

AESTHETIC INTERVENTIONS: THE BIOPOLITICS OF THE U.S.  
SOLDIER'S WOUNDED BODY AND HORROR OF NOTHING TO SEE

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By:  
Brianna Gallagher

Dissertation Committee:

Kathy E. Ferguson, Chairperson  
Michael J. Shapiro  
Sankaran Krishna  
Jonathan Goldberg Hiller  
Craig Howes

This dissertation is dedicated to all the people whose lives are affected in horrific ways by the U.S.-led Global War on Terror, and the everyday people trying to imagine and build a world free of militarized violence.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother, Kathleen O'Brien, and my mother, Kathleen O'Brien Gallagher.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how the U.S. soldier's wounded body becomes a productive site of knowledge and power within the military-medical complex. Rather than situate soldiers' trauma from the current wars within narratives of loss, this project demonstrates how medical, scientific, psychiatric, and therapeutic institutions treat the soldier's wounded body as a patient-body that can be cured and re-circuited back into capitalist and militarized modes of production. Specifically, the project examines the shifting gender and sexual dynamics of the military-medical complex in the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. A central theme of the dissertation is that the discipline of the soldier patient-body within the military-medical complex involves the production of militarized masculinities that depend on fears of feminization. When soldiers attempt to receive mental health treatment and resist processes of militarization they often become feminized as "PTSD Pussies" and as unmanly soldier-bodies by their Commanders and fellow soldiers.

In addition, the project examines the visible and invisible traumatic effects and affects of the wars for soldiers and civilians across multiple differences of gendered embodiment and racial, class, and colonial inequalities. It explores how the policing of soldiers' and civilian' bodies within the military-medical complex on the homefront and warfront operates as the "horror of nothing to see" in dominant media representations of a so-called clean war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Finally, it examines how soldiers and veterans attempt to demilitarize trauma by reclaiming their bodies, their selves, from military and therapeutic discourses of knowledge and power. The project explores

a growing archive of poems, films, art works, veteran testimonies, and new media that address the traumatic affects of the wars for soldiers and civilians since the events of 9/11. This dissertation thus contributes to a growing literature in feminist theories of gender and militarism, feminist science and technology studies, and disability studies that reframe the “horror of nothing to see” in the wars in order to imagine and actualize more demilitarized, egalitarian futures.

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## Chapter 1

### **The Horror of Nothing to See: The Biopolitical Assemblage of the U.S. Soldier's Wounded Body**

#### The Biopolitics of the U.S. Soldier's Wounded Body

In an article in the *New Yorker* (2008), Sue Halpern looks at how the U.S. military is currently working alongside psychologists, scientific communities, and the entertainment industry to create virtual simulation games for treating trauma amongst soldiers returning from Iraq. The article briefly explores U.S. military interest in extending popular video game culture, currently used to train soldiers for combat, into virtual therapeutic technologies to treat soldiers diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) [See Figure 1].

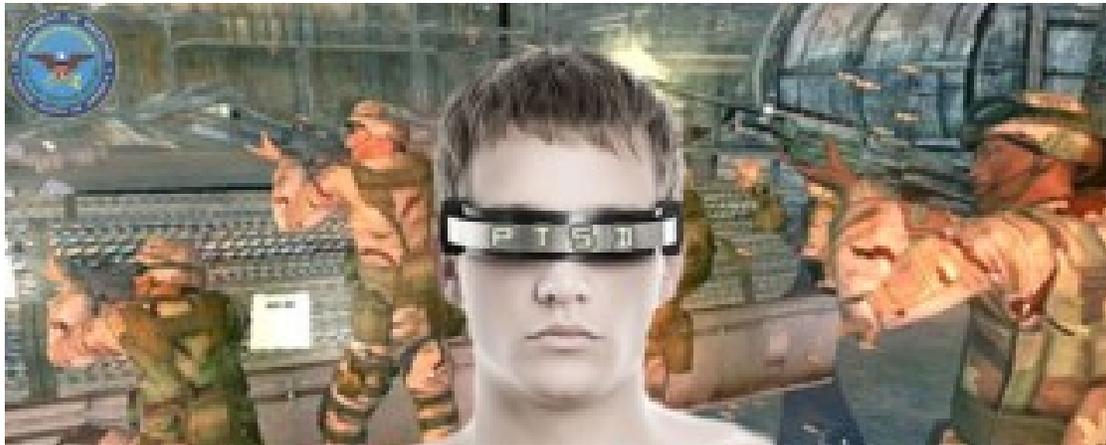


Figure 1: Department of Defense, Advertisement for Virtual Iraq. Source: *Veterans Today: Military & Foreign Affairs Journal*, <http://www.veteranstoday.com>.

While Virtual Vietnam experienced limited popularity amongst the scientific-military-research community in the late 1970's, the shifting dynamics of what James Derian calls "virtuous war" have led the military, research scientists, and new media conglomerates to reconsider virtual therapeutics' potential for treating soldier trauma in the U.S.-led Global

War against Terror in Afghanistan, and until recently, Iraq. So-called virtuous war constitutes the convergence between the U.S. military, new digital simulation technologies, virtual media, and the entertainment industry. Der Derian describes these new convergences as the military-industrial-media-entertainment network [MIME NET] in postmodern assemblages of war. MIME NET operates through the hyper-reality of the symbolic realm, blurring the distinctions between the real and the fictive while reassembling time-space continuums in military networks of power.

MIME NET collapses the spatial-temporal distances between the soldier and enemy through new technologies. For example, the Army soldier's Land Warrior Uniform systematizes soldiers' prosthetic vision within a "system of systems" connected to satellite and digital surveillance technologies [See Figure 2].<sup>1</sup> The soldier's body thus becomes wired into a networked battlefield of digital communication technologies and wearable computer gear. The uniform includes many high-tech weapons systems, including a rifle equipped with a sight system that enables soldiers to see digitally around corners without extending their body parts into a potential line of fire. The high-tech uniform enables the soldier to view the enemy up-close but at a distance. Simultaneously, the high-tech uniform gear creates a new system of camouflaging the soldier's body within a more wired urban warfare environment.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See the online article, "Future Force Warrior Infantry System of Systems (SOS) at the popular online defense magazine, Defense Website, at <http://defense-update.com/features/du-2-07/ffw-sos.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> After fifteen years of development and half a billion dollars later, and after many failures to create a Land Warrior Uniform that was less costly and less bulky for soldiers, the military continues the development of these high-tech suits.



Figure 2: Land Warrior Uniform, From: Armed Forces International website. Source: [http://www.armedforces-int.com/projects/future\\_force\\_warrior\\_system.html](http://www.armedforces-int.com/projects/future_force_warrior_system.html).

The creation of high-tech combat gear, new drone technologies, virtual therapeutic programs—and the development of a smaller and more mobile Armed Forces—are just several examples of what so-called virtuous wars look like according to military strategists and weapon designers. Minimally, virtuous war is embedded within the logic that the U.S. is able to wage wars with minimal casualties and through “precision” targeting. As Der Derian puts it, virtuous war is embedded within the desire to “actualize violence from a distance—

with no or minimal casualties.”<sup>3</sup> As illustrated by the first Gulf Wars and Kosovo War, virtuous wars “promote a vision of bloodless, humanitarian, hygienic wars,” where the death of Iraqis, Somalis, and Serbs far outweighed the death and injuries of the U.S. soldier.<sup>4</sup> Similar to the simulacrum of violence that conditioned the possibilities for the First Gulf War to function as an intelligible event-space, the current Global War Against Terror is rendered intelligible to the viewing public as a war without civilian deaths, U.S. soldier deaths and injuries, or destruction of land.<sup>5</sup> Despite media invisibility of the deaths, injuries, and forced migrations of peoples in Iraq, it is estimated by the British medical journal *The Lancet* that nearly 655,000 men, women, and children have died since July 2006 as a consequence of the March 2003 U.S.-led invasion, with 601,027 of those deaths related to military violence.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the image of a so-called virtuous and “clean war” waged in Iraq and Afghanistan since the events of September 11, 2001, more U.S. soldiers are returning to the homefront with serious combat-related injuries. New technologies in soldier-combat gear, a shifting urban battle space, a more technologically efficient U.S. military, new medical procedures,

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<sup>3</sup>James Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping The Military- Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (Basic Books, 2001), xv, original emphasis.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to underline how the current Global War on Terror has been rendered visible to the U.S. public, especially in relation to the events at Abu Ghraib and the circulation of the photographs in the media. While this essay does not contrast feminist responses to the U.S.-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan since the events of 9/11 and the First Gulf War due mainly to time and space constraints, there is a vast literature emerging on these comparisons, such as Susie Kilshaw’s *Impotent Warriors: Perspectives on Gulf War Syndrome, Vulnerability, and Masculinity* (Berghahn books, 2010); Jasbir Puar’s *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Duke University Press, 2007); Véronique Pin-Fat and Maria Stern, “The Scripting of Private Jessica Lynch: Biopolitics, Gender, and the “Feminization of the U.S. military,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 30 (2005), and Kelly Oliver, *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media* (Columbia University Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert Burnham et al., “Mortality after the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: A Cross-Sectional Cluster Sample Survey,” *The Lancet* 368, no. 9545 (October 2006): 1421–1428, doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(06)69491-9.

faster medical evacuation, and soldiers' multiple redeployments have led to an increase of wounded soldiers returning from war. More soldiers are returning from the current wars with serious injuries as compared to the number of wounded soldiers returning from the first two World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.<sup>7</sup> More than 51,400 U.S. soldiers have been wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan and 2003 invasion of Iraq. Meanwhile, 4,423 soldiers have been killed in action in both of the wars.<sup>8</sup> This ratio constitutes the highest proportion of wounded to killed soldiers in U.S. history.<sup>9</sup> The new technologies and shifting urban landscape of today's U.S.-led wars condition the possibilities for more resilient U.S. soldier-bodies able to survive injuries that in previous wars would have been fatal.

Veteran activists, feminists, journalists, and military family members have begun to shed an important light on the "hidden" physical and psychic injuries of the wars for soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan since the events of 9/11. Since I began this dissertation project in 2009, the American public has become more aware of the multiple injuries that soldiers experience on the homefront and the warfront. The most frequent injuries of soldiers

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<sup>7</sup> See Linda Bilmes "Soldiers Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan: The Long-Term Costs of Providing Veterans Medical Care and Disability Benefits," Faculty Research Working Paper Series, John. F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (2007). [http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP07001/\\$File/rwp\\_07\\_001\\_bilmes.pdf](http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP07001/$File/rwp_07_001_bilmes.pdf); [http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP07001/\\$File/rwp\\_07\\_001\\_bilmes.pdf](http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP07001/$File/rwp_07_001_bilmes.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> See "U.S. Military Casualty Statistics: Operation New Dawn, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom," Congressional Research Service, Hannah Fischer, February 5, 2013 [available online: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22452.pdf>]. Exactly 51,450 U.S. soldiers have returned from the wars with serious injuries. Specifically, 4,409 U.S. Service members died in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF); 66 service members have died in Operation New Dawn (OND); 2,165 service members have died in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan.

<sup>9</sup> See Linda Bilmes "Soldiers Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan: The Long-Term Costs of Providing Veterans Medical Care and Disability Benefits," Faculty Research Working Paper Series, John. F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (2007).

in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars include traumatic brain injury (nearly 20 percent), spinal injuries or amputations, blindness, deafness, and serious burns.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, over thirty-six percent of U.S. soldiers treated thus far demand mental health treatment, which includes treatment for PTSD and acute depression.<sup>11</sup> As of December 2012, over 103,000 service members deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with PTSD while 27,549 service members not deployed to the warfront have also been diagnosed with PTSD.<sup>12</sup>

Within the last few years, the politics of gendered violence against women service members has also become a prominent site of national debate. According to recent studies by the Department of Veterans Affairs on women soldiers serving in Iraq since 2001, "...30% of military women are raped while serving, 71% are sexually assaulted, and 90% are sexually harassed."<sup>13</sup> As Chantelle Henneberry reports: "The Department of Defense acknowledges the problem, estimating in its 2009 annual report on sexual assault...that some 90% of military sexual assaults are never reported."<sup>14</sup> Sexual violence against male soldiers in the Armed Forces still remains mostly invisible. However, recent studies suggest the majority of sexual assaults in the U.S. military are against men. As James Dao recently reported in *The New York Times*, "In its latest report on sexual assault, the Pentagon estimated that 26,000 service members experienced unwanted sexual contact in 2012, up from 19,000 in 2010. Of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Linda J. Bilmes and Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> See "U.S. Military Casualty Statistics: Operation New Dawn, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom," Congressional Research Service, Hannah Fischer, February 5, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> See Chantelle Henneberry's "Women at War Face Sexual Violence," *BBC*, April 17, 2009, sec. Americas, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8005198.stm>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

those cases, the Pentagon says, 53 percent involved attacks on men, mostly by other men.”<sup>15</sup>

Hence, the gendered politics of PTSD is complex and demands paying attention to how military cultures—rooted in sexism, homophobia, racism, and misogyny—encourage and perpetuate sexual violence against women and male service members.<sup>16</sup>

The American public is also becoming increasingly aware of the multiple costs of caring for wounded soldiers returning from the wars with PTSD and serious combat-related injuries. As economists Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz demonstrate, it is estimated that it will realistically cost around \$717 billion dollars to provide veterans with basic medical, disability, and social security services upon their return from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup> The ability for veterans to receive these funds is limited, insofar that it has become increasingly difficult for veterans to receive basic health and disability benefits within the neoliberal and bureaucratic practices of contemporary war machines. As journalist Aaron Glantz illustrates, the Bush administration repeatedly refused to provide funds for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and actively stripped veterans’ benefits during the 2003 escalation of the war in Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> James Dao, “In Debate Over Military Sexual Assault, Men Are Overlooked Victims,” *The New York Times*, June 23, 2013, sec. U.S., <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/24/us/in-debate-over-military-sexual-assault-men-are-overlooked-victims.html>.

