Vietnam Generation

Volume 1

Vietnam

Number 3 Gender and the War: Men, Women and

Article 15

10-1989

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Recommended Citation

 $Leed, Eric J. \ (1989) \ "Violence, Death \ and \ Masculinity," \ \textit{Vietnam Generation}: Vol. \ 1:No. \ 3, Article \ 15. \\ Available \ at: \ http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/vietnamgeneration/vol1/iss3/15$

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Violence, Death and Masculinity

Eric J. Leed

My thinking on the issue of war and gender, like that of most people, has been fundamentally shaped by the scholarship which has issued from the women's movement in the last two decades. In general this work has addressed issues of direct concern to women, and yet it has had the effect of liberating all-men and women-to regard history through the lens of gender. I think that Joan Scott is correct when she insists, in her keynote essay in the important anthology Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars, 1 that to use gender as a "category of analysis" rather than as a template of sensitivities or a battle-cry, has the potential to rewrite history itself and to reorient the channels of mainstream history. It is clearly impossible, any longer, to read history as the history of humanity, for it—like art, mathematics, politics, war, and much else—is done by men and is largely reflective of their concerns. The revelation of the gender-specific nature of history, while humbling, is also liberating. It frees us to read the evidence for clues no longer about the nature of a totality (humanity) but about a partiality—masculinity. The following remarks and observations are an attempt to follow through on this possibility, and to contemplate the role which violence has played in engendering the male persona within Western cultures. It attempts to suggest a reading of Western war literature for evidence of the process by which Man is produced and images of manhood generated.

In thinking about war and gender we are examining the role which violence plays as a "gendering activity," which it clearly has been in the history of the war-making cultures of the West. The editors of Behind the Lines suggest this as a point of departure: "War must be understood as a gendering activity, one that ritually marks the gender of all members of society." At the very beginnings of Western war literature, in what remains the most detailed representation of a warrior culture, in the Iliad, violence is clearly used to delineate the activities proper to men and women. When Diomedes wounds Aphrodite in the wrist with his spear on the Plains of Ilion, making her Ichor flow and causing her much pain, he is thrusting home a gendering point:

"Daughter of Zeus," he cried, "be off from this battle and leave war alone. Is it not enough for you to set your traps for feeble womenfolk? If you persist in joining in the fight, you will be taught to tremble at the very name of war."³

Lest she, or ourselves, miss the point Father Zeus explains why he allowed a mortal to commit an act of sacrilege upon the body of an immortal. It was to teach her a lesson: "War is not for you, child. Lend yourself to sighs of longing and the marriage bed." This act which violates the boundary between the profane and sacred world is permissible because it demarcates and sacralizes yet another even more culturally definitive boundary between the world of love, seduction, and childbirth—the female provenance—and the male world of violence in which males project their identities upon men of other stock, losing themselves and finding themselves in battle.

In this text it is clear that war is not just one gendering activity among others, but that it is a particularly gendering activity, one which marks the boundaries between the genders and sets the limits at which differences meet but do not mesh. Violence, as Randall Collins recognizes, is a primary boundary-making and boundary crossing activity in historical societies. Those most human (if inhumane) forms of violence—torture, terror, summary executions, mutilations, ritual slaughters and manhunts—are primary ways in which the proper objects of violence are defined, as those outside the boundaries of the group, or those "below" the standards and norms which define the group. Collin's essay is a bold analysis of the phenomenon which is obvious in history but still requires an explanation—through violence men (primarily) have created the boundaries of groups and communities, walled and defended them. This historical fact Leo Tolstoy regarded as the product of a moral "error" which he found in all political doctrines.

The error of all political doctrines without exception, from the most conservative to the most progressive, the error which has brought men to their present calamitous predicament, is essentially this: the men of this world have thought it possible, and still think it possible, to unite people by violence in such a way that they will all, without resistance, submit to the same order of life and to the same rule of conduct following from it.⁶

In fact, men throughout history have been capable of forcing others, with varying amounts of resistance, to submit to the same order of life and rules of conduct. The wounding of Aphrodite by Diomedes is a representation of this fact, for it is the act constitutive of the band of male warriors, just as it identifies the female as seductress and child-bearer. The reservation to men of arts of violence as an activity engendering the masculine is highly significant, for in appropriating the means of violence men take unto themselves the chief means by which communities, domains, spheres of activity, places, have been delineated—a signal power which contains all others.

It is important to understand that when one speaks of gender and the role which violence plays in genderization we are talking about the symbolic significance of the activities and accourrements of war in defining a species of social being. We are not speaking about the causes

of violence or its experiential continuations in memory, text, history, fiction, myth. This is Alfred Vagt's point in making a distinction between the "military way"—which is a technological spirit seeking for the best possible way to attain particular objectives with the least expenditure of blood and treasure—and "militarism": all of those activities, weapons, rituals, costumes, manners which define the "being" and identity of the warrior. All of the paraphernalia of militarism are tools by which war becomes a gendering activity, and a gendering activity is any which carries a specific symbolic "wattage" over and above any instrumental purpose the activity may have, a wattage illuminative of a certain kind of identity.

