir suggests that the 1980s and 1990s cultural focus on "new" reproductive technologies (e.g. sperm banks, in vitro fertilization, etc.) enacted a veritable "assault on masculinity" through the rhetoric of sperm as

like embattled soldiers fighting over the lone egg. He explains that this "rivalry" caused a "marked anxiety over the elusive numerousness of sperm, which are simultaneously superfluous and scarce." Representing sperm with metaphors of war and battle "externalized and projected instances of the violence and rivalry that inhere in the idea of masculinity itself" (xv). Aydemir's fascinating (almost celebratory) book takes as its subject the symbolic meanings of the substance that "issues forth" from the male organ, overlooking the very substance that the iconic Hanks body makes visible twice in *The Green Mile*, urine.

Both of the urination scenes are drawn out, the second narrating the long trek toward an outhouse. Edgecomb falls to his knees before he makes it there, urinating outside of it, in full view, and then collapsing. Both urological scenes present the anguish of the moments before release, then images of the liquid's arc or splash, and then close-ups on Edgecomb's face that perform both ecstasy and suffering. Edgecomb's urinary tract infection presents as symptomatically worse than Andy's AIDS, Gump's and Miller's bullet wounds, and Sam's broken heart. Strangely, *The Green Mile* turns perhaps one of the most basic corporeal acts into a full-fledged display of illness, suffering, and trauma. It represents the elusive trauma the white male has searched for in the films of the 1990s and displays what Aydemir termed the "assault on sperm and the male body" (xv). Aydemir draws on Hegel when he mentions nature's cruelty at housing the abject (urine) and the glorious (sperm) within the same male organ (221).

However, Edgecomb resolves this problem through a highly eroticized healing session with Coffey. After noticing Edgecomb's worsening condition (fever, sweat, unsteadiness, and collapse) Coffey bades him to his cell bars. Coffey grabs Edgecomb's genitals through the bars, in what, at first, seems a sexual assault. Edgecomb struggles against Coffey's grip, then gives in. As Coffey fondles Edgecomb, the dimmed cell block's light fixtures radiate to a whiter glow,

then burst, sending out cascades of light (a similar effect occurs when the electric chair is switched on). Edgecomb's visage changes from apprehension, to delight, to relief and relaxation. The touch between the two men is shown in close-up, focusing on both their hands. Edgecomb's hand reaches for his billy club (perhaps a phallic substitute that he may clutch, as well). However, the sexualization of the men's touch is overt even without phallic symbols. The touch is direct and it brings deep satisfaction. Edgecomb immediately feels the effects.

As the result of the healing of his urinary infection, Edgecomb's penis is restored to its "traditional" nature—a sexual one. He goes home aroused and proceeds to "satisfy" his wife, Jan (Bonnie Hunt) four times—which is presented as excessive when he brags of it later to Coffey and his workmates. Later, in old age, he attributes his longevity to this same "healing." The Hanks' star text's return to a highly eroticized nature, for the first time since *Big*, occurs at the expense of Coffey. Though Edgecomb is healed, Coffey takes his affliction into his own body and later "coughs" out a swarm of digitized flies which represent the disease. Taking on Edgecomb's pain makes Coffey weak and exhausted. Coffey becomes a highly empathic creature, transferring the "imagined" traits of his hyper-sexuality and strength to Edgecomb, but in turn, taking on the latter's weaknesses. The transfer also is displayed through the same tropes that accompany all the electrocutions depicted: the radiating of lights and bursting of light bulbs, mimicking the flash bulb of an early camera. Electricity and light take on erotic connotations that inevitably accompany the horror of the executions, but which transform them into a visual experience that is glorified and highly affective.

After realizing Coffey's extraordinary healing power, Edgecomb decides to use it for good one last time before Coffey's execution date. The warden's wife, (Patricia Clarkson), is afflicted with a brain tumor which presents with symptoms much like Tourette's syndrome. The

warden (James Cromwell) describes his horror to Edgecomb: his wife uses "the most awful language you can imagine. I didn't know she'd ever heard words like that. To hear her say them in her sweet voice." Edgecomb is duly horrified and plots to break Coffey out of prison to attend to the warden's wife. The healing of the foul-mouthed wife seems to allow for an enactment of the fantasy about the black male's hyper-sexual desire for white Southern women. The scene aims to both contain and display this fantasy which is actually "imagined" by the white males who stand watching. They are all incredibly moved by the sight. Coffey bends over the women in her bed, her thin white nightgown pulled high to expose her legs. Coffey places his mouth on hers, then pulls away, leaving a stream of illuminated light passing between their two open mouths. The power is so intense that the house shakes, light bulbs burn brighter, and a grandfather clock stops, then shatters. The woman is cured, but Coffey falls to his knees, overcome with fatigue and illness. The guards take him back to death row.