<sup>16</sup> This is only a brief sketch of some of the issues surrounding sexual violence in the U.S. military. For a more astute analysis, see Dahr Jamail's journalistic accounts of the traumatic affects of the wars for soldier and civilians in *The Will to Resist: Soldiers Who Refuse to Fight in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009). See especially Chapter Six, “Resisting Sexism,” 100-120. As Jamail demonstrates, women and men are not simply victims of sexual violence, but they are also active agents of resistance to sexism within the U.S. military.

<sup>17</sup> See Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz’s excellent report on the financial costs of the war (and the statistics they struggled to obtain) in *The Three Trillion Dollar War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Aaron Glantz, *The War Comes Home: Washington’s Battle against America’s Veterans* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2010).

While public officials, patriotic citizens, and the Bush Administration all deployed the phrase “support the troops” when everyday people and broader anti-war groups around the world challenged the Iraq war’s legitimacy on both legal and moral grounds, the Bush administration was actively stripping veterans of their basic health needs for mental health services and disability benefits.<sup>19</sup> The organization, “Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America,” reports in their new interactive media campaign that more than 500,000 veterans wait on average over 300 days for care and benefits from the Veterans Administration (VA). The most frequent injury claims include PTSD (66%), mental health (53%), bad back (56%), and bad knees (48%). As this project demonstrates, the soldier’s injured body becomes a body worthy of “fixing” when it can be rehabilitated and re-circuited back into the U.S. war machine through high-tech prosthetics and virtual therapeutic programs within neoliberal markets of value. However, rehabilitation programs and mental health services for wounded veterans are rendered nearly obsolete within the U.S. war machine, military-medical complex, and neoliberal markets of value and capital accumulation.

Political economists often frame the increase of wounded soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan as an ongoing cost of the wars for U.S. soldiers, civilians, and tax-payers. These important studies frame the wounded soldier’s body as a financial cost of the ensuing budget crisis of the Global War on Terror and render visible the multiple costs of America’s endless wars abroad.<sup>20</sup> Due to the severe lack of federal funds for caring for America’s wounded soldiers, these studies urge the U.S. administration and military-medical

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<sup>19</sup> As Aaron Glantz writes in his book on wounded veterans, “...The VA announced that as a cost-cutting move it would start turning away middle-income veterans who applied for medical benefits. Consequently, the number of uninsured veterans skyrocketed by more than 290,000” in 2003. See Glantz, “Didn’t Prepare to Treat the Wounded” in *The War Comes Home*, 119.

<sup>20</sup> Bilmes and Stiglitz, *The Three Trillion Dollar War*.

community to provide greater healthcare funds for attending to the rising number of wounded soldiers returning from Iraq.<sup>21</sup> As the “Costs of War” project at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University demonstrates, the costs of the wars in Iraq have detrimental effects for not only U.S. wounded soldiers, but also military families, civilians, and men, women and children in Iraq.<sup>22</sup>

While Congress is not properly funding the Veterans Administration in order for wounded veterans to receive adequate mental health services and rehabilitation services for serious combat-related injuries, the soldier’s wounded body operates as a site of biopolitical management within capitalist and neoliberal markets within the military-medical complex. This dissertation contributes to a better understanding of what the costs of the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan constitute by examining how the soldier’s wounded body becomes a site of techno-scientific management and experimentation in the military-medical complex. Rather than focus on narratives of loss surrounding the soldier’s wounded body, such as the lack of healthcare funds for treating wounded soldiers’ bodies, my project examines the productive returns of soldier-trauma within the military-medical complex. This is not to suggest that demanding more adequate healthcare services for treating wounded soldiers is not important. Rather, a shift in theoretical orientation that locates the soldier patient-body within its ability to function as a productive body within current U.S. war machines enables a more critical understanding of how the physical health and memories of the soldier are policed and rendered sites of desire within the military-medical complex.

### The Military-Medical Complex

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<sup>21</sup> “Caring for US Veterans | Costs of War,” March 13, 2013, <http://costsofwar.org/article/caring-us-veterans>.

<sup>22</sup> “Iraq: 10 Years After Invasion | Costs of War,” March 14, 2013, <http://costsofwar.org/iraq-10-years-after-invasion>.

It is important to foreground what I mean by the term “military-medical complex.” In order to appreciate the use of this term, it is necessary to first provide a brief gloss on the concept of the military-industrial complex. The concept of the military-industrial complex signifies the policy and financial relations between lawmakers, national militaries, the defense and other industries. Such relations comprise political contributions, the authorization of defense spending, and the industrial lobbying of legislative bureaucracies and the armed forces. The idea refers to the industrial-political “system” behind the United States military and was coined by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his farewell address on January 17, 1961.

For Paul Virilio, however, the notion of the military-industrial complex indicates the development of the state war enterprise and the historical effects of Western revolutions in military-industrial power.<sup>23</sup> In *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* for instance, he demonstrates how the military-industrial complex actually emerged in the nineteenth century, when bourgeois-capitalist power became increasingly militarized through the expertise of military engineers and the establishment of a permanent military class.<sup>24</sup> For the accumulation of bourgeois-capitalist wealth in nineteenth century Europe in particular demanded the creation of an enduring “state of siege” that was secured through the production of fortified cities and the configuration of the countryside into a network of transportation routes for the movement and facilitation of the military. Hence the rise of the bourgeoisie as a political-economic class during this period was accompanied by a revolution in military thought that scientifically mapped the socio-political landscape of the countryside

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<sup>23</sup> The next three paragraphs, and my discussion on the “military–industrial complex,” comes from my published entry on this concept in *The Virilio Dictionary*, edited by John Armitage, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Virilio, *Speed and politics: an essay on dromology* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2006). First published in France in 1977.

and urban centers as strategic nodes of a broader militarized system of state power and its exploitation of mass movement. Significantly, the masses of the new military proletariat were mobilized through the production of industrial artillery and by the expansion of machine warfare into the movements of everyday life.

Moreover, from the nineteenth century onwards, such military-capitalist apparatuses of territorial conquest were accompanied by the military class's effort to control the seas to aid the movement of Western armies and bodies between its urban centers and its colonies. The expansion of Western military power was henceforth conditioned by mastery of the spatial cartography of the land and the seas as well as by control of the revolutions in speed and technical innovations in transportation. For example, Great Britain became the "first great industrial nation" not only because of its technical advancements in transportation but also owing to its increased capacity to manufacture engines.<sup>25</sup> For Virilio, therefore, democracy is best understood as a "dromocracy," as a revolution of speed and a strategic endeavor by the state to maintain technological superiority.

Likewise, in *Popular Defense & Ecological Struggles*, Virilio illustrates how twentieth and now twenty-first century West European expansionism, military revolutions, and industrialization have led to the "domination of space by speed," to the rise of a military-industrial proletariat, and to the state's search for "pure power" or the means of absolute defense and absolute attack.<sup>26</sup> The military-industrial complex is consequently the historical result of these Western revolutions in pure power, of the military class' total colonization of space by time, and of the movement of bodies within and without militarized and industrialized organizations such as the state. Somewhat distinct from Eisenhower's

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Virilio, *Popular defense & ecological struggles* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1990), 31.

comprehension, then, Virilio's understanding of the military-industrial complex emphasizes its dismantling of the unity of space and time, its inauguration and perpetuation of a militarized "war of time" and its increasingly industrial management of the everyday movements of civilian populations.<sup>27</sup>

These temporal dimensions to the militarization of everyday life and of bodies within western and colonial formations of power echoes Gilles Deleuze's emphasis on the temporal, rather than spatial, dimensions of controlling bodies in contemporary control societies.<sup>28</sup> In many ways, U.S. soldiers are embedded within a "war of time" as many soldiers are deployed and redeployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, including up to four to five tours of duty. Soldiers are also increasingly surviving the shock and awe effects of postmodern war, and return from the warfront with serious physical and psychic injuries. The temporality of trauma and the ongoing affects and effects of exposure to violence, sexual trauma and sexual harassment, and chemical weapons (i.e., depleted uranium) constitute an ongoing battle for many soldiers, veterans, and their families. For the state apparatus, rehabilitating the soldier's wounded body so that it can be re-circuited back into the military apparatus becomes part of the military's strategic approach to urban warfare and colonialism in international politics.

For veterans, soldiers, and family members, claims to adequate mental health services, and quality rehabilitation services for serious combat-related injuries, are ongoing battles. This is especially the case when the state—as a war machine—values the capitalist returns of KBR/Halliburton contracts for invading and rebuilding Iraq (and now Afghanistan) more than the ethical and social returns for providing adequate mental health services and

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>28</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59, January 1, 1992, 3-7.

institutional support for wounded soldiers (such as the rising number of soldiers returning from the wars with PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, and serious combat-related injuries).

The soldier's wounded body is thus embedded within what I call the military-medical complex that treats the soldier's body as a patient-body within this shifting assemblage of war and violence in time and space. The military-medical complex interacts with multiple medical, scientific, and University-related departments and research institutions to develop new technologies that will (ideally) enable medical professionals to rehabilitate the soldier's injured body for the continuation of war. As this dissertation project demonstrates, pharmaceutical industries, prosthetic industries, virtual therapy and gaming developers, and military-funded University programs are all interested in rehabilitating the productive returns of soldiers' trauma. They collaborate to develop and create new technologies and medical-scientific knowledges that treat the soldier's body as a patient-body within capitalist and militarized networks.

Moreover, it is important to examine how the *soldier patient-body* becomes an important site of value-formation within broader networks of discipline and machine assemblages operating in current societies of control. In his seminal essay "Postscript on Societies of Control," Gilles Deleuze demonstrates how societies of control are increasingly replacing the disciplinary societies that Michel Foucault analyzed.<sup>29</sup> In societies of control, the individual no longer passes from one disciplinary institution or space of enclosure to the next, such as from the school to the factory. Instead, specialized knowledges and "perpetual training" take on new forces that motivate the individual to actively partake in her own structures of domination. While institutional structures become increasingly fragile in more global circuits

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

of power, the “man of control” and rivalry in societies of control becomes an important element in keeping these institutions alive.<sup>30</sup> For instance, no longer does the army slogan go: “Join the army!” but rather “Be all that you can be!” and, more recently, “Be one!” Within this apparatus of control—when one is “never finished with anything”—the militarization of society and individual need not end after “war time” or when one’s military career is completed.<sup>31</sup>

Such an approach to the spatial and temporal politics of war and violence echoes, again, Paul Virilio’s approach to the shifting dynamics of what he terms “military space” in the industrial era. Both Deleuze and Virilio emphasize that war is both everywhere (spatial) and that it is perpetual (temporal); “war time” is hence located in people’s everyday movements in space and time. Paul Virilio describes “military space” as a military field of action wherein according to Virilio’s *Bunker Archeology* the armed forces reconfigure social space as a space of territorial, aerial, and seaborne control through the deployment of a “hierarchy of speeds,” various projectiles, and vehicles.<sup>32</sup> Military space is then conditioned by historical shifts in the locus of power from the low speeds and infrastructural milieu of the preindustrial era to the high-speed projectiles and vehicles of the industrial era.<sup>33</sup> Significantly, projectiles and vehicles in the industrial age function not merely as objects in or of military space but, rather, as particles in or of a militarized field of “energy” that destroys the space of the world.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archeology* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 17-26. Originally published in France in 1975.

<sup>33</sup> My discussion in the following paragraphs is a modified version of my published entry on this concept in Armitage, *The Virilio Dictionary*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 18.