"Gender" itself is a category of social being which-like class or race—derives from nothing more substantial than the mutual recognitions, categorizations and identifications in which people habitually engage. Gender is a form of identity which proceeds from the observation of superficial sexual differences which are then collated and structured into oppositions and antitheses, ultimately becoming templates of behavior and categories of mind. Many have suggested that genderization takes place through "pairings," "twinships" of male and female identities and that gendering itself seems to be an inherently dialectical process. There is no Father without the Mother, no Knight without the Lady, nor warrior without his concubine (witness Achilles' long sulk when deprived of his). One may use the wounding of Aphrodite by Diomedes as an example of this dialectical process of identity formation in which the male is mirrored in a complementary female form, for in their confrontation Diomedes in recognizing the nature of the "other" and constituting his own as well as enforcing a nature upon the other. The process of gendering is interesting because it seems to be paradigmatic of the process of identity formation in general, and exemplifies the truth that, at bottom, there is no "self" without the "other." It is all done with mirrors, and begins with the fact that "we are but nature given eyes."8 From our recognitions and observations of others are created categories, simplifications, rigidities, masks and veils without which we may not identify what is seen. I have to admit to feeling nothing but unease before this subject, for gender, like all social being seems to be something, a reality, which grows out of nothing. But such we must recognize when we look for the source of social reality and social power which seem to be generated purely in and through the relations of individuals to each other and in the reflections set up by those relations.

To make the point even finer, then, in studying the question of war and gender we are examining the ways in which violence governs mutual recognitions and identifications out of which structures of identity are crystallized and from which societies take their form as articulations of differences. In this sense, society consists of little more than fixed images of identity which structure and explicate human relations. The role which violence plays as a medium of recognitions is

best approached from the insight of Hegel, who regarded war as the origin of relations of dominance-submission, the master-slave relationship. In asking why men fight each other, and how male relationships and consciousness are mediated through the reality of violence, Hegel proposed the operation of a "necessity," the necessity of the "confirmation" of the male self.

They must enter into this struggle, for they must bring their certainty of themselves, the certainty of being for themselves, to the level of an objective truth, and make this a fact both in the case of the other and in their own case as well. And it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence. The individual who has not staked his life, may, no doubt, be recognized as a Person: but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness.⁹

Perhaps men "must" enter this struggle, too, because the language of violence is a preemptory language, the first act of which forces the other to reply in kind or lose "certainty of self," "face" status. But it is an open question why men (rather than women) require this confirmation of themselves and feel this need to acquire a "certainty" of self as an "objective truth" acknowledged by a defeated "other" whose own identity might be cancelled in this operation. History offers a wealth of examples of men who have been willing to risk the very condition of identity (life) in the affirmation of an identity superior to "bare existence" and biological necessity, trading life for glory, death for fame. This would seem to be an irrational choice and one requiring explanation. Mysterious too is this notion of the essence of the male identity proven in battle as "freedom." "It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained." By what necessity is this assertion of freedom made, this declaration of liberty from "mere" existence implicit in the risks of battle?

Hegel proposes that we regard war as a process of "identification," or as a "change" of character of a particular sort. It is a "trial," a testing and "proving" which adds nothing new to the self-consciousness engendered in battle, but which reduces the self of the warrior to an identifiable and characteristic essence, to an irreducible form and individuality. It is thus that in war a putative identity is asserted by the process of having everything unessential to that character stripped away. In this sense the "trial by battle" resembles what Kenneth Burke has spoken of as a "fictional death." The fictional death is fictional rather than "real" because it uses death as an assertion of self, character, identity, thereby denying the reality of death as a dissolution of form and a solvent of identities. The topos of the fictional death is prominent in funeral orations, in the narration of epic and heroic journeys as well as in war literature, where it is presumed that the "true" and genuine self is tried, proven, reduced to its essence by the journey through the "valley of death." What men often experience in war is the disillusionment of

hopes and expectations keyed to the image of the fictional death, learning that death is the negation of consciousness, the revelation of the pure materiality of the body. "In this experience self-consciousness becomes aware that *life* is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness." It is only after a war that the "fictions" which promote it are slowly reconstituted in the conditions of peace until men must again engage in the reality of violence in order to free themselves from the horrors and hopes invested in its imaginings.

Hegel's description of war as the source of the master-slave relationship is interesting, as is his entire discussion of the unfolding of consciousness, because it describes a structure of desire which, in psychoanalytic terms, must be described as narcissistic. In war the warrior seeks confirmation of a projected self-image as an "objective" truth upon an opponent's body, and through his triumph confirms this self-image, often at the cost of the destruction of the "otherness" and the life of his enemy. The "minimal" self confirmed in war and death is a peculiarly "social" self, "fame," name, reputation, the self whose continued existence assuages Hector's grief at the certainty of his own mortality. As he explains to his wife:

I see you there in Argos, toiling for some other woman at the loom or carrying water from an alien well, a helpless drudge with no will of your own. "There goes the wife of Hector," they will say when they see your tears. "He was the champion of the horse-taming Trojans when Ilium was besieged." And every time they say it, you will feel another pang at the loss of the one man who might have kept you free.¹¹

The continuation of Hector's fame, signed and symbolized in the person of his wife, is some compensation for the death of his body, and his grief for his wife is peculiarly an extension of his grief for himself.

Those who would examine the warrior mentality and the psychosocial structures characteristic of warrior cultures would do well to look into the literature on narcissism. Warrior societies are significant historically in providing the soil of aristocracies. With the territorialization of nomadic peoples the image of the warrior is idealized, "and when there were local agriculturists to dominate, this type could develop into that of the aristocrat or noble."12 Increasingly it appears that the normative persona general within the modern West—the image of the autonomous, free, armed, mobile individual—is derived from the self-image of the nobleman, the lord. Warrior cultures and the aristocracies which issue from them are constructed—Gonzalez-Reigosa and Kaminsky argue upon narcissistic channeling of libido. Homoerotic libido was a central force in the culture of the gymnasium, in the formation of the image of the warrior-citizen, in the Greek Miracle, the discovery of philosophy in the West, which was essentially "related to the cognitive desire of the mind to possess itself as an object, a relationship we understand in terms of the Freudian concept of narcissism..." In the Freudian

conception the narcissistic object-choice is the choice of an object which acquires libidinal significance insofar as it is a projection and mirror of self. As Socrates observed of the beloved in the *Phaedrus*, "the lover is his mirror in whom he is beholding himself but he is not aware of this." The structure of libido characteristic of warrior cultures is explicated in the first notions of romantic love as an homoerotic love which eschews sexual consummation. The most interesting implication of Gonzalez-Reigosa and Kaminsky's theory is that by identifying the wellsprings of romantic love in narcissistic libido one may dispense with the idea that the prohibition upon consummation of romantic desire is a result of "repression." This attenuation of the desire short of possession is implicit in the very narcissistic character of the first explications of romantic love in the West.