Soon after, Coffey again uses his magic to "transfer" power to Edgecomb. He takes his hand and psychically, both men are able to see the actual culprit of the crime for which Coffey is convicted. Again, fireworks spray from the overhead lights. Edgecomb has long suspected that Coffey is innocent, and the "vision" which he receives with intensive affect, performing both suffering and ecstasy, confirms his suspicion. Oddly, rather than seeking an acquittal (especially since the warden has been helped by Coffey), the characters blandly go forward with the scheduled execution as if the system cannot accept modification. Rather than this choice inspiring outrage and credulity in audiences, I believe that Hank's star persona assuaged its racism and made the event highly affective and pleasurable.

As a gift to Coffey, they allow him to watch *Top Hat* (Mark Sandrich, 1935). Tears stream down Coffey's face as he watches Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dance to "Cheek to Cheek." They flit across the screen in illuminated whiteness. Coffey says, "They're angels just like up in heaven." When he is later strapped to the electric chair, he mumbles the lyrics "Heaven, I'm in Heaven" as tears stream down his face. The film displays fantasies about black and white masculinity, and in this scene, it imagines that the black male similarly idealizes white culture, emoting over its heavenly (and thus innocent) qualities. The visual contrast between the thin, light-on-his-feet Astaire, and the enormous Duncan (often filmed in shackles) could not be greater. Though Coffey wants to experience Astaire's "heaven," his ability to seems absurd and is impossible. In contrast, his own body can be "experienced" by white characters through magic. As they execute Coffey in the next sequence, the guards each tear up. The scene prolongs the execution; Edgecomb waits before giving the order, conflicted. This dilemma is resolved by a subtle nod from Coffey, giving the go-ahead and alleviating Edgecomb's guilt and responsibility. We see close-ups of the weeping or emotive face of each guard, cuing the audience and giving them time to weep as well before the lever is pulled. As the switch sends the charge, the camera rests on Edgecomb's face, close to tears. Behind him, the overhead lights burst, sending sprays of sparks over the executioners and the gathered audience. For a moment, over Edgecomb's shoulders, a flash of light overwhelms the background, almost swallowing him in its immense whiteness. Heaven. He's in heaven.

The Green Mile restores a long-absent erotic nature to the Hanks star body and intertwines its visual representation both with sexual pleasure and the execution of the suffering black male body. The motif of light and electricity (which passes through the bodies of the condemned), also indicates wonder; it is the residual "proof" of magic and signifies the transfer

of affect to Edgecomb and the other guards. However, the healing of Edgecomb's own plight, his corporal suffering, trauma, and anxiety, is resolved only through the presentation of fantasies associated with black male stereotypes and the eventual, ritualized death of that same body.

I intend this Chapter on *The Green Mile*, which raises issues associated with white violence toward black males, to intersect with the questions of nation, nostalgia, and masculinity that have concerned this dissertation as a whole. White masculinity has been presented in my various chapters as a boyish, protean, hypochondriacal, and paradoxical state. In part, that masculinity sought to soothe its contradictions in the 1990s through nostalgic forays that reworked the tensions of its present condition—often embodying boyhood in order to avoid taking responsibility for social ills and cultural privilege. In the 1990s, the crisis of white masculinity took place alongside the highly influential presidency of President Bill Clinton, himself, a figure of contradictory masculinity with protean qualities that occasionally cast him as "black."

The Green Mile is an illuminating text for suturing together these various issues because it obsesses over the constitution of white masculinity in ways that are wedded to presentations of nostalgia and nation, in fact, articulating their interconnections. *The Green Mile* engages with a wistful discourse that casts the Old South (Clinton's home) as the lost national epicenter. It also invokes the classic Spielberg themes of boyhood and magic as way to inspire affect that distracts from difficult ethical issues. His use of boyhood was particularly attuned to distancing the audience and characters from shame and responsibility. When "innocence" shows up in *The Green Mile* it works out ideas about the American nation through its investment with the justice and goodness that undergirds a fundamentally racist judicial system. *The Green Mile* does not

seek to revise this injustice; it revels in it. The film merely wants to recast the white male who regulates this system as supremely good, innocent, revered, and ideal. Edgecomb is the center of a perfect nation: in the Green Mile which he oversees, everyone is in their proper place and ready for his use. *The Green Mile* ultimately suggests that one needs to accept the good with the bad. Granted, Edgecomb carries out executions, but, through his impeccable skills, he is doing a "good" job. He knows he is a part of a flawed system. He feels bad about it and weeps. Granted, he makes mistakes and missteps, but he does a lot of good too. No one can be good all of the time. He does not need to feel any shame.