Historically, the fortifications and the miniaturization of weapons technologies during the industrial epoch led to a reduction of obstacles and distances within military space. Meanwhile, aeronautics and the deterritorialization of the atmosphere through the production of the speeding fighter jet laden with bombs reduce the specificity and primacy of land forces. Moreover, the conquest of space through satellite and digital communication technologies has created a sense of an artificial space that has transformed how the military occupies time and space. For example, soldiers today rarely engage in face-to-face combat as a means of conquering the enemy, but instead, engage in combat at-a-distance as a way of defeating both the infinitely small spaces of nuclear physics and the never-ending large spaces of the cosmos.<sup>35</sup> Hence, the increased speed of weapons technologies throughout the industrial period led to a radical transformation of military space and the means of violence.<sup>36</sup>

#### Ontological Lessons: War is about Injuring Bodies

Given these configurations of warfare and warring bodies, in which ways do MIME NET assemblages invest the U.S. *soldier patient-body* as a “valuable” body to be “treated” and in

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<sup>35</sup> Virilio, *Bunker Archeology*, 18.

<sup>36</sup> Yet these historical revolutions in industrialization, military architecture, technoscience, and communication networks in the industrial era not only reconfigured the spatial dimensions of modern warfare but also the temporal dimensions of contemporary conflict. For while the decreased time of modern warfare demands the continuous innovation *and* production of new weapons technologies during “peacetime,” it also insists on the temporal presence of more “primitive” combat strategies and tactics. For instance, according to Virilio, the “Oriental military-rural apparatus” tends to increase the time of war, as evidenced by the military structures and methods of combat used by the Vietcong during the Vietnam War (1955-1975) (*Bunker Archeology*, 22). Thus, while the “time of war tends to disappear” with the “Occident military apparatus,” it is prolonged by the “Oriental military-rural-apparatus” because the latter seeks to extend the time of war into the everyday life of the masses (*Bunker Archeology*, 22). Consequently, military space is dually constituted by the spatial and temporal co-presence of these sometimes-competing military apparatuses, effectively blurring the supposed boundaries between the state of war and the state of peace.

which ways? How does the soldier's patient-body become a site of knowledge and power within the military-medical complex? How does the creation of new rehabilitation technologies contribute to the re-circuiting of the soldier's wounded body back into the U.S. military apparatus, multiplying and intensifying the "war of time" and temporality of traumatic affects for soldiers? Rather than approach soldiers' traumatic affects from the wars within narratives of loss, how might we approach soldier-trauma in terms of the productive returns of trauma within the military-medical complex? The U.S. military is indeed interested in soldier trauma and the physical health of soldiers, evident in its research projects for virtual therapeutics. Mining various Department of Defense [DoD] health care research projects for treating wounded soldiers and soldiers diagnosed with PTSD, we can begin to better situate how the U.S. military is invested in preventative technologies that will control soldier injuries and trauma than it is in attending to wounded soldiers (i.e., through mental health services or prolonged, quality treatment for serious war-related injuries) returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Moreover, it is important to note that the whole point of war is to injure bodies. It is not the case that previously "whole" bodies are unfortunately injured and "broken" during war. The U.S. military does not accidentally injure civilian bodies in Iraq and Afghanistan due to lack of federal funds for caring for wounded civilians or due to U.S. soldiers whom occasionally "go haywire" and kill innocent civilians. Instead, this dissertation demonstrates how processes of militarization, disciplinary techniques, and new technologies of warfare produce soldier-bodies that are gendered, sexualized, and racialized. These U.S. soldier-bodies are produced within the militarized logic that they will survive the shock and awe affects of postmodern war, and that they will kill and out-injure the enemy.

Which bodies can be rehabilitated within the military-medical complex operates in these terms as part of the historical and contemporary process of creating and sustaining an Armed Force than can out-injure the enemy. The healthcare needs and the militarization of people's lives—especially civilians' lives in Iraq and Afghanistan—become rendered invisible within dominant U.S. military-media formations of power. Part of the U.S. military strategy in the Middle East, therefore, is to produce the illusion that not only are civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan not dying; they are not suffering from any serious injuries. In each chapter of this dissertation then, I focus on how assembling the soldier-body and rehabilitating the soldier-body demands dehumanizing the civilian body and civilian wounded body in Iraq and Afghanistan as expendable bodies; as bodies not worthy of grieving.

These matrices of violence—of the dehumanization of the “enemy” body and the destruction of bodies in war—structures war as a social and political practice. As Elaine Scarry famously put it, the whole point of war and new weapons technologies is to injure and destroy bodies. Christine Sylvester also makes this clear in her recent book on the body and “war as experience” in Feminist International Relations theory.<sup>37</sup> The structure of war, and of injury, is defined by relationships of the interior and exterior of war and the sum of its parts. For example, the exterior or “outside” verbal justifications of going to war (i.e., ideologies or freedom) come to justify the interior aspects of war (i.e., casualties) “within” war.<sup>38</sup> In terms of the latter, there are two important aspects to the interiority of war for Scarry. First, the immediate activity of war is inuring and second, the immediate activity of war is a contest.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Christine Sylvester, *War as Experience: Contributions from International Relations and Feminist Analysis* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 63.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

“In participating in war,” she writes, “one participates not simply in an act of injuring, but in the activity of reciprocal injuring where the goal is to out-injure the opponent.”<sup>40</sup>

The creation of more resilient Armed Forces of citizen soldiers is also part of the contemporary process of sustaining soldier-bodies that can survive the shock and awe affects of postmodern war. If the U.S. military is thus waging a so-called virtuous war in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the deaths and injuries of everyday people in the region outweigh the deaths and injuries of American and British soldiers, then it is also worth noting in this sense that the U.S. is invested in rehabilitating the resilient injured bodies of war that it produces through new technologies and shifting landscapes of war.

Hence, part of “out-injuring” the enemy involves creating a military strategy whereby the U.S. soldier-body cannot only survive previous fatal injuries. Out-injuring the enemy also means that the rehabilitation of the U.S. soldier’s wounded body within the military-medical complex operates as a sort of contest—as a means by which the soldier’s wounded body can be reassembled and redeployed to the warfront. However, as each chapter of this dissertation demonstrates, there is a hierarchy of value surrounding which injuries, and which traumatic affects of the wars, become worthy of treating within the military-medical complex. Moreover, the shifting burden of caring for wounded soldiers falls upon military families, mostly women, who provide the unpaid care labor for caring for women and men returning from the wars. The development of new therapeutic technologies for treating wounded soldiers, such as suicide prevention programs and Virtual Iraq, places the burden of care on the individual soldier who is said to take responsibility for reaching out for help. As many soldiers however return from the wars with serious combat-related injuries, and mental health

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

conditions, women—as mothers, wives, and girlfriends of soldiers—are often the ones who are taking up the task of providing long-term emotional and physical support of caring for the war’s wounded.

### The Solider Patient–Body and the Biopolitical Management of Trauma

Approaching the *soldier patient-body* as a biopolitical assemblage in “virtuous war” and within the military-medical complex enables us to explore how virtual therapeutics such as Virtual Iraq function as highly productive sites for policing soldier-trauma. Virtual Iraq reassembles and intensifies the soldiers’ senses—sight, sound, smell, and touch—and sense of “reality” through digital simulation screens and prosthetic devices. As a remodeled version of Full Spectrum Warrior, Virtual Iraq uses computer simulation programs that place the patient in simulated combat scenes set in the cityspace of Iraq.

The program includes prosthetic devices such as guns, a helmet with video goggles, earphones, and a “scent-producing machine” used to associate the patient with familiar scents, such as Middle eastern foods, and sounds, such as babies crying, fire rounds, and explosives. The clinical controller is able to adjust various sensations and simulated elements as the therapy progresses [See Figure 3]. The soldiers’ bodily reactions are monitored during the treatment, including his blood pressure, respiration, heart rate, and stress level, in effect monitoring the body’s reactions to the stimuli that the controller activates. Summarizing research scientist Albert “Skip” Rizzo’s approach to constructing Virtual Iraq, Sue Halpern in her article from *The New Yorker* writes:

At the click of a mouse, the therapist can put the patient in the driver’s seat of the Humvee, in the passenger’s seat, or in the turret behind a machine gun, and the vehicle moves at a speed determined by the patient. Maybe the gunner in the turret is wearing night-vision goggles—the landscapes goes grainy and green. A sandstorm

could be raging (the driver can turn on the windshield wipers and beat it back); a dog could be barking; the inside of the vehicle could be rank. Rizzo's idea is that giving the therapist so many options—dusk, midday; with snipers, without snipers; driving fast, creeping along; the sound of a single mortar, the sound of multiple mortars; the sound of people yelling in English or in Arabic—increases the likelihood of evoking the patient's actual experience, while engaging the patient on so many sensory levels that the immersion in the environment is nearly absolute.<sup>41</sup>



Figure 3: A soldier's bodily sensations are monitored in Virtual Iraq. Source: Photo Credit: Sgt. Sara Wood, "Brian Frasure, a clinical prosthetist and world-class athlete, speaks to the audience on the last day of the Military Amputees Advances Skills Training workshop June 1 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center." U.S. Army website: <http://www.army.mil/media/9817>.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 5.

Collapsing distinctions between representation and matter, Virtual Iraq evokes soldiers' affective registers of sense-memory from the "past" into the present through the intensification of speed and image transmission. The idea here is that soldiers' unconscious memories are temporally crystallized in the present through a process that depends not upon speaking about memories but upon the body's ability to sustain sensation. Everyday triggers such as the sudden jolt of a car are "restored to insignificance" by associating memories of pain and trauma within their supposed spatial and temporal locations of experience in Iraq: "The trauma thus becomes a discrete event, not a constant, self-replicating, encompassing condition."<sup>42</sup> As painful memories are localized through the manipulation of bodily sensations, the therapist becomes both controller and witness to the patient's trauma through her selection and subtraction of particular sensory mechanisms, "giving the therapist," Halpern writes "so many options to evoke the patient's actual experience."<sup>43</sup>

By immersing soldiers within this virtual environment, Virtual Iraq as a "treatment" for soldier-trauma attempts to "cure" one of the main criteria for PTSD—avoidance criterion. The category of PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder has its genealogical roots in medical and psychiatric contexts. In chapter three, I provide a more detailed genealogical gloss on the creation of PTSD as a psychiatric category of knowledge and power. At this point, it is worth emphasizing that PTSD became a psychiatric category in the American political grammar of official disorders after the Vietnam War. In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) added PTSD to the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM 3).

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<sup>42</sup> Sue Halpern, "Virtual Iraq," *The New Yorker*, May 19, 2008, [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/05/19/080519fa\\_fact\\_halpern](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/05/19/080519fa_fact_halpern).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

The subjects of trauma who can be diagnosed with PTSD are wide ranging and are not limited to combat veterans. According to the APA's recent fifth edition of the DSM-5, the diagnostic criteria for PTSD include "a history of exposure to a traumatic event that meets specific stipulations and symptoms from each of four symptom clusters: intrusion, avoidance, negative alterations in cognitions and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity. Significantly, the sixth criterion concerns duration of symptoms; the seventh assesses functioning; and, the eighth criterion clarifies symptoms as not attributable to a substance or co-occurring medical condition."<sup>44</sup>

Stressor factors include persons exposed to "death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence."<sup>45</sup> Stressor factors can be directly or indirectly experienced, further broadening the potential for those who can claim to be traumatized. These direct and indirect experiences include 1) direct exposure; 2) witnessing, in person; 3) Indirectly, "by learning that a close relative or close friend was exposed to trauma. If the event involved actual or threatened death, it must have been violent or accidental"; 4) and "repeated or extreme indirect exposure to aversive details of the event(s), usually in the course of professional duties."<sup>46</sup> Intrusive symptoms include 1) Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive memories; 2) traumatic nightmares; 3) dissociative reactions, such as flashbacks; 4) "Intense or prolonged distress after exposure to traumatic reminders"; and 5) "marked physiologic reactivity after exposure to trauma-related stimuli."<sup>47</sup> Avoidance

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<sup>44</sup> See "DSM-5 Criteria for PTSD" for more information—including the remainder of the criteria of a PTSD diagnosis—at the Department of Veteran Affairs National Center for PTSD website. [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/dsm5\\_criteria\\_ptsd.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/dsm5_criteria_ptsd.asp)

<sup>45</sup> See [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/dsm5\\_criteria\\_ptsd.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/dsm5_criteria_ptsd.asp)

<sup>46</sup> [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/dsm5\\_criteria\\_ptsd.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/dsm5_criteria_ptsd.asp)

<sup>47</sup> I have directly quoted these descriptions from the website at:  
[http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/dsm5\\_criteria\\_ptsd.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/pages/dsm5_criteria_ptsd.asp)

criteria include “Persistent effortful avoidance of distressing trauma-related stimuli after the event,” such as when people, places, scents, objects, and sounds evoke for one the traumatic events of the past.