[D]esire for a self-projected image of the self is desire for an unattainable object, hence interminable desire, and object of such desire must tend always to appear as a transcendent ideal. In this sense the Western ideal of romantic love pitched to an unrealistic height and taken as an absolute value in the individual's life is fundamentally narcissistic, inasmuch as it aims at an unattainable object and is therefore a projection of self-love.¹⁴

Plato's prohibition upon sexuality in the ideal relations of lovers was a prohibition on the appropriation of the sexual object. The discountenancing of consummation is an attempt to perpetuate the conditions of desire, and it is this which makes romantic love an ideal peculiar to the West. Any appropriation of the object through sexual intercourse or through killing (killing is an ultimate form of appropriation) is the destruction of that object, just as Narcissus shatters his beloved image reflected in the pool with his touch.

Notions of romantic love inherited from the Classical world and repackaged in Christianity were heterosexualized in the Middle Ages, and yet the codifications of romantic love one finds in courtly literature remain significantly narcissistic and self-referencing. To be a knight, the mounted man whose calling was arms had to be in love with a lady, and yet, in Diaz de Gomez' explanation of why this was necessary, it becomes clear that the lady is not so much the object of the knight's sexual desire as the frame, mirror and stimulus of his characterizing passion.

Likewise they know that for love [of women] do they become better knights and acquit themselves more magnificently, that they achieve prowess and great labours of chivalry, whether in arms or in sports, that they are set forth on great adventures to do them pleasure; and to go into strange realms bearing their devices, seeking chance encounters and encounters in the lists, each praising and exalting his mistress. Moreover, they make about their ladies and for the love of them gracious songs, most

pleasant declarations, notable sayings, ballads, songs, roundelays, lays, virelays, complaints, tales of dreams and sonnets, and allegories where each declares himself in words and makes the most of his passion.¹⁵

The "love," the encounters and adventures, the equipment and behaviors of the chivalric character are all self-referencing, done to no other purpose than to reveal the individual doing these things as a true and genuine knight, exemplary of the normative "free" person, the one identity presumed to exist outside social categories and above the "commons." This image—as it is appropriated by artisans, clerks, men of mere property and by women after 1789, always exists in conjunction with ideals of romantic, that is to say, narcissistic love, which acquires a hegemonic reality in the industrial age.

Always, in contemplating an apparently complete socio-psychic structure which persists as an ideology, one must deal with the historical origins of that structure. One can do no better than follow out the implications of K.J. Dover's suggestion that the open approval of pederasty in Greek culture was a result of constant warfare. 16 This thesis is perhaps derived from Aristotle who noted, in general, that warfare eroticized society. "Indeed, it seems as if there was a rational basis for the myth of a union between Ares and Aphrodite: certainly all soldiers have a strong urge towards sexuality, whether directed towards the male or the female."17 Aristotle also noted, significantly, that the open approval of male homosexuality in warrior societies was a "corrective" to the power which women assumed over property and marriage in societies where men were often away fighting. Aristotle did not approve of the dominance of women which he saw in Spartan and Cretan societies, though, he noted, this dominance, "is a common state of affairs in a military or warlike community, though not among the Kelts and other peoples among whom male homosexuality is openly approved."18 The grouping of men and women into separate sodalities within which homosexuality is tolerated or openly approved, the structure found in ancient Sparta, is most often interpreted as a "primitive survival." And yet when we see this "primitive survival" reappearing again and again in societies that go to war one must suspect that it is the product of a force which operated in the past as it does in the present—the force of war. In general when we see human cultures removed in time, separated by space and constituted of very different human materiel, evidencing the same structure we might presume these similarities are a product of a common force, just as the force of waves reduces stones of differing mineral content and configuration to a common rotundity and complementary form. In order to prosecute this thesis we would have to show how normally peaceful societies which go to war evidence the same "gender structure" characteristic of warrior societies and societies dominated by war. One would have to ask of all wars the question which Joan Scott asks of World War I: "Was the gender system transformed or

reproduced in the course of the extraordinary conditions generated in wartime?"²⁰ The evidence of modern war literature compels one to conclude that the conditions of war change the "normal" gender structure, setting aside, for the duration, the conditions and terms of patriarchy. Sandra Gilbert, in a superb article on the war experience of British literary men and women, notes that the war experience of men was very different from that of women. For men war was an experience of mortality and the decimation of a generation. For women it was an experience of improved health, ²¹ expanded power and effectiveness. This suggests to Gilbert, "that the most crucial rule that the war had overturned was that of patrilineal succession, the founding law of patriarchal society itself."²² There is a widespread sense, in the expectations of those who go to war, that warfare transmutes the structures of patriarchy into something else. The question is: "What is this something else?"