7.1.1.4 Afterword: Shame and connections to WWII

Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* spent the final two years of the 20th century on the *New York Times* Bestseller List, with predictable peaks in sales around Father's Day. As stated earlier, the book presents a series of sketches that focus on an individual person's experiences in WWII and the post-war years. These vignettes are organized in eight representative sections. Six of these have titles that specify a category of veteran: Ordinary People, Home Front, Heroes, Women, Famous People, and The Arena—the latter, a section on politicians who served in WWII. Two additional sections follow the same blueprint, but have thematic titles; one is called "Love, Marriage, and Commitment" and the other is titled "Shame." The "Shame" section features four profiles of minorities who served in WWII. Their profiles do not reference any personal shame, but do depict the discrimination they endured, although not through impassioned critiques, but in a "that is the way it was" style narrative.

Curiously, it seems that these profiles belong under "Ordinary People" since discrimination was ordinary. In that case, since "shameful" racism was institutionalized as

"normal" through segregation and Jim Crow laws, especially in the military, perhaps the title "Shame" would more accurately cover the chapters on whites (or, at least, white high-ranking officials who formulated policy). Weirdly, the choice raises the "politically correct" notion that discrimination during WWII was shameful, but makes sense of it by profiling minorities under its banner. At any rate, the bizarre chapter naming that failed to title the section on minority soldiers and nurses something like "Minorities" or "Minority Heroes," clumsily betrays offensive ineptitude. Nevertheless, this "gaffe" was apparently unnoticed and did not affect the book's sales or popularity.

Ultimately, many of the texts I have examined (e.g. *The Greatest Generation*, Ron English's *Color Corrected* painting, lynching photography, *The Man from Hope* video, *Amistad*, and *The Green Mile*), prove that: white dominated visual systems cannot and do not represent black suffering. Instead, they focus on whiteness and try to recuperate or correct its shame within American history, each in its own, complicated mode. For example, the highly emotive visages of black actors studied here (Morgan Freeman as Joadson and Djimon Hounsou as Cinque in *Amistad*, Denzel Washington as Joe in *Philadelphia*, Dave Chappelle as "the black buddy" in *You've Got Mail*, Michael Clarke Duncan as Coffey in *The Green Mile,* and even Martin Luther King Jr. in *The Man from Hope*), were all used by filmmakers to portray decency in their white co-stars. Their presence in these texts was as essential to white masculinity as their absence was crucial to it in *Saving Private Ryan* and *Apollo 13*.

Though one of the primary goals of Congress's WWII Commemoration Committee in designing the 50th Anniversary ceremonies was to promote public awareness about African-American presence in that war, the popular hoopla (films, bestsellers, magazine articles and advertisements) failed to address that fact. Though black soldiers cleaned the beach and buried

the dead at Normandy, they were absent from *Saving Private Ryan* and from HBO's WWII mini-series *Band of Brothers*. Despite over 200,000 black troops serving in that war, the imaginary war in the 1990s reconfirmed their "imagined" absence.

Scholars such as Susan Willis, Marianna Torgovnick, Carl Boggs, and Tom Pollard, and journalists such as J. Hoberman, Richard Goldstein and Christopher Hayes presented arguments early in this century about the influence the 1990s WWII trend had on the nation's conservative and war-mongering agenda after 9/11. In that sense, Steven Spielberg's and Tom Hanks' film *Saving Private Ryan* contributed to the national imagination and bore an extraordinary influence on policy, events, and material realities. On the Wednesday morning after the attacks Bush began using war phraseology. By Thursday afternoon it was specifically attached to the actions of the "greatest generation," and the rivalry produced between non-military Boomers and their veteran dads. President Bush said: "Today we feel what Franklin Roosevelt called the 'warm courage of national unity' . . . in every generation, the world has produced enemies of human freedom . . . the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time." Bush Jr. then reportedly glanced at Bush. Sr., the WWII fighter pilot.[166] The previously "imagined" war had become a part of material reality.

By September 12th and 13th, 2001, networks and media outlets were already censoring what was deemed political content in popular television, movie trailers, and upcoming films.

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[166] SEEHTTP://WWW.NYTIMES.COM/2001/09/16/US/AFTER-ATTACKS-EVENTS-FOUR-DAYS-NATIONAL-CRISIS-CHANGES-BUSH-S-PRESIDENCY.HTML?SCP=3&SQ=SEPTEMBER%2016%202001&ST=NYT&PAGEWANTED=4

However, the second episode of *Band of Brothers* (produced by Spielberg and Hanks) ran without censorship or incident on Sunday, September 16th. It was an episode filled with crashing planes and the bodies of soldiers engulfed in flames. The nostalgic vision of combat seemed to collide with the present war (on terror) and display its immediate past and certain future. The nation united anew, in a sea of flags, jingoism and revived patriotism. The culture war seemed to end definitively. The enemy was beyond borders or, if internal, of foreign descent. Further historical studies will answer how long this moment of imagined unity lasted and at what cost and to whom. However, WWII nostalgia in the 1990s was integral to this manifestation of American consolidation. It takes a lot of deaths (either simulated or actual) to birth the nation.

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