Virtual Iraq, as a therapeutic technology, thus attempts to cure this avoidance criterion by immersing the soldier-patient within a virtual environment that slowly intensifies and brings the soldier back to these scenes and images of trauma in a controlled and safe environment. For instance, driving in a Humvee is one of the most dangerous places to be as a U.S. soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since Improvised Explosive Device [IED] attacks and Rocket-propelled grenade [RPG] strikes often target moving vehicles, the space of the vehicle excites for many soldiers a constant sense of fear and anxiety. Moreover, many explosions, injuries, and deaths take place in a moving or stopped Humvee.

I explore these vehicular sites of trauma in more detail in the remainder of the chapters. For now, it is important to point out that Virtual Iraq aims to treat the soldier patient-body within this context of PTSD as a psychiatric category and of urban warfare. The idea here is that after multiple sessions with the psychiatrist in a controlled environment, soldiers will eventually become reprogrammed to feel like they are safe and eventually be able to return to “normal” everyday life (like getting into a car to go to work). The therapist is in this sense helping the soldiers and veterans to relive the traumatic experience they are trying to avoid remembering and dealing with (which is seen as a symptom of PTSD—as avoidance of the traumatic memory).

The notion that U.S. soldiers’ traumatic memories are located simply in sensory-motor reactions and triggers to affective stimuli from combat scenes in Iraq limits the field of possibilities for asking how soldiers understand the trauma they experience. As part of a

broader U.S. imperial effort to create a more technologically efficient, post-human cyborg soldier body, and in our example, a very specific soldier-sense memory of trauma and postmodern war, virtual therapeutic technologies aim at re-programming soldiers' memories through masculine game cultures of technological speed, violence, and simulation.<sup>48</sup> Many U.S. soldiers are recruited into the U.S. military apparatus through video games; they are trained through military video games in boot camp, such as through the video game America's Army; and the militarization of the warfront is embedded within screening technologies that depend on a virtual field of vision between the U.S. soldier and the enemy that resembles a video game.

The "Collateral Murder" video that Bradley Manning uploaded onto Wikileaks in 2010, which showed two Apache helicopter pilots who gunned down civilians and Reuters journalists in Baghdad, illustrates how warfare increasingly looks like one is playing a video

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<sup>48</sup> See Pasi Väliäho, "Affectivity, Biopolitics and the Virtual Reality of War," *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, no. 2, March 1, 2012, 63-83. Pasi Väliäho has written a keen analysis of the biopolitics of Virtual Iraq in his essay, "Affectivity, Biopolitics, and the Virtual Reality of War." Drawing on political theorists such as Julian Reid and Michel Dillon, Väliäho locates how virtual therapy programs like Virtual Iraq operate within liberal discourses of war that attempt to administer life and death (64-65). He deftly moves between various theories of psychiatry and neuropsychology within a genealogical context. His analysis draws on theories of trauma by Bessel van der Kolk, Ruth Leys, Edna Foa and Michel Kozak, Sigmund Freud, Catherine Malibou, Charles Darwin, and John Protevi and demonstrates how virtual therapeutic programs involve controlling the subject's emotions within evolutionary theories of psychology. The subject of biopolitical control in VR therapy needs to "...be considered in terms of the 'biohuman,' not the juridical or even (self-) sensing subject, but a being that is shaped and governed on the level of its biological properties ranging from behavioral patterns to emotional disposition" (73). Future versions of this chapter will attempt to take these dynamics of Virtual Therapy into account. My emphasis in this chapter focuses less on the neuro-scientific dimensions of how Virtual Iraq attempts to program and reprogram soldiers' brains. Instead, I focus on how the technologies of VR therapy de-politicize the militarization of everyday life; how they operate within gendered and sexualized formations of power; and, as illustrated in the following chapter, how some veterans attempt to embrace other ways of healing that politicize war, violence, and trauma through various forms of artwork.

game.<sup>49</sup> Viewers of the “Collateral Murder” video are only able to see the violent affects and effects of the air strikes vis-à-vis the field of perception or “vision machines” taken from the helicopter.<sup>50</sup> From the loci of perception of the pilots, the violent effect of firepower on the men and children below is remote and distanced. Remote-distance warfare, U.S. military strategies, and the shifting dynamics of the postmodern battlespace, distance many soldiers from seeing the violent effects of military technologies and weapon systems on so-called enemy combatant bodies and civilian bodies. By integrating the soldier’s body into various informational and technological communication and weapons systems, U.S. soldiers are trained to kill the enemy from a distance with heavy artillery, machine guns, drones, and rocket-propelled grenades without ever necessarily engaging in face-to-face combat.

War is increasingly presented as entertainment, or as “militainment.”<sup>51</sup> The militarization of everyday life involves the production of “virtual citizen-soldiers” whose daily lives are saturated by media and video game cultures of violence, hyper-masculinity, and the normalization of violence.<sup>52</sup> The soldier’s body is thus embedded within multiple circuits of gaming technologies and processes of militarization before deployment, during deployment, and upon returning home. As a “war of time” (recalling Virilio’s use of the phrase), virtual gaming and therapeutic technologies aim at manipulating the temporal dimensions of traumatic affect and warfare through somatic and temporal modulations of the bodily senses.

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<sup>49</sup> See the video at [www.collateralmurder.com/](http://www.collateralmurder.com/)

<sup>50</sup> See Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine* (Indiana University Press, 1994).

<sup>51</sup> I recruit this term from Roger Stahl, *Militainment, Inc.: War, Media, and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Within this political context of militarization, gaming culture, and violence, Virtual Iraq presupposes (not unintentionally) what the “actual experience” of soldier-trauma and landscape of war constitutes. It renders invisible and unspeakable U.S. soldiers’ memories of witnessing the death of innocent peoples or one’s dis-identification with the U.S. military and national imaginary of the U.S. soldier-hero. It also depoliticizes how many men and women service members experience sexual violence in the military. The creation of virtual game therapy programs like Virtual Iraq depoliticizes the silences produced within gendered and sexist hierarchical formations of power within the military. It does so by assuming that the “battle space” and scene of trauma takes place on the road space rather than in multiple spaces for many women and men service members. As the next chapter demonstrates, the “scene” of trauma and the “battlefront” can take place in boot camp training, on base, in latrines, and virtually anywhere and at anytime for victims of sexual assault.

Virtual Iraq also produces silences by policing how the lived experiences of war are remembered vis-à-vis the militarization of psychotherapy and the entertainment industry. In these terms, Virtual Iraq and game simulation programs used to treat soldier trauma reflect the biopolitical assemblage of soldiers’ bodies, and the senses, operating in societies of control. They point to how the “fitness” and health of the soldier’s body and sense-memory are managed and worked upon through various military-scientific-medical-media biopolitical networks of power to produce a more docile, resilient army of soldier-bodies that can be retrained, reassembled, and redeployed into combat for the continuation of war. For those alarmed by the militarization of new technologies for the production and continuation of U.S. military hegemony, Virtual Iraq signals a profound site of political concern over how soldier-bodies and dominant ideas surrounding trauma become militarized.

Virtual Iraq—as a military technology of power and social control—needs to be understood in terms of the U.S. military’s more systemic effort to more densely root itself across an infinite plane of institutional assemblages in contemporary war practices. The U.S. military’s attempts to further extend its forceful grip across a multitude of private and public institutions operate as important strategies of broader U.S. imperial efforts at home and abroad. By embedding itself within a complex web of institutions that organize peoples’ everyday social relations and popular imaginaries about militarism and war, the U.S. military (as a total institution) is able to more thoroughly militarize soldiers and citizen-subjects. The family, property, education, media & technology, finance, entertainment, (computer) information systems, science, psychiatry, medical communities, advertising, architecture, and urban development projects all operate as important institutional sites for more deeply militarizing the everyday life of citizen (and non-citizen) subjects. While these military institutional assemblages are by no means new, contemporary shifts in postmodern war assemblages have significantly altered how the U.S. military seeks to institutionally root itself—temporally, spatially and strategically—within these overlapping institutions of power and knowledge.

#### Postmodern War and the Soldier Patient–Body

What do I mean by the term “postmodern war” here, and by extension, “postmodern war assemblages?”<sup>53</sup> Earlier I described how Paul Virilio maps the terrains of warfare during the industrial or so-called “modern” era, but what constitutes a postmodern shift in warfare and attending understanding of the warrior-hero? First, the term “postmodern” can be understood within a multiplicity of political histories and intellectual debates within various academic (and non-academic) disciplines. I take heed to Chris Hables Gray’s definition of

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postmodernism here, because it highlights the important shifts from modern to postmodern warfare—a critical historical shift central to the concerns of this project. There are two reasons, according to Gray, why the term postmodern is applicable to describe contemporary wars, which he locates in post-1945 forms of warfare. First, there is a definitive difference between what military historians typically describe as modern forms of warfare, which they define as beginning in the 1500s and extending to the mid twentieth century, and post-1945 forms of warfare.<sup>54</sup> The development of new military technologies for example, shifts in world power structures, the advance of globalization and late-capitalist development, and the global circulation of media images are just several of the most obvious differences between modern and postmodern forms of warfare since WWII.<sup>55</sup>

Second, the term postmodern is also appropriate to describe contemporary wars for Gray, because today's wars are fought within the relationships of power described by most postmodern theorists, despite the differences that are ascribed to the term "postmodern" within the different disciplines of literature, art, economics, philosophy, and war. For instance, the information revolution and the development of technoscience significantly shifted the political terrains of modern to postmodern forms of war. Let us consider for a moment Michael J. Shapiro's analysis of these historical shifts from modern to postmodern war assemblages while highlighting the importance of information technologies and virtual media assemblages in postmodern war practices. In *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War*, Shapiro juxtaposes two male soldier-figure heroes—Norman Schwarzkopf and Audie Murphy—and their autobiographical accounts of war in order to illuminate several

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<sup>54</sup> Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern War: The New Politics of Conflict*, 1st ed. (The Guilford Press, 1998), 22.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

critical shifts from modern to postmodern war practices surrounding the wounded soldier-body.<sup>56</sup> Schwarzkopf's autobiographical accounts of the Gulf War reflect more postmodern accounts of war. His accounts all emphasize the proliferation of technologies separating soldiers from their "targets," illustrating how new military technologies distance soldiers from other warring bodies in postmodern (cityspace) battlefields.

Schwarzkopf's accounts also lay emphasis upon the spectacularization (and attending displacement) of the soldier's body as site of attraction in the global media, illustrating how postmodern forms of war are deeply embedded within "virtually produced" media displays that circulate globally. As Guy Debord might put it then, Schwarzkopf's accounts of the importance of the media present us with an understanding of how the soldier-figure hovers in the media within a "society of the spectacle" that organizes public fantasies by blurring the presumed boundaries between the "real" and "fictive" through the spectacularization of the image in postmodern media circuits.<sup>57</sup> In these terms, the circulation of the "real" soldier-figure demands the heterogeneity of commodification, war, and image culture in postmodern media circuits.

Audie Murphy's autobiographical accounts of World War II (as a celebrated war hero) offer however a different perspective of "warring soldier bodies" and public modes of identification with the war-hero. In contrast to Schwarzkopf's accounts, Murphy's descriptions of war all underline how U.S. soldiering was understood by both soldiers, and in part by the public, within more materialized understandings of the land, soldier-injuries, and through the discourses of work. As one who experienced the war front as a shifting landscape

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<sup>56</sup> Michael J Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

<sup>57</sup> This is a general reference to Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* and does not include a particular quote.

of propriety ownership (i.e., the transfer of real estate) and as a “penetrating ground” of bodies against bodies, or of wounded and suffering bodies, Murphy’s interpretation of war stands in stark contrast to Schwarzkopf’s description of a bloodless (at least for U.S. soldiers) war. Thus, Shapiro writes, Murphy’s depiction of war and soldiering:

[S]ummons the classical legitimating political economy discourses, which link proprietorship or control over turf with labor or expenditure of effort. His war story is expressed in large part as a story of men working, with the aid of their “tools,” in this case guns, to absorb more and more real estate. . . . In stark contrast to the virtual realities, the dematerialized landscapes and bodies actualized in the Persia Gulf War, Audie Murphy’s autobiography is a story of bodies meeting bodies and penetrating the ground as the war becomes a bloody movement across foreign real estate. Suffering and dying bodies permeate Murphy’s account. . . . the dying and wounded bodies provide palpable evidence of the work of manly bodies and their work implements.<sup>58</sup>

Contemporary practices of warfare and dominant media images of the U.S. “hero” are thus significantly different than they were during World War II. Public identifications with the image of the soldier-hero and wounded-warrior in post-9/11 worlds best reflect more postmodern war assemblages. Representations of the wounded-warrior and soldier figure in general circulate in similar global, digital circuits of knowledge in the Global War on Terror as they did during the first Gulf War that Schwarzkopf describes. In post-9/11 and postmodern war assemblages, new media assemblages afford us multiple, daily ways of publicly identifying with the image of the U.S. soldier-figure fighting in Iraq and

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<sup>58</sup> Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies*, 155.