War removes men and women from the patriarchal family and sets aside the patriarchal family as the chief "gendering institution." In war men and women encounter each other directly and in generalized, uniformized figures as men are mobilized, massed and uniformed, and women—also uniformed—flood into the public sphere the men have vacated. One finds abundant evidence that war generates solidarities which are perverse in patriarchal circumstances. Nina Auerbach insisted that, "union among women...is one of the unacknowledged fruits of war."23 David Mitchell observed that with the demobilization of 1919, many women "wept at the ending of what they now saw as the happiest and most purposeful days of their lives." 24 In war too, men learn to love each other, forming solidarities and brotherhoods which have always astonished those who regard the phenomenon of war from the outside, as an event purely of enmity and hatred. The literature of war is replete with testimony about the ways in which men, through common violence, cross the boundaries which have separated them into different classes, nations and races. But also crossed are those hedges and barriers set up between men in their normal competition for women, the vehicle of patriarchal continuities. Perhaps the most defining condition of patriarchy is that men mediate their relations to other men through women, becoming to each other individual brothers, sons, brother-inlaws, fathers. So too, under the conditions of patriarchy, the relationship of women to women within other households is mediated through the agency of men who occupy, define and confine them within the boundaries of the private sphere. With the outbreak of war, this engendering through the "other" undergoes fundamental mutations. In war men encounter as familiars those who have been made strange by the boundaries of privacy, nation and manhood which have separated them. So too, women learn their inherent similitude to each other independently of the mediations of the "other," the male. This is to say that in setting aside the chief engendering institution, the patriarchal family, warfare engenders the genders homoerotically and narcissistically.

It is also apparent on the surface of things that with war the chief "gendering activity" within patriarchy—biological reproduction—is bracketed out for the duration. In war, the genders map their relations to the "other" along an erotic-aggressive continuum, relating to each other through non-reproductive sexuality ("sex" proper) or through the reigning gendering activity—violence. Susan Gubar's essay on the images of women in the literature and propaganda of World War II details this transformation, as women are figured as booty and objects of male sexual appropriation.²⁵ So too Klaus Theweleit's study of male fantasies in the Freikorps literature, thoroughly examines the erotic-aggressive relations between the soldier-male and the seductive woman (as booty and betrayer).26 The common military-male fantasy of wallowing in dismembered female flesh combines the hostility of unified men against the opposite sex with a pornographic attitude towards the female body. Pornography is, in this instance, what Susan Sontag (On Pornography) described long ago; the objectification and dismemberment of the sexual object, its disarticulation into "arts" which implicitly denies the unity of those parts, the "person" constituting the whole. In the conditions of war the "integrity" of the male body is posed against an "enemy" intent upon violating that integrity, and this integrity is also defined against the image of woman, now a creature outside the domain of battle, whose touch may despoil with pollutions the sacrality of the male who had dedicated himself to violence. The boundaries which war sets up between the sexes are often revealed in their violations, as in Ernst Von Salamon's description of his encounter with Berlin prostitutes while fighting against the Spartacists in 1919.

With their aura of unalterable strangeness, they would throw themselves at us as we lingered for a short break in the shelter of the houses, still in the grip of the laws of turbulent battle, the enemy still fixed in our sights. It wasn't their whispered propositions that seemed so intolerable: it was the easy matter-of-fact manner in which they grasped our bodies, bodies that had just been exposed to the ravages of machine-gun fire.²⁷

The sacralization, the "setting apart" of the male from the female through the instrumentalities of violence contributes to the sense of the "unalterable strangeness" of women and to the sense of violation by their "matter-of-fact" and knowing touch. But such violations of the closed and integral male body are abundant in war with its pollutions and penetrations, wounds and dislocations. The conditions of violence which set apart women and men also create the conditions of a promiscuous familiarity, Just as Vera Brittan, who served as a nurse on the Western Front during World War I, was grateful to war for her knowledge of men: "Towards men...I came to feel an almost adoring gratitude...for the knowledge of masculine functioning which the care of them gave me."²⁸

At least in these two ways—by setting aside the patriarchal family as the chief gendering institution and biological reproduction as the chief gendering activity—war creates a gender structure which contrasts markedly with patriarchy, and might be called a "sororial-fratriarchal" gender structure. Societies marked by protracted war present an image of organized cohorts of women without men and men without women.29 One also finds this structure explicated in many ancient myths and legends. During the long Second Messenian War (600-640 BC) the many children born to Spartan women during the war (called Parthenot, or products of "virgin births") were repudiated by the men at the end of the war and sent away to found the colony of Taras (Tarentum) in southern Italy, the only colony the normally non-imperialistic Spartans were known to have founded. According to another version of the legend the Spartan women sent a delegation to the army protesting the length of the war and the depopulation resulting. The army picked its best young men and sent them home to procreate. The outcome, however, was the same: the progeny of these unions were accused of plotting with the helots. rounded up and sent abroad. It was this arrangement which Plato sought to institutionalize in the marriage practices and mating lotteries of his guardian class. One also finds this structure of opposed male and female sodalities which meet periodically to procreate in the myth of the Amazons who were paired with the male tribe of Gargarensians. On Midsummer's Eve the two tribes met in the meadows atop the Caucasus mountains to mate. The product of such unions, if male, were placed with the Gargarensians, while the girls had their right breast seared to facilitate the drawing of the bow and were installed among the Amazons. Structurally, the Amazons functioned as the mirror-image of the warriormale cohort. Mythically, they functioned as an obligatory test of all men who would be heroes, existing to be conquered by all who would claim a lasting fame, as they were by Heracles, Jason, Theseus, Dionysus. The force which war exercises upon the productive strategies of war-making societies might also be seen in the first landfall of Jason and his Argonauts upon the island of Lemnos where the women had killed their husbands. "For they hated their lawful wives, and yielding to their own mad folly, drove them from their homes; and they took to their beds the captives of their spear, cruel ones." 30 The men preferred the women who were after all the "possessions" of the men who had captured them, to those wives who enjoyed the power characteristic of women in warrior societies. The women of Lemnos asked Jason and his men to settle and repopulate the island but he, driven on by "grevious trials" and the ultimate goal of the golden fleece of the Amazon women, demurred, only allowing his men to go ashore to the Lemnian women, "in order that Lemnos might be again inhabited by men and not be ruined."31 In all of these instances war is obviously the force which shapes the outline of the genders, effecting their meetings, forming the antipathies and connective between them.

It is an open question whether this alternation between patriarchy and sororial-fratriarchal gender structures in the transition from peace to war is a change conserving the structures of patriarchy or transformative of them. There are many who would argue that this change is a "structural" rather than an "historical" transformation, a switch of codes resident in established cultural patterns which is often repeated in history rather than a unique and irrepeatable alternation of those patterns. Those who have studied the alterations within gendering caused by modern wars have consistently argued that the freedom and power of women, their consecration to larger public functions within an expanded "home" were alterations which were temporary and for the duration of hostilities. With the return of peace in 1918 and 1945 men and women flocked to the reconstitution of the patriarchal family, consecrating themselves anew to the disciplines of motherhood or fatherhood. And yet this conservative estimation of the power of war to change the very terms in which identities are defined neglects the to and fro of history, the way in which war inalterably transforms the affections and the fears of those who experience them, at home or at the "front." Many, in their experience between the lines of domesticity and on the peripheries of nations, cannot easily forget the selves adapted to those circumstances, even when they once more retreat behind the lines. In general it is my feeling that prevalence of "total" war in the first half of the twentieth century explains many of the features regarded as characteristic of modernity: the liberation and power of women, the demise of patriarchy, the heating up of the battle of the sexes, the public eroticization of gender relations and the use of "sex" as a social cement, the obsession with violence as a marker of moral boundaries.

The point of the foregoing remarks is to suggest that there is a specific socio-psychic structure characteristic of war-making societies and evident when societies make the transition from peace to war. It is a structure which differs in significant ways from patriarchy in that gender relations are not individualizing and particularizing as they are within the patriarchal family, but generalizing and universalizing of "masculine" and "feminine" characters, writ large in literature, propaganda and myth. Gendering, in war, is done narcissistically, through the projection of male and female ideals which focus self-love. The injuries, psychic and physical, incurred in war are often the injuries which Sandor Ferenczi found in his ward for shell-shock victims, which he interpreted as "wounded self-love," as damaged narcissistic ego, which retreats from a violent world of war, and seeks confirmation in veterans' movements, searches for compensation and recognition from society. The "force" of war must be regarded as a primary "cause" of this narcissistic gender structure and a primary factor in its pathologies, a force which cuts across differences of era, language, culture. I am a presentist in that I believe that the forces we observe in operation around us—of statusing, reproduction, production, violence, capital accumulation and consumption—are the forces at work in history which

have shaped historical formations. The primary value of this view is that it integrates the observational (anthropology, sociology, political science, economics) with the historical sciences. If war is viewed as a force constitutive of particular social and psychic structures, we might examine these not only historically and through texts, but in our witnessings of our own time, our observation of ourselves, in considering the role which violence has played in creating one's own manhood, shaping the defenses and distortions characteristic of the gender.

What remains is a closer consideration of the role which violence plays in historical definitions of masculinity and in the relations which men fashion to each other. War is a language in which human relations are fashioned and explicated. It is a reality which has shaped men's relation to other men and to themselves. At the very outset this goes against the common usage in which violence means the absence of human relations or their severance and a self-destructive relationship to the self. Many sociologists would prefer to exclude the relations of violence from those exchanges at the basis of social reciprocities, expunging "the result of physical coercion from the range of social conduct encompassed by the term 'exchange.'" 32 Others, notably Georg Simmel, Leo Tolstoy and Clausewitz, have insisted that the reciprocities set up by violence make it a source of human relations. For Georg Simmel, violence is an instrument of "sociation" which serves to "resolve divergent dualisms, it is a way of achieving some kind of unity, even though it be through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties."33 Clausewitz's conception of war was distinguished by an awareness of the way its reciprocities lead to a maximization of violence. constant state of reciprocal action, the effects of which are mutual."34 Though students of trench warfare have noted the way in which the reciprocities of violence act to minimize risk of life.35 From quite another point of view Tolstoy noted that the reciprocities of violence are rooted in the injuries caused by it, and that violence is almost invariably justified in terms of defense or as retaliation for an injury done. He argued, following the brilliant solution of Christ, that it was only by denying the right to self-defense that the cycle of violence might be broken, asserting that the act of self-defense is no more "moral" than the initial violence to which the victim is responding. Such a denial is present, too, in Camus' succinct statement that "suffering gives no rights."36 In short, it is only by denying the right to violent self-defense that the cycle of violence is broken. By denying the rights incurred by injury the injury is laid to rest.

The conflict is traditionally the source of two species of human relations, relations of dominance-submission and relations of equality and independence. The defeat of one party by another is the inaugurative act of relations of dominance and subordination and is the apotheosis of the identity of the victor as it is the annihilation of the identity of the defeated. Inconclusive conflict or a draw may provide the foundation for a mutual recognition of autonomy, respect, friendship, or alliance on the terms of equality. The violent encounter is a way of measuring the