Afghanistan. At the same time, these modes of public identification operate in tandem with broader social mechanisms of control, embedded in various institutional “truth practices” of U.S. militarism as a so-called clean war. As numerous scholarly works have attested, these new media assemblages function as infinitely productive networks for mobilizing popular images of the U.S. soldier-figure in the current Global War on Terror at the same time that these popular images of U.S. soldiers remain highly policed sites of social control.<sup>59</sup>

As the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan continues, moral, social, and state anxieties surrounding the ability to see the Global War on Terror through the eyes of U.S. soldier continue to function as processes of state management, security, and visual/literary consumption. In postmodern and post-9/11 worlds, television specials, documentary films and radio, all frame and reframe how the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are being fought through the personal testimonies and “witnessing acts” of the U.S. soldier. Moreover, news print and web blogs, Iraq War veterans memorials, the Department of Defense, embedded and non-embedded journalists, documentary films, and global media networks all attempt to capture the war from the U.S. soldiers’ subjective viewpoint: the sensations of the soldiers during combat, stories of leaving loved ones, soldiers’ families and wives on the homefront, and what the war is “really” like. Meanwhile, global techno-cultures imagine and infinitely recycle short reel videos (i.e., YouTube, CNN video forums, and on-sight war reporting) of U.S. soldiers deployed and returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, soldier

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<sup>59</sup> See Cynthia Weber, *Imagining America at War: Morality, Politics, and Film*, (New York: Routledge Press, 2005); Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics*, (London & New York: Routledge Press, 2008); and Kathy Ferguson & Phyllis Turnbull, *Oh, Say, Can You See? The Semiotics of the Military in Hawaii*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

memoirs and novels circulate in mass production in neoliberal markets that capitalize on viewing Iraq and Afghanistan vis-à-vis the subjective vision of the U.S. soldier.

Virtual digital computer technologies, global media assemblages, and political institutions thus all operate as important mechanisms of control in postmodern war assemblages. Let us return to our original site of concern—the militarization of new technologies for treating soldiers as patient–subjects—by asking how virtual game therapeutic technologies, such as Virtual Iraq, operate in these postmodern war assemblages. Specifically, what are the institutional apparatuses at work in the militarization of psychiatry, “trauma,” and new media that surround game simulation programs such as Virtual Iraq? Moreover, in which ways is the soldier patient-body understood within these relationships of power, especially in terms of biopolitical power? What is at stake in the militarization of professional psychiatry in postmodern war and, more specifically, post-9/11 worlds? In which ways are these configurations of power gendered? I suggest we turn to James Der Derian once again here as a helpful point of entry into these questions.

#### Institutional Networks: Game Culture & the Militarization of Everyday Life

First, the military’s convergence with industrial, media, and entertainment networks, for Der Derian, is constituted by more horizontal, rather than hierarchical, relationships of power.

We can understand this distribution of power across a more hierarchical, decentralized, open network-like plane of power by taking heed to postmodern theories of “fragmentation.”<sup>60</sup>

Second, MIME-NET formations of power circulate for Der Derian within broader U.S. military ideologies and fantasies of “virtuous war.”<sup>61</sup> So-called virtuous war assemblages are conditioned by new convergences between militarism and digital technologies; a blurring of

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<sup>60</sup> Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983), 169.

<sup>61</sup> Der Derian, *Virtuous War*.

distinctions between the real and the fictive toward the hyper-real; a re-assemblage of time-space continuums in military networks of power; and a military embedded in an “ethical” imperative for diminishing U.S. casualties through technological “progress” and information networks.<sup>62</sup>

Taken together, “virtuous war” thus imagines a sort of “dream-state” or illusion that “projects a mythos as well as an ethos” or a “kind of collective unconscious for an epoch’s great aspirations and greatest insecurities.”<sup>63</sup> It is these contemporary aspects of “virtuous war,” along with the drive for increased speed and temporalities in contemporary forms of warfare, that comprise the “fifth dimension” of U.S. military hegemony. Following Der Derian, the development of Virtual Iraq and other military game simulation modules signal a profound concern over the militarization of new media technologies and ideas of “virtuous war” military formations in post-9/11 worlds. Game simulation programs such as Virtual Iraq turn our attention to how the matrices between the entertainment industry, professional psychiatry, and popular game cultural media function as crucial distributions of power for policing the soldier patient-body in virtuous war and postmodern war assemblages.

Processes of militarizing media circuits of knowledge and understandings of the U.S. soldier patient–body are thoroughly gendered processes of power. By affirming ideas of military cyber citizen-soldiers, U.S. soldiers are rendered in the military-media apparatus in post-9/11 worlds as cool, manly, and technologically equipped individuals capable of targeting and abolishing the terrorist “other” in the Global War on Terror. Dominant media imaginaries and visual performances of the U.S. soldier as a masculine warrior hero become more complex when we start asking how U.S. soldiers juggle femininity and masculinity as

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., xvii.

“wounded warriors,” or as individuals with “PTSD” and other “disorders.” In Virtual Iraq for instance, the militarization of virtual gaming and virtual reality culture functions as a way to recode the act of talking to therapist from feminine displays of weakness to more masculine signs of what I term “virtual coolness”—to more dominant ideas of (white) masculinity that circulates, historically and politically, as a truth-sign of military honor and strength within U.S. culture.

Virtual coolness is an affective process whereby everyday people become postmodern cyber-citizens through the development and use of new high-tech weapons and virtual gaming technologies that are framed by the military-industrial network and military-medical community as cool, masculine, sexy, cutting edge, optimistic, able-bodied, and futuristic. Individuals, especially soldiers and mental health experts, who resist the development and use of new technologies and high-tech weaponry are often framed by medical-scientific-military specialists as outdated, backwards, feminine, and non-technologically equipped.

As clinical psychologist at the University of Southern California (USC) at the Institute for Creative Technologies and developer of Virtual Iraq Albert “Skip” Rizzo puts it, treating PTSD through game culture is (virtually) “cool” as compared to speaking to a therapist.<sup>64</sup> Rizzo, who had been working with “at risk” male youth as a clinical psychologist for several years before his work at USC, describes virtual therapy as a solution for motivating and rehabilitating young male patients who, since the 1990’s and advent of popular handheld games such as Game Boy, are now more attuned and responsive to game culture habits than talk therapy. Military game technologies also prompt us to ask how the U.S. military is increasingly turning to game culture and youth culture’s everyday media habits as somatic,

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<sup>64</sup> Halpern, “Virtual Iraq.”

cultural sites for social control. As enlistment rates in the U.S. military steadily decrease, and as the U.S. economy continues to spiral further downward in an economic recession, militarizing peoples' everyday lives through game and media culture becomes ever more imperative for normalizing the processes of militarization—which remain “hidden in plain sight”—and for recruiting citizens and non-citizens into the U.S. military.

### Soldier Trauma and The “Horror of Nothing to See”

We are living in a time of torn imagination. As information gives us excess by proliferating images, we are encouraged to believe in *nothing* of what we see any longer, and ultimately to no longer want to gaze at what is before our eyes.

—Georges Didi-Huberman<sup>65</sup>

Images of wounded and dead soldiers circulate as threatening images within military-media security apparatus. As Georges Didi-Huberman suggests in the above quote, “we” no longer want to see what is before “our” eyes within late-capitalist societies that involve the ceaseless consumption of information and images. As illustrated in Chapter 6, the photograph of Lance Cpl. Joshua Bernard, fatally wounded in Afghanistan, is one amongst many other images policed by the Department of Defense (DoD), dominant media, and the Bush and Obama Administration during the Global War on Terror. For instance, the photographs of the abuse of prisoners by U.S. soldiers at Abu Ghraib, images of civilians killed by “friendly fire” in Iraq and Afghanistan, soldiers' video footage and photographs of the wars, and embedded journalists' photographs of the war are all policed in the dominant media. The securitization of images in the Global War on Terror, and the virtualization of therapeutic video games,

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<sup>65</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, “Emotion Does Not Say ‘I’: Ten Fragments on Aesthetic Freedom,” in *Alfredo Jaar: Le Politique Des Images*, Musee Cantonal Des Beaux-Arts, Luusanne (Jrp/ringier ; Distribution Partners: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers], 2007), 58.

involves “screening” a so-called clean war to the American public and imagining a seamless re-circuiting of the soldier’s wounded body back into these militarized networks of power and knowledge.

Televised information and new media provide both a lack of images of wounded bodies and violence and an excess of images and information. For instance, while we do not see many images of wounded soldier and civilian bodies in the dominant media, we are bombarded with images of suffering children from famines and disease, mostly in the Global South, that instruct many Western viewers to feel compassion for children. Yet, these images of human suffering are endlessly circulated and recycled in the dominant media, devoid of any political and post/colonial context, resulting in what some have called “compassion fatigue.”<sup>66</sup> In light of this double constraint that involves both a lack and excess of information and organized violence, Georges Didi-Huberman asks: “What can be done to counter this double constraint, which would like to alienate us to the alternative of *seeing nothing at all* or *seeing only clichés*?”<sup>67</sup> Huberman suggests, following Gilles Deleuze’s emphasis on the “art of counterinformation,” that art can be an act of resistance to the informationalization and manipulation of television and media images. “A work resists if it can “dislodge” our vision;” he writes, “i.e., *involve* it as “what concerns us,” while at the same time correcting the actual thought, i.e., *explaining* it, unfolding it, making it explicit, or criticizing it by a concrete act.”<sup>68</sup> An act of resistance can therefore be understood not only in a work of art, but also by a concrete act that involves “us” reflecting and critically thinking

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<sup>66</sup> See Susan D Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War, and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>67</sup> Didi-Huberman, “Emotion Does Not Say ‘I’: Ten Fragments on Aesthetic Freedom,” 57. original emphasis.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

about the actualization of the *event* as it unfolds.<sup>69</sup> The work of art and act of resistance has nothing to do with communication, but provides instead “counterinformation” that compels us to become involved in remaking sense of our relationship to others and the political economy of images.

Some images of soldiers’ and civilians’ wounded bodies do “leak” from the dominant “frames of war”<sup>70</sup> in the media, while other images of human suffering solicit viewers’ charitable donations to various non-profit organizations through discourses of compassion. Yet, the viewing of a sanitized war and of a “virtuous war” is a vision of a war without any dead, injured, or suffering bodies. As Jacques Rancière puts it, despite the dominant media images of violence that inform everyday viewing habits for many peoples, such as video game habits and violent films, there are hardly enough images of the mass violence that is a part of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. For Rancière, it is not that there are “too many images” of violence in today’s media culture and viewing practices.<sup>71</sup> It is not that there are too many images of horror, such as in film and television. “We” are not becoming desensitized to violence or apathetic because of the proliferation of images of violence. Instead, there are not enough images of the war’s violent effects on bodies. What Rancière calls for is a “democratic” politics that does not police which images shall be distributed to the public and which images shall be taken away, without the possibility for the public’s reflection on the image. Instead of an equality of images of the wars, however, what we

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<sup>69</sup> An “event” is understood here in the Deleuzian sense of the term, which signals how the actualization of the virtual is the real. There is no distinction between what the “actual” and the “virtual” is within Deleuze’s understanding of event–spaces.

<sup>70</sup> Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, Reprint (Verso, 2010).

<sup>71</sup> Jacques Rancière, “Theater of Images,” in *Alfredo Jaar: Le Politique Des Images* (Jrp / ringier; Distribution Partners: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers], 2007), 71.

mainly see, says Rancière, are the faces and images of those “that ‘make’ the news.”<sup>72</sup> They are the images and words of the “official” and “authorized speakers” whose words and images have forceful effects in the world as “specialists” of debate and ceaseless explanation.