"strength" of the parties involved, and this strength comes down to an ability to administer and endure pain. It is the "disparity" in this ability which provides evidence for superiority and which thus is the focus of much communication and symbolization in war. The disparity of strength measured in battle justified, according to the Greeks, the dominance of one city or individual over another. As the Athenians explained to the islanders of Melos just before they conquered the city, killing all the men and enslaving the women and children: "Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men leads us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can." 37 Clearly, it is through war that one discovers what one can rule. Since it is the disparity of strength, the excess in the ability of one party over the other to endure or administer suffering, which generates the evidence justifying "rule" and dominance, this is the chief focus of representations and demonstrations of force. The slaughters conducted by the Portuguese in their efforts to control trade in the Indian Ocean during the sixteenth century were calculatedly "excessive." Francisco Almeida, the first Portuguese governor of India, blew captured natives from the muzzles of his cannon before Conanor, saluting the town with fragments of the bone and flesh of native fathers, husbands, and sons. Albuquerque, the second Portuguese governor of the Indies, was particularly brutal in his treatment of the townsfolk of Kuryat, south of Muskat near the Gulf of Oman, whom he executed in great numbers, women and children included, mutilating others. "He ordered also that they should cut off the ears and noses of the Moors who were captured there, and then sent them away to Ormuz to bear witness to their disgrace." 38 When Albuquerque retook Goa in 1510 he put to death all of the Moors—men. women and children—whom he found in the city to the number of six thousand, winning the fear and obedience but not the love of peoples along the shore of the Indian Ocean from Ormuz to the Malaccas. But one suspects that this excess of cruelty was a compensation for an actual inferiority of men and supplies. By conscientiously transgressing the "norms" of violence the Portuguese represented themselves as men from whom scarcely imaginable horrors might be expected and who should, thus, be obeyed. Conquest is a form of armed travel usually undertaken by an expeditionary force against a much more numerous people, and thus a form of war which often uses the language of cruelty in the effort to over-match the often superior resources available to native populations. Such captains as Cortez, Pizarro and Pedro de Alvarado, the conqueror of Guatemala, all considered terror to be an essential resource of conquerors. In justifying his decision to burn at the stake those chiefs of the Quiche Indians who resisted his conquest of the city of Tulatan, Alvarado wrote to Cortez in a language perfectly understood by both.

And seeing that by fire and sword I might bring these people to the service of His Majesty, I determined to burn the chiefs who, at the time that I wanted to burn them, told me, as it will appear in their confessions, that they were the ones who had ordered the war against me and were the ones also who made it.... And this I did so that I could...strike terror into the land.³⁹

Of course neither the Portuguese nor the Spanish invented the techniques of terror, or were the first to discover the efficacy of the preponderance of force in working upon the imaginations of those they would conquer, for the imagination is, in this instance, the crucible of political power, the means by which force is translated into rule. Thus, while violence is by no means unknown to other species, it is the human animal that has specialized in the most "communicational" modes of violence, torture, terror, execution, mutilation.

Torture and mutilation...are distinctively human acts; they are indeed advanced human acts. The boundaries between human groups are involved, making possible the detachment that allows (and motivates) a free use of cruelty; but there is a skill at empathizing across the boundary, enough to be able to gauge the effects of cruelty upon its victim. This distinctively human violence becomes symbolic; torture and mutilation are above all forms of communication usable as threats and supports of complete domination.⁴⁰

The torturer, detached from his victim, may imaginatively share the pain he administers but does not feel, and this constitutes a bond between himself and his victim while at the same time asserting his liberty—as torturer—from pain and death, the same liberty which is a part of the innocent sadism of children. In war, torture, the administration of terror, sado-masochistic relations in general are the norm, not the perversion they are in normal circumstances.

However lamentable and morally reprehensible, the techniques of violence used in all societies are evidence of the extent to which violence is not simply a destructive but also an ordering reality, constituting relations between human beings where none have existed before. Internally, violence integrates the group, by the expulsion of anomalies to that group, an act by which "the outline of the set in which it is not a member is clarified."41 One may draw many examples of this function of violence from off the slaughter-bench of history, but two telling examples of ritualized internal violence are supplied by Sir Francis Drake and Magellan on their respective voyages around the world. Both Drake and Magellan executed members of their expeditions at the same place—in the Bay of St. Julian in the Straits of Magellan and at roughly the same time of year. Magellan's execution of his mutinous captains occurred on March 31, 1520, after he ignored (and not for the first time) the will of the majority of his followers that the fleet return to winter in the more salubrious climate of the Rio de la Plata. The majority of the captains, too, preferred the easy and known route to the Malaccas East, around the horn of Africa, to the route west across the

Pacific with its unknown dangers and hazards. In the Bay of St. Julian this quarrel came to a head and the expedition fissioned. Three of the five ships drew away from Magellan's flagship, anchored in a far corner of the bay and refused messages from the commander. Magellan blocked the exit of the bay and undermined the fragile federation of captains opposed to him. He succeeded in killing the most formidable of his opposition, Captain Alonzo de Mendoza, and in suborning another. His punishment of the mutineers was exemplary. The body of Mendoza was drawn and quartered, its parts hung from four gibbets on the shore which were still standing when Drake visited the place. Gaspar Quesada was beheaded by his secretary in exchange for a pardon. Juan de Cartagena, because of his excellent connections in the Spanish court, was marooned in Patagonia along with a quarrelsome pilot.

Fifty-eight years later, at this same boundary line between oceans, Sir Francis Drake executed Thomas Doughty in an act which had a more sacrificial and less political complexion than Magellan's punishment of his rebellious captains. Doughty was a pious underling, apparently an unpleasant man, whom everybody disliked and who was often guilty of presumption before his betters. He was removed from the command of his ship for allegedly accepting bribes from prisoners taken with a Portuguese vessel near the Cape Verde Islands. While a semiprisoner on the admiral's ship, Doughty was "thought to be too preemptory and exceeded his authority, taking upon himself too great a command."42 Francis Fletcher, one of the chroniclers of Drake's expedition thought that Doughty deserved his fate, and that he "had conspired, not only the overthrow of the action, but of the principal actor also."43 William Sloan, another of the chroniclers, was not so sure, and described Doughty as a martyr rather than a rebel. "Long before his death he seemed to be mortified and ravished with the desire for God's kingdom."44 Doughty himself seems to have assumed the passivity and resignation of a designated victim. Given the choice of being beheaded on the spot or returned to England for execution he chose the former and was beheaded on the beach before the assembled crews. Francis Fletcher was aware of the parallels between these two incidents. The execution of Doughty

...left unto our fleete a lamentable example of how a goodly gentleman, who in seeking advancement unfit for him, cast away himselfe; and offered unto posteritie [an example] of a fatall calamite, as incident to that port, and such like actions, which might happilie afford a new paire of parallels to be added to Plutarch's: in that same place, neere about the same time of yeare, witnessed the execution of two gentlemen: suffering both for the like cause, employed both in the like service, entertained both in great hopes, endowed both with excellent qualities, the one fifty-eight years after the other.⁴⁵

But there are deeper parallels. In both instances the expulsion of "anomalies" from the travelling society clarified the order, the relationship

between leaders and led, from which the victims were excluded. The sacrifice of a victim at the boundaries between worlds has been customary since Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter before embarking for Troy and in general we might regard the spilling of blood, the sacrifice of a victim, as a boundary marking and boundary-crossing activity. Wiolence, here, is unifying because it is an act which all, leaders and followers, have an interest in representing as an act of justice. Here the act of execution performs a number of functions: It is exemplary representing what happens to those who are "out of place," it rids the group of troublemakers and silences dissenters; it assures those who accede to the sacrifice of their own innocence, rectitude and righteousness, creating a uniform conscience which appears to be a psychological necessity within social groups, particularly those undertaking risky and uncertain actions.

Violence is a way of marking boundaries, a method of articulating the structure of groups but it is also a connective, a link, a means of crossing boundaries. If we think of this dual property of violence as a method at once of distanciation and connection (regarding that which distances as also that which connects) in a psychological rather than a purely geographical sense we may see the ways in which violence is an activity which men use to assert their integrity and autonomy, to boundary themselves, to invade the precincts of the "other" man and to penetrate him. The cult of the wound, the delectation of wounds, the peculiarly precise depiction of woundings and blood-lettings which one finds in war literature may thus be read as evidence of connections made and integrities violated. War literature is a peculiarly masculine and sado-masochistic form of pornography which delectates the opening of that which is made mysterious by the cult of honor, the integrity of the male person, defended and maintained by force and law. With the wound, the mysterious interiors of the male are revealed, the mask of masculinity is penetrated. The masculine cult of wounds and pain is evidence of a peculiarly male sexuality often exercised in war and we might gain some insight into this form of sexuality by using Wilhelm Reich's insights into the masochistic character. Reich learned, in his analysis of the dreams of his masochistic patients, that the most common dream of masochists was the dream of puncture and bloodletting. He also found that masochists did not enjoy pain, as was popularly thought, but that they were willing to tolerate the displeasure of pain for the pleasure of release from inner tensions. But it was the release, not the pain which was sought.47 Thus violence figures as a mechanism both of repression and release. "The specifically male relation to sexuality is that of sublimation, the symbolism of honour tending at once to refuse any direct expression of sexuality and to encourage its transfigured manifestation in the form of manly prowess."48 The masculine social being—"honour" for short—is closely bound up with the body, just as to "lose face" is to lose honor, to touch the head or bow it a sign of honor given, a public blow delivered an act which

dishonors the integrity of the male body. A man is thus responsible for avenging insults and assaults upon the integrity of the body and, traditionally, loses honor by going to the public authorities with the request that they avenge insults to that integrity.

A man is therefore always the guardian of his own honour, since it relates to his own consciousness and is too closely allied to his physical being, his will, and his judgement for anyone else to take responsibility for it.... The ultimate vindication of honour lies in physical violence.⁴⁹

If we regard "honour" as a traditional and moral term for accumulated repressions, for body-armor, then violence is a means by which these repressions, this self is maintained and also a way in which the repressions may be dismantled through the agency of another. The spectacles of destruction we find in war, depictions of machines being blown up, men pulled apart, dismembered and dismantled, is enjoyable and pleasurable not because it expresses a "death-wish" but because it specifies the dismantling of repressions, the collapse of rigidities, the release from tension of that machine, man, "an arrangement of opposed parts so constructed as to transform energy into work."

The actual workings of the sexuality which men have invested in violence and its sado-masochistic structure within the male group might be clearly seen in the march of Lope de Aguirre and his men through the Amazon basin in 1560. Aguirre was a long-service sergeant in the conquest of Peru who had been on the losing side of the many revolts of the conquistadors against the governors appointed by the Spanish crown. The expedition, searching for El Dorado, was a way of ridding the colony of an unruly, disruptive and "anomalous" element. At the mouth of the Putumayu near the village of Machiparo, Aguirre led a mutiny against the appointed leader of the expedition, Pedro de Ursua. He justified this rebellion in curious terms, accusing Ursua of sleeping too much with the lady he had brought with him. He also charged that Ursua, "always made his hut apart from the rest of the army, when he ought to be its center, because he detested the company of soldiers...."50 When Aguirre and his followers elected a new king, Don Fernando Guzman, they drew up a document legitimating the overthrow of the old leader. Aguirre signed his name to the document, "Lope Aguirre, traitor," insisting that this act had put himself and the men together outside of the law. "Yes we have all killed the governor, and the whole of us have rejoiced at the act; and if not, let each man lay his hand upon his heart, and say what he thinks. We have all been traitors, we have all been a party to mutiny."51 Aguirre used this technique, periodically killing a member of the group, to solidify the men behind him. He killed and disemboweled Dona Inez and her maid in a way which shocked even the toughened consciences of these veterans of the conquest, "either because he did not like the woman, or that he was jealous that anyone should