He writes:

Whatever people say, our news bulletins present us with very few images of the wars, violence, or distress that characterize the present on our planet; hardly any violent, mutilated, or suffering bodies. What we see mainly are the faces of those that “make” the news, the authorized speakers: presenters, editorial writers, politicians, and experts, specialists at explaining or debating matters. The “images” on the screen are their images: this means firstly their effigy, the visibility of the weight of their word, then the bits of the visible that their word validates as worthy of being drawn from the multitude of events in the world, and which in turn validate that word.<sup>73</sup>

Similar to the policing of images of soldier and civilian bodies in the First Gulf War, and throughout most of the Vietnam War, images of wounded and dead soldiers circulate as problematic images within the military’s attempt to screen a so-called clean war in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11. Moreover, while the Obama Administration has lifted the ban on photographs of soldiers’ caskets as they return from the wars, a ban initiated by the Bush Administration following the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the ban on images of wounded and killed U.S. soldiers remains firmly intact within securitization practices. In May 2007, as violence in Iraq intensified during an increasingly unpopular war, a new policy by the U.S. military banned embedded media from releasing any image depicting a dead soldier. The new policy also restricted embedded journalists and photographers from

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

releasing any image of a wounded soldier without the soldier's prior consent. The regulations require that "embedded photographers and reporters obtain "prior written consent" to include "[n]ames, video, identifiable written/oral descriptions or identifiable photographs" of wounded soldiers in their reports."<sup>74</sup> Clearly, this contractual agreement between the embedded reporter and soldier polices how journalists and war photographers publish photographs.

The policing of images of wounded soldier bodies in the media occurs not only on the warfront but also on the homefront as soldiers are flown to Walter Reed Medical Hospital. As journalist Mark Benjamin illustrates in his article "The Invisible Wounded," the military goes to great lengths to ensure that images of wounded soldiers flown into Andrews Air Force Base are rendered invisible to the media and the public. Wounded soldiers are consistently transported from Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany to the military base late in the night, before the soldiers are quickly transported into unidentified vans to (the formerly named) Walter Reed Medical Hospital, where the media is prohibited from photographing the soldiers.<sup>75</sup> The invisibility of these circuits of movement of the soldier's wounded body is remarkable. Many Americans do not realize that the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center is the largest American hospital outside the United States, and that it

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<sup>74</sup>Michael Schoepf, Silha Research Assistant, "New U.S. Military and Iraqi Policies Create Challenges for Journalists Working in War Zone," <http://www.silha.umn.edu/news/summer2007.php?entry=199053>.

<sup>75</sup> Mark Benjamin, "The Invisible Wounded," accessed November 18, 2013, [http://www.salon.com/2005/03/08/night\\_flights/](http://www.salon.com/2005/03/08/night_flights/).

provides hospitalization and medical treatment for more than 52,000 local American military personnel and their families.<sup>76</sup>

Luce Irigaray's political topography on the rejection of women's more "hidden" sexual organs—as the "*horror of nothing to see*"—within a male-dominated scopophilic economy provides a helpful point of entry for situating the gendered politics of visibility and invisibility of wounded bodies of war. After all, the screening of the wars and the objectification of soldiers' and civilians' wounded bodies in war are embedded within masculine MIMÉ NET assemblages of a so-called "virtuous war" in Iraq and Afghanistan. The screening of the wars within these masculine media networks involves the production of the male gaze as well as the medical gaze that seizes the body as an object of knowledge and power. As Irigaray once put it in her well-known text on the politics of sexual difference in *The Sex Which is Not One*, the body of Woman, or of becoming woman, is historically and presently bound by dominant scopophilic regimes of representation and systems of identification within patriarchal assemblages. As Irigaray puts it, though "woman" takes pleasure in touching rather than looking, she is nevertheless bound by a "scopic economy" of signification that privileges looking and that consigns her to the passive role as a "beautiful object of contemplation."<sup>77</sup>

In a key quote from the text, Irigaray describes the eroticization of woman's body as a process that is constituted by a "double movement" of exhibition and chastity.<sup>78</sup> Yet, while woman's outward appearance and her capacity to remain chaste dually constitute her

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<sup>76</sup> "Landstuhl Regional Medical Center - Kaiserslautern, Germany," *Goarmy.com*, accessed November 18, 2013, <http://www.goarmy.com/amedd/health-care/facilities/landstuhl-regional-medical-center.html>.

<sup>77</sup> Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Cornell University Press, 1985), 26.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

subjectivity and the “drives” of the other, it is woman’s sexual organs that are viewed, within andocentric frameworks of recognition, as the “horror of nothing to see.”<sup>79</sup> As the horror of nothing to see, women’s sexual organs thus represent a “defect in this systematics of representation and desire. A “hole” in its scopophilic lens. It is already evident in Greek statuary that this nothing-to-see has to be excluded and rejected from such a scene of representation. Women’s genitals are simply absent, masked, sewn back up inside their “crack.””<sup>80</sup> By showing how women’s sexual organs represent that which must be rejected within dominant scopophilic and male-dominated representational practices, Irigaray provides a helpful framework for better understanding the politics of “visibility” and “invisibility” of trauma and frames of war. As Chapter Four and Chapter Five demonstrate, Commanders and higher officials often call male soldiers “PTSD Pussies” when they challenge the image of a so-called clean war in the dominant media. Soldiers are also trained in boot camp to become male military subjects by degrading what it means to be a “woman.”

One soldier’s story that I follow in these two chapters is the story of Ethan McCord who was told by his Commander officer to “Get the sand out of your vagina, soldier!” when he sought mental health services following a traumatic air attack against civilian men and children. In each chapter, I demonstrate how the “horror of nothing to see” involves the feminization of soldier–trauma, the policing of affect and of soldiers’ processes of grieving within military-networks of power, the invisibility of the fatally wounded and injured bodies of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, the domestic terror on the homefront once soldiers return from multiple deployments, and the invisibility of the psychic and emotional battles of war for soldiers and their families when they return from the wars. The *horror of nothing to*

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 26.

*see* involves the feminization of soldier-bodies and the policing of images and acts of resistance within a militarized order of things. Images, soldiers and veterans' acts of resistance, and any disorderly bodies that disrupt a military order of things, must be biopolitically contained and "managed" within contemporary control societies.<sup>81</sup> Militarized game culture provides one example of how the military-medical community reproduces the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars by attempting to "manage" soldiers' traumatic experiences of war and storytelling practices, including their sense of grief, on the homefront and warfront.<sup>82</sup>

### Militarizing "Trauma" in Postmodern War and Post-9/11 Worlds

Militarizing game culture thus conditions the possibilities for the U.S. military, psychiatrists, research scientists, and the entertainment industry attempt to re-territorialize soldiers' everyday gaming habits (especially during deployment) and reassemble them as affective technologies for "managing" soldiers' sense memories of trauma upon returning from war. Importantly, these attempts to cure and "order" soldiers' "disorderly" bodies and trauma through militarized game technologies render invisible U.S. soldiers' concrete experiences and personal narratives of war within the public realm. By "virtually" privatizing U.S. soldiers' experiences of war and trauma through MIME NET therapeutic technologies, military game technologies used to "cure" war trauma signal biopolitical modes of control

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<sup>81</sup> See Giorgio Agamben, "From a State of Control to a Praxis of Destituent Power," February 4, 2014, <http://roarmag.org/2014/02/agamben-destituent-power-democracy/>. In this lecture, Agamben points out that control societies are all about "managing" disorder.

<sup>82</sup> Some might argue I am eliding women of color theorizations by using a concept by a French white feminist theorist to analyze the gendered and violent dimensions of the wounded body of war. However, it is not my intent to be faithful to Irigaray's original use of the phrase, "the horror of nothing to see," which Freud made, to examine the biopolitics of soldier-trauma. Instead, I take this concept and put it to use in new contexts and examine how each example problematizes the original use of the phrase. I examine the "horror of nothing to see" in the wars across differences of embodied experience that are situated across multiple gendered, sexual, racial, and colonial inequalities.

surrounding the U.S. soldier patient-body, soldier testimonies of war, and everyday acts of dissent by soldiers in post-9/11 worlds. It is in these terms that the biopolitical management of the soldier patient-body, and the virtualization of trauma through military game culture, de-politicize soldiers' political understandings of and resistance to U.S. militarism and war as the *horror of nothing to see*.

However, we need to situate the discursive formations surrounding the term “trauma” here as they circulate within the matrices between U.S. imaginaries, militarism, and the soldier patient-body. In particular, we need to attend to how the term “trauma” is recruited by various individuals and peoples within registers of representation. We might begin by saying that how individuals lay claim to traumatic experiences will be different depending on the contingencies of time, place, culture, nation, gender, and so forth. How individuals and the public come to make sense of trauma, such as understandings of national trauma and the Vietnam War, is historically and culturally contingent. However, all claims by individuals, peoples, and nations to traumatic origins and experience involve various procedures of representation that function as important truth-practices.

Since the event-space of 9/11 for instance, dominant, racist images of the Iraq “other,” “Haji,” or Bin Laden—as one whom the U.S. soldier must defend himself or herself against, and by extension the U.S. public—have all circulated as crucial representational figures bound to understandings of 9/11 as a national “traumatic” experience. A U.S. public victimized and traumatized by the “terrorist other,” in these terms, demands discursive formations surrounding dominant beliefs that society must be defended against the cultural difference of its inherent other through the Global War on Terror. At the same time, the term “trauma” is not dependent on a particular set of dominant signifying practices. In other

words, any individual may make claims to trauma whether or not other individuals or institutional structures agree on what constitutes a “traumatic” experience.<sup>83</sup> One soldier’s claim to traumatic experiences of war may not be viewed for instance by another soldier as necessarily traumatic. For instance, if one soldier was deployed for only three months as compared to the other soldier who was deployed for two years, then disagreement over understandings of what constitutes “traumatic experience” of soldiering and war will likely differ.

There is a vast literature surrounding the ways in which trauma emerges discursively, institutionally, culturally, and psychoanalytically around the U.S. soldier-figure as a patient. As Cathy Caruth has illustrated for instance, understandings of PTSD and soldiers’ traumatic experiences of war are contested sites of meaning making in national, scientific, and psychoanalytic imaginaries and practices. The term trauma circulates as a broad category of knowledge in the public sphere that is reconfigured within multiple relationships of power. The endless range of meanings surrounding what constitutes PTSD, for instance, renders multiple possibilities for reproducing this particular category of knowledge and its modes of classification within the psychiatric-military-medical community. Caruth writes:

This classification [of P.T.S.D.] and its attendant official acknowledgement of a pathology has provided a category of diagnosis so powerful that it has seemed to engulf everything around it: suddenly responses not only to combat and to natural catastrophes but also to rape, child abuse, and a number of other violent occurrences have been understood in terms of P.T.S.D., and diagnoses of some dissassociative disorders have also been switched to that of trauma. On the other hand, this powerful

new tool has provided anything but a solid explanation of disease: indeed, *the impact of trauma as a concept and a category*, if it has helped diagnosis, has done so only at the cost of a fundamental disruption in our received modes of understanding and of cure, and a challenge to our very comprehension of what constitutes pathology.<sup>84</sup>

Craig Willse and Greg Goldberg are helpful in this respect for asking how military simulation games used to treat soldier–trauma function in terms of dominant ideas of trauma on the one hand, and biopolitical practices surrounding the health of the U.S. soldier-body on the other. In their important essay “Losses and Returns: The Soldier in Trauma,” they argue that managing the health of the U.S. soldier and soldier-trauma functions as an important productive aspect of U.S. militarism and contemporary so-called virtuous war assemblages. Managing soldier trauma and U.S. soldier bodies through psychiatric practices and advances in technoscience is not simply a “symptom” of U.S. militarism’s effects on the soldier-body. Rather, managing soldier-trauma operates as a condition of possibility for the continuation and perpetual recreation of U.S. military imperialism, as well as for the perpetual production and recreation of more solutions or opportunities to be found in order to treat soldier-trauma as a “biopolitical illness.” Willse and Goldberg write:

Biopolitics...does not require a reduction of traumatic interference; the *management* of trauma is itself an end for biopolitics. Biopolitics therefore requires moving away from a model of trauma that constrains or fragments the body, and toward an understanding of trauma as a condition of possibility for technological development; away from an analysis that imagines critically wounded soldiers as the loss of a fighting force, and toward an analysis that assesses traumatized soldier-bodies as

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<sup>84</sup> See Caruth, Caruth, “Trauma and Experience,” *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, Eds. Neil Levi & Michael Rothberg (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 192.

productive—productive, that is, for capital, military, and technoscience interventions. The trauma of the Iraq war, a form of biopolitical illness, offers unexpected returns: opportunities of financialization of health, illness, and injury...as well as the development of new rehabilitative technologies, all of which offer the possibility to modify and extend governmental management and the administration of mutations of life.<sup>85</sup>

This dissertation focuses specifically on how the U.S. soldier patient-body circulates as a productive site of meaning making in postmodern war and post-9/11 worlds. By locating the soldier patient-body as a productive site of meaning making, I am signaling a Foucaultian approach to how bodies accrue value within different power-knowledge formations. Such a move demands that we turn not to the negative effects of power surrounding the U.S. soldier patient-body in postmodern war assemblages. Instead, it demands that we approach the effects of power surrounding the soldier patient-body as productive forces that “produce reality” and “rituals of truth” (such as the soldier patient-body as an object of knowledge within MIME NET assemblages). As Foucault puts it in *Discipline and Punishment*: “ We must cease one and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes,’ it ‘represses,’ it censors,’ it ‘abstracts,’ it ‘masks,’ it ‘conceals.’ In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.”<sup>86</sup> The individual is thus an

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<sup>85</sup> See Greg Goldberg & Craig Willse, “Losses and Returns: The Soldier in Trauma,” in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>86</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Random House Digital, Inc., 1995), 194.

effect of various truth-practices that are always, already contested notions of knowledge/power.

#### Methods: A Politics of Truth-Telling Practices

The psychiatric category of PTSD functions as a *biopolitical container narrative* or as a particular truth-telling practice about the U.S. soldier's traumatic affects from the wars. In contemporary militarized networks of power and institutions, PTSD, as a psychiatric category, has become a narrative practice that helps produce which lives qualify as lives worthy of rehabilitating and which lives are unqualified for grieving and rehabilitating. The discursive and institutional assemblage of PTSD as a psychiatric category is structured by multiple classification systems, psychiatric and medical knowledges of the body, genealogies of war and trauma, medical institutions, disability rating systems, bureaucratic paper trails, gendered ideologies and practices, colonial formations of power, and biopolitical techniques of discipline. Military Commanders, mental health experts, soldiers, and members of the military-medical complex are able to manipulate which soldier-bodies are diagnosed with PTSD and which bodies are not worthy of being diagnosed with this supposed "disorder" within disciplinary and control societies.

In addition to the multiple stigmas surrounding PTSD in the military, many soldiers are encouraged to contain their grief and traumatic experiences from the wars. I draw on Judith Butler's concept of "precarious life"<sup>87</sup> and "frames of war"<sup>88</sup> throughout the dissertation chapters to situate the "hierarchies of grief"<sup>89</sup> surrounding the soldier's wounded body in the wars. I also draw on Sandra Whitworth's emphasis on how PTSD is best understood as a

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<sup>87</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Reprint (Verso, 2006).

<sup>88</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*.

<sup>89</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*.

storytelling practice—listening to the stories of soldiers and veterans sheds light on how PTSD and the *horror of nothing to see* is experienced differently by soldiers and veterans across racial, classed, sexed, ethnic, national, and gendered differences and inequalities.<sup>90</sup> Hence, the remainder of the chapters examines how the biopolitical management of soldiers' trauma and wounded bodies are managed through the narrative practices of PTSD—which I later term Post Traumatic Stress Order (PTSO)—on multiple levels. These ordering effects and affects of PTSD as a biopolitical container narrative within the military-medical complex are forcefully felt amongst U.S. soldiers and others (i.e., family and civilians) across gendered, racialized, sexualized, and colonial formations of power and differences. The biopolitical management of soldiers' bodies within the military-medical complex involves the proliferation of “orderly” soldier-wounded bodies through various technologies and dominant media images. The biopolitical management of soldiers' “disorderly” wounded bodies is enacted within state security apparatuses and through the feminization of trauma, the policing of soldiers' sites of resistance to a military order of things, the development of new medical and psychiatric diagnoses and classification systems, the securitization of images of wounded soldier and civilian bodies, and more.

My methodological approach to examining the politics of the soldier's wounded body focuses on how the soldier's body and sense memory come to be objects of value and intelligibility through therapeutic technologies and discourses that seek to cure soldier trauma in order to reproduce U.S. soldiers for the continuation of war. Rather than approach disciplinary and control mechanisms surrounding the soldier-patient body in therapeutics as

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<sup>90</sup> See Sandra Whitworth's essay “Militarized Masculinity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” in Jane Parpart and Marysia Zalewski, *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations* (Zed Books, 2008).

uniform codes or as unproblematic modes of production, I approach these mechanisms of power (i.e., biomedicine, PTSD as a psychiatric category, new technologies surrounding the soldier patient-body, discursive formations of trauma as a biopolitical illness) as always fragile micro-enactments of power, as what Foucault calls particular “truth-practices” where *“certitude is only sure because of the support offered by unexplored ground. The most fragile instant has roots.”*<sup>91</sup> A politics of truth of the soldier patient-body operates by a mode of critique that questions how it is that soldier bodies are rendered as intelligible bodies in military-psychiatric truth practices.

This mode of critique is not simply a descriptive mode of analysis. Instead, critique operates as a political practice, one in which we come to question the attending truth-practices that surround us. In Foucault’s words, “Critique is the movement by which the subject gives itself the right to question truth on its effects of power and to question power on its discourses of truth...in a word, the politics of truth.”<sup>92</sup> Following Foucault, what is at stake in these multiple “truth-practices” surrounding the U.S. soldier patient-body? In which ways do the institutional networks of power that permeate the figure of the U.S. soldier as a patient actively “reproduce” U.S. soldiers for the continuation of war in post-9/11 worlds? In which ways do more dominant representations of the “wounded U.S. soldier” in global media culture(s) conflict with the institutional constraints and military mechanisms of power that surround the U.S. soldier? Are there sites of political resistance—of the demilitarization of game culture, for example—that we might look for when navigating these lines of flight? What possible sites of resistance are there for demilitarizing military-psychiatric knowledge

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<sup>91</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth (Semiotext)*, 2nd ed. (Semiotext(e), 2007), 144.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

practices surrounding soldier-bodies, and by extension, understandings of these truth-practices as they circulate in pop media culture and our everyday lives?

This dissertation turns to both a Foucaultian genealogy of the soldier's wounded body operating in disciplinary societies (within a U.S. context in particular) and to a more Deleuzian methodology that navigates how the soldier wounded-body circulates as an object of desire in societies of control. My genealogical approach to the soldier's wounded body examines the biopolitics of the soldier's wounded body on several theoretical levels. On the one hand, I draw on cultural texts, new articles, and academic scholarship that focuses on the historical shifts attending notions of war neurosis, hysteria, shell shock, the war-hero, the fallen soldier, disability, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. By doing so, I provide a historical and political context for soldiers' contemporary experiences of war trauma and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars. On the other hand, I focus more specifically on the feminization of soldier trauma from the Vietnam War to the present and map the ways in which today's soldiers become feminized by their Commanders and higher officials within a post-Vietnam War context. This historical juxtaposition enables me to contrast the feminization of the military and nation-state through America's defeat in Vietnam to the feminization of soldier-trauma and of the nation-state in a post-9/11 context. On another level, I provide a brief genealogy of how poets, soldiers, veterans, and novelists supply a poetic inflection on the soldier's wounded body and the affective dimensions of war trauma. I draw on poets such as Walt Whitman; novelists such as Annie Proulx; Vietnam veterans and novelists such as Tim O'Brien; and current Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who write poetry and create artwork. I examine how they all provide a poetic approach to the

relationships between war, trauma, and a politics of truth and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars.

This project also examines the subtle maneuverings of power illustrated by particular popular cultural texts. Drawing on popular cultural texts as specific sites of political inquiry for exploring the biopolitics of U.S. soldiering in past and current wars, the project traverses the soldier patient–body of virtuous war across a plane of consistency that is both macro-and micropolitically informed. I recruit Jacques Rancière’s concept of a politics of aesthetics to illustrate how dominant formations of power/knowledge are redistributed through everyday aesthetic acts and films.<sup>93</sup> I examine the aesthetic and political dimensions of films such as Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), Paul Haggis’s *In the Valley of Elah* (2006), Richard Robbins’s documentary *Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience* (2007), Danfung Dennis’s docudrama *Hell and Back Again* (2011), Bahman Ghobadi’s *Turtles Can Fly* (2004), and Sigfrido Ranucci and Maurizio’s short documentary *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre* (2005). In addition, I turn to soldier-memoirs and poems that inflect a more ethically and politically informed perspective on militarism’s ongoing effects in the realm of the social and the *horror of nothing to see* on the homefront and warfront.

Finally, this dissertation maps the multiple ways that soldiers are embedded within and resist dominant militarized networks of power that attempt to contain soldiers’ grief, trauma, bodily senses, and *sites of resistance* to the military. It navigates the myriad of ways that soldiers’ aesthetic practices of dissensus to military-psychiatric formations of power and the Global War on Terror operate in both the withering away of disciplinary societies and the emergence of societies of control. This dissertation suggests we can begin to remap more

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<sup>93</sup> Jacques Rancière and Gabriel Rockhill, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006).

ethically and politically attuned past-present-futures for the demilitarization of the soldier patient-body and virtuous war by taking soldiers, veterans, and artists aesthetic acts of resistance to militarization seriously.

The project examines how soldiers and veterans attempt to demilitarize trauma by reclaiming their bodies, their selves, from military and therapeutic discourses of knowledge and power. It explores a growing archive of poems, films, art works, veteran testimonies, and new media that address the traumatic affects of the wars for soldiers and civilians since the events of 9/11. This dissertation therefore contributes to a growing literature in feminist theories of gender and militarism, feminist science and technology studies, disability studies and trans-disciplinary fields of political thought that reframe the *horror of nothing to see* in order to imagine and actualize more demilitarized, egalitarian futures.

#### Outline of Dissertation Chapters

Chapter Two, “The Wound Dresser and Horror of Everything to See: A Poetic Sensibility of the Soldier’s Wounded Body,” explores the war/trauma relationship by focusing on the wounded soldier’s body in literature, film, and other aesthetic texts. It provides a genealogy of poetic/aesthetic ways of figuring the soldier’s wounded body, a method of analysis that serves as the trajectory that is to be politically inflected in this dissertation. This process of writing continues for the remainder of the chapters, weaving in and out of particular ways of “thinking the political” and of the soldier’s wounded body. I borrow my methods here from Michael J. Shapiro’s practice of writing and thinking the political in contemporary geopolitics which involves engaging aesthetic texts as a way to stage particular “scenes of dissensus” between different modes of epistemological and ontological thought-worlds.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Chapter Three, “Traumatic Affects and Cinematic Time: Assembling the Soldier-Body Machine Complex,” provides a brief genealogical gloss on the biopolitical management of the soldier-body within modern medical, military, and psychiatric knowledges. This chapter revisits Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) as a filmic example of how the soldier body–machine complex operates within both disciplinary and biopolitical formations of power. It examines the *horror of nothing to see* in boot camp training and how the dehumanization of soldier-bodies involves the simultaneous dehumanization of civilian bodies on the warfront.

Chapter Four, “PTSD Pussies! Framing and Reframing the Feminization of Trauma from the Vietnam War to The Global War on Terror,” examines how the feminization of trauma and the *horror of nothing to see* of the dehumanization of male soldiers in the current U.S.-led wars operate as a regulatory mechanism of power for disciplining soldiers’ bodies. It explores how many soldiers become framed as “women”—as giving into grief as “PTSD Pussies”—when they disrupt the normative frames for viewing the war’s violent effects on the homefront/warfront. It explores how grief, as a process of unraveling and becoming undone, often become feminized within not only the dominant media of the Global War on Terror but through the process of becoming “Strong, Army Strong.” The chapter examines what “feminizing” a soldier entails and how this process of feminizing soldier-bodies is historical, gendered, sexualized, and racialized as the *horror of nothing to see* in the dominant media.

Chapter Five, “Managing Disorder: The Multiple Affects of ‘Post-Traumatic Stress Order’ and Burdens of Proof,” continues to examine how phrases like “PTSD Pussies” function discursively within biopolitical formations of power. There is a widespread use of

this term and phrase by Commanders when soldiers speak out against their Commander's orders. The psychiatric category of PTSD operates as a "biopolitical container narrative" of identity and subject-formation that regulates and manages soldiers' bodies and traumatic claims to injury and pain as the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars. This chapter explores how the stigma surrounding the term in the military helps in part to produce "impossible subjects"—soldiers stuck between a rock and a hard space—who cannot seek mental health treatment for PTSD and who have difficulty finding alternative modes of healing from the traumatic affects of the wars.

Chapter Six, "Beyond the Front: A Micropolitics of Grief on the Homefront/Warfront in Paul Haggis's *In The Valley of Elah*," provides an alternative economy of meaning for approaching how U.S. soldiers (male soldiers in particular) grapple with the traumatic affects of war on the one hand and the militarization of grief and everyday life on the other. In juxtaposition to the dominant image of the wounded warrior hero that informs the semiotic strategy of the military's recent suicide prevention program, this chapter turns to Paul Haggis' film *In The Valley of Elah* (2006) as an important aesthetic text that renders visible the more micro- and macropolitics of grief surrounding the temporal presence of the soldier's wounded body. A micropolitical analysis is especially important for disrupting more macropolitical public policy and reform agendas that demand a greater variety of health services for wounded veterans, such as the Army's suicide prevention program, without politicizing the biopoliticization of wounded soldier bodies in military formations of power.

At the same time, my analysis of the film critiques Haggis's rendition of the true story of Richard Davis, a veteran of the Iraq War whom the film was based on. While Richard Davis experienced racism in the military as a young male born to a Philippina mother and Latino

father, Haggis chose to include an all-white cast and rendered invisible these racist dimensions to Davis's murder. My critique focuses on the whitewashing of Davis's story for a Hollywood production, despite the film's low visibility amongst the American public. I examine the relationship between the racism of U.S. militarism and broader racial and gendered imaginaries of the U.S. soldier-hero and wounded warrior as *the horror of nothing to see* in the dominant media and Hollywood.

Chapter 7, "Reframing the Horror of Nothing to See: Prosthetic Assemblages, War Machines & Disability," maps the political significance of contemporary prosthetic technologies and prosthetic research developed for wounded veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan since September 11, 2001. On the one hand, it turns to the international political economy of new technologies, such as prosthetic arms and legs, developed for U.S. soldiers returning from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The military-industrial complex increasingly turns to the advancement of new artificial limbs to encourage amputee soldiers to return to full-time active duty service. My analysis demonstrates how the development of new prosthetic technologies for the U.S. soldier injured-body also circulates as the "horror of everything to see" within MIME NET assemblages of power and knowledge. In addition, my analysis turns to Bahman Ghobadi's film *Turtles Can Fly* (2004), Danfung Dennis's film *Hell and Back Again* (2011), and Martha Rosler's recent photomontages of wounded soldiers and analyzes how each text disrupts dominant images of the heteronormative, white-male, able-bodied soldier equipped with high-tech prosthetic technologies. It examines how these aesthetic texts render visible the *horror of nothing to see* and the micropolitics of everyday life for Iraqi children living in militarized landscapes and for wounded soldiers who return to the homefront.

Chapter 8, “Coming Home: ‘Women’s Time’ and ‘Rural Time’ in Annie Proulx’s ‘Tits-Up In a Ditch,’” examines the political dimensions of trauma surrounding U.S. wounded soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan since the events of 9/11. Given that more U.S. soldiers survive the “shock and awe” effects of postmodern war assemblages and are returning to the homefront with serious injuries and traumatic combat-related experiences, it is increasingly important to identify how wounded soldiers and their families are embedded within, and politically challenge, military institutions of bureaucratic control, violence, and gendered inequalities.

I suggest that Annie Proulx’s short story “Tits-Up In a Ditch” is an exemplary text for exploring these macro- and micropolitical dimensions of trauma and the *horror of nothing to see* surrounding wounded soldiers since the event-space of 9/11. By taking heed to Michael J. Shapiro’s concepts of “national times” and “other times,” this chapter illustrates how Proulx’s short story maps the politics of “rural time,” “women’s time,” and “military time” that inform how many wounded soldiers experience the traumatic effects of the war in everyday life, both at home and abroad. By doing so, this chapter contributes to a broader political knowledge that is attentive to the temporal structures of power and gendered inequalities underpinning the U.S. wounded soldier as a subject of contemporary war trauma since the events of 9/11.

In Chapter 9, “Veteran Activism, Art, and Transnational Collaborations,” I take a more unconventional approach and provide a narrative of my experience attending a Combat Paper Workshop with veterans from current and previous wars. I provide a story of my experiences at the workshop that involved cutting apart old military uniforms. Once the uniforms are shredded, they are turned into paper, and veterans and civilians then write stories and poems

on the paper. The Combat Paper Project provides an alternative to healing from war trauma and provides a counter-public space where veterans and everyday people can talk about the effects of militarization through their own storytelling practices. In addition, I examine how artists, medical doctors, and veterans collaborate through various art projects to politicize the ongoing effects of the U.S.-led wars for civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan and the *horror of nothing to see* since the events of 9-11. I conclude with a brief outline of my research findings from this project, and reflect on the new directions I would like this research to take in future projects.

## Chapter 2

### **The Wound Dresser and Horror of Everything to See: A Poetic Sensibility of the Soldier's Wounded Body**

#### Introduction: The Wound Dresser

A work of art is worth more than a philosophical work; for what is enveloped in the sign is more profound than all the explicit significations. What does violence to us is richer than all the fruits of our goodwill or of our conscious work, and more important than thought is “what is food for thought.”

—Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*<sup>95</sup>

Democracies are noisy creatures...

—Davide Panagia<sup>96</sup>

In a letter to his mother Louisa on February 12, 1864, Walt Whitman describes the conditions of wounded soldiers' treatment at a Civil War hospital and the movement of wounded soldiers' bodies from the countryside to the capital. One amongst fifty-nine letters written to his family and friends from 1862 and 1864, now collectively titled “The Wound Dresser,” the letter reads:

I suppose you know that what we call hospital here in the field is nothing but a collection of tents on the bare ground for a floor rather hard accommodation for a sick man. They heat them there by digging a long trough in the ground under them, covering it over with old railroad iron and earth, and then building a fire at one end

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<sup>95</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, 1st ed. (Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2004), 30.

<sup>96</sup> Davide Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 52.

and letting it draw through and go out at the other, as both ends are open. This heats the ground through the middle of the hospital quite hot. I find some poor creatures crawling about pretty weak with diarrhea; there is a great deal of that; they keep them until they get very bad indeed, and then send them to Washington.<sup>97</sup>

Whitman's description of a hospital, as only a collection of tents and bare floor, is a telling depiction of the care available for the injured and dying during the Civil War. These disparate hospital conditions and the spectacle of suffering caused by the war came to inform the subject matter of Whitman's first formal collection of poems, *Drum-Taps*, published in 1865 (Whitman also wrote a "Sequel to Drum-Taps" from 1865-1866; both collections were re-worked and partly incorporated into the deathbed editions of *Leaves of Grass*). In keeping with Davide Panagia's emphasis on the political sensation of life as illustrated by the opening quote to this chapter, in his collection Whitman figures the wars' dead and injured as figures embedded within the particular sounds, smells, noises, and (deformed) faces of the hospital camps in ways that disrupt more dominant representation practices surrounding the wounded-soldier-body.<sup>98</sup> However, before turning to the ways in which Whitman assembles the wounded-soldier-body in his collection of *Drum-Taps* within an aesthetic-political sensibility, it is necessary to first situate Whitman's life-world as a war nurse and poet within a more historical context of the Civil War, often called the first modern war.

Like many civilians, mostly women, who came to provide services as "psychological nurses" during the war despite any formal medical or specialized training, Whitman came to

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<sup>97</sup> Available online at:

[http://www.familytales.org/dbDisplay.php?id=ltr\\_waw7183&person=waw](http://www.familytales.org/dbDisplay.php?id=ltr_waw7183&person=waw).

<sup>98</sup> For example, Whitman's enactment of the wounded-soldier in his poems disrupts the more symbolic image of the "cult of the fallen soldier" that I describe during my discussion of George Mosse's book, *Fallen Soldiers*.

be a Civil War nurse when his brother, George, was wounded in combat in 1862. Originally, Whitman believed his brother had died during the battle of Fredericksburg after viewing his brother's name in a *New York Herald* casualty list from the battle. He left Brooklyn to search for his brother in Fredericksburg to find George only slightly injured from a shell fragment that had punctured his cheek. Following his brother's recovery, Whitman decided to continue his work as a nurse instead of returning home with George. Whitman was resourceful and secured a part-time governmental job that allowed him the time and financial support to spend his time visiting military hospitals over the next few years. In particular, he visited many hospitals in Washington, D.C., making nearly six hundred visits to the capital's hospitals between 1862 and 1865.<sup>99</sup>

As a nurse, Whitman entered a significantly different medical corps than that of the current U.S. medical-military care system—now a massively bureaucratized political system with numerous financial, institutional, and technological divisions and sub-systems. Significantly, the medical corps lacked financial and institutional resources when the war began in 1861. Thomas Lawson, the chief of the U.S. Medical Corps in 1861, was over the age of eighty and was dying of cancer.<sup>100</sup> In addition to Lawson's poor oversight, the medical officers under Lawson's discipline were significantly underpaid and overworked, sometimes waiting up to ten years at frontier posts before granted a leave of absence. At the same time, Lawson had stripped the medical corps of necessary funding, providing only the bare minimum of supplies and inventory, such as medical tools, bandages, and medicine. Because

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<sup>99</sup> I gather this biographical data on Whitman's early life as a nurse from Robert Roper's biography of Walt Whitman in *Now the Drum of War: Walt Whitman and His Brothers in the Civil War* (New York: Walker & Co., 2008).

<sup>100</sup> See Harold Elk Straubing, *In Hospital and Camp: The Civil War through the Eyes of Its Doctors and Nurses* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1993), 2.

of these conditions, medical practitioners were less willing to work for the poorly funded medical corps when they could make a handsome salary as a private practitioner. In turn, a quarter of the U.S. Medical Corps' surgeons and assistant surgeons decided to go into private practice, or sought employment with the Confederate Army because of Lawson's management, leaving the Union Army with ninety-eight medical officers when the war began.<sup>101</sup>

While American narratives on the Civil War tend to represent the gravity of war conditions through heroic battle scenes and patriotic displays of soldierly honor, most soldiers suffered not from combat but from diseases and poor sanitation conditions in the camps.<sup>102</sup> Pneumonia, tuberculosis, scurvy, rheumatism, typhoid, scarlet fever, and yellow trailing fever for instance all widely afflicted soldiers during the war. Though the smallpox vaccination was created in 1798, immunization standards during the war were overlooked, as well as the presence of other diseases amongst enlisted recruits. In contrast to the hygienic obsession during the induction of U.S. soldiers into the army during the first and second World Wars, when draftees were required to undergo and pass rigorous medical tests and standards in order to create a more "healthy and fit" U.S. military, strict disciplinary medical procedures were less visible during the 1860's.

It is these less heroic, more banal experiences of witnessing the mass spread of disease amongst soldiers and civilians during the war—or the "*horror of everything to see*"—that

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<sup>101</sup> I take this discussion on the Medical Corps and Lawson's management again from *In Hospital and Camp*, by Harold Elk Straubing, 2.

<sup>102</sup> For instance, of the 360,222 Unions soldiers who died during the war, 110,000 soldiers died because of Confederate attacks while over 224,580 soldiers died because of various diseases (26,872 died in "accidents"). Meanwhile 94,000 Confederate men died during battle while 164,000 died of disease. Moreover, 470,000 soldiers from both the North and South were wounded during the war, and almost 600,000 soldiers suffered from some form of sickness, see Strauberg, 3.

informs Whitman's poetic inflections on the war's wounded and suffering. In his poems and letters, the wounded and dead come to figure as prominent tropes of national redemption that haunt the war-torn landscape that surrounds the poet. Whitman's poems on the war's dead and wounded constitute a particular coming together of the nation by memorializing the dead and suffering. At the same time, his poetic assemblages of the wartime experiences and of his experiences with wounded soldiers are rooted within his claim that these poetic works emerged from concrete, political forces. However, in order to appreciate the significance of how Whitman's poetic reflections on the wounded soldier circulate within a broader literary imaginary of the nation, it is important to first provide a brief gloss on Whitman's poetic style and political impetuses.

#### The Poetics of Whitman's Civil War & Sites of Memory

The Civil war was so significant an event in Whitman's life that he entertained the idea of writing a lengthy history of the war—"in a great volume or several volumes"—before compiling the first edition of *Leaves*. However, Whitman ultimately viewed "all efforts at either a full statement of the war in its origins or for writing its history" as "futile" at best.<sup>103</sup> For Whitman had, in his words, "become accustomed to think of the whole of the Secession War in its emotional, artistic and literary relations."<sup>104</sup> In other words, Whitman's Civil War is not the sum of its events, selected and arranged by the author in a chronological, sensible order. In contrast to historical narratives, which demand a chronological order to things and, most minimally, an overarching narrative structure of coherence, Whitman's war—as the sum of its emotional, artistic and literary relations—fosters an appreciation for more partial,

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<sup>103</sup> These are all Whitman's remarks, taken from his journals; see Lowenfels, *Walt Whitman's Civil War, Compiled & Edited from Unpublished Sources*, 12-13.

<sup>104</sup> See Whitman's journal entries in *Walt Whitman's Civil War*, 13.

limited accounts for framing what knowledge of the Civil War constitutes. His emphasis on the affective and aesthetic dimensions of the war open the wartime experience to ongoing modes of interpretation and aesthetic encounters, in effect resisting any sense of narrative closure for summarizing the war in time and place.

Pierre Nora's distinction between *history* and *memory*, and his elaboration on the political import for making such a distinction in his essay *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire* (1989), helps illuminate the political significance of Whitman's approach to the Civil War as a distinctly modern event space in literary experiment and genre. Briefly put, modernity, Nora reminds us, emerged as a historical rupture between a feudal past and democratic