have a female companion," for the women had found new protectors among the men of the expedition. When Aguirre killed a priest, the "king" and his entire suite at a place on the Amazon river still known as the "village of butchery," he told his men that they should not be alarmed at these killings because "such were the natural consequences brought on by wars, and that war could not be called by that name if such acts did not take place...."52 It is obvious that killing was a way of unifying the men behind him through "crimes." but one may suspect that the motive operative in the repetitions of violence was the one admitted to by a soldier on Quiros' expedition who, when asked why he shot a native with no provocation "replied that his diligence was to kill because he liked to kill."53 In any case, Aguirre's followers noted that he often became morose and depressed when it had been many days "since an occasion had offered to kill again."54 After deposing their elected prince Aguirre named himself not king or general but "powerful chief" and his men began to call themselves the "Maronones" after the river they travelled. They reached the sea on July 1, 1561, at the mouth of the Orinoco and laid siege to the island of Margarita. Now the crimes that Aguirre had committed with the tacit consent of his men became the cement which he used to bind them to him.

So now you must open your eyes, and see each for himself. Be not deceived by any vain confidence: for having committed so many, and such grave and atrocious crimes, be ye sure that ye are not safe in any part of the world, excepting with me.... Thus I counsel you not to leave me...to sell your lives dearly when the occasion offers, and to let all be of one mind; for against such a union, all the force that may be sent against you will be of little avail. 55

By their crimes these men had placed themselves outside of the laws, and this bond held Aguirre's force together until they met a substantial royal army in New Granada. On the occasion of one of Aguirre's numerous executions—the execution of his Mayor del Campo for treason—he accused another of his closest followers, one Llamaso, of disloyalty. In a particularly graphic performance of the rite which bound this party of men to each other, Llamaso threw himself upon the body of the man who had been slain.

Shouting "curse this traitor, who wished to commit so great a crime. I will drink his blood!" and putting his mouth over the wounds in his head, with more than demonic rage, he began to suck the blood and brains that issued from the wounds, and swallowed what he sucked, as if he were a famished dog.... Aguirre was satisfied at his fidelity, and so it turned out, for there was no one who sustained him, until his last hour, like unto this Llamaso.⁵⁶

This graphic rendering of the contagion of identities through the exchange of blood is too shocking to suggest the question it answers: How is it that the men of this world have found it possible to unite people by violence in such a way that they will submit to the same order of life and follow the same path? But in what way is the cannibalism of a Llamaso and the repetition-compulsion that drives Aguirre different from Drake's execution of Doughty? Both have the same form and differ only in Aguirre's repetitions, and in the fact that Drake, by his execution of the victim, solidified his following around an act of "justice," while Aguirre united his following through repeated acts of "injustice." But violence, as Aguirre never tired of insisting, was the act which linked the band of warriors. It is only that in his expedition the evil is pressed beyond banality to an extreme where it can be recognized.

By what necessity does male libido traditionally flow through the channels of violence? Why is it men rather than women who seek "certainty of self" and connections to other men through the medium of violence? In what ways does war, the encounter with death, confront men with their essence—freedom? War is an assertion of male potencies. What does it reveal about the nature of these potencies? Mary O'Brien suggests an answer to these questions which needs to be considered.

Potency is a masculine triumph over men's natural alienation from the process of reproduction.... [It] is the name men have given to their historically wrought success in mediating experienced contradictions in their reproductive consciousness.⁵⁷

Men's participation in biological reproduction is only for the briefest moment of ejaculation, itself often experienced as a death, a wasting and loss of substance. After this they are superfluous unless they create their own necessity. In war, in the defense of women from men much like themselves, they find this necessity. The classical myths and legends which narrate the founding of a world-order as a product of masculine potencies are thus both charters of patriarchal institutions and revelations of the contradiction at the heart of male participation in speciesreproduction. "The fact is that men make principles of continuity because they are separated from genetic continuity with the alienation of the male seed."58 The strenuously maintained fiction of paternity, paternal love, the ceremonial complexes concretizing male gods and male power may thus be read as a complex denial of a fundamental estrangement rooted in the gender. This "alienated" relation to the means of biological reproduction also charter, O'Brien observes, the relations of men to each other. "Relations between men have an objectively casual base; they are relations of those who are forced to be free...."59 It is only that men make a virtue of this estrangement and call it freedom, making death rather than the reproduction of life their chosen field for the generation of identities. "In a very real sense, nature is unjust to men. She includes them and excludes them at the same

moment." Historically men have been compensated for this injustice with "undying" fame, honor, reputation and recognition, kula shells, medals, monuments. It is perhaps thus, as a version of the reproductive scene, that the "fictional death," the wastings and reductions of self through the frictions of war and travel, represents a truth. Men become what they are, realizing a masculine character and a "strength" through what they lose rather than what they gain, and this loss reveals the irreducible core of masculinity as "alienation" and "freedom."

There is an extreme point at which poverty always rejoins the luxury and richness of the world.... This is the only meaning which I can accept of a term like "stripping oneself bare." "Being naked" always has the associations of physical liberty, of harmony between the hand and the flower it touches, of a loving understanding between the earth and men who have become freed of human things.⁶¹

Here is a positive evaluation of the strippings and wastings implicit in the fictional death. For a negative evaluation one might go to any number of laments, descriptions of the losses of battle and the annihilation of futures in war. And yet when something is the same, regardless of whether it is viewed positively or negatively, one must suspect that here lies a truth. Gender is a fate, or rather the elaboration, legitimation, justification of a fate rooted in the realities of biological reproduction, realities only recently attenuated by a new technology of reproduction. The "injustice" at the root of this fate, the superfluity of men and their alienation from biological reproduction, might be seen as the "injury" which becomes the identity of the warrior, and the "cause" of subsequent aggressions. We see the aggression but not the injury which causes it.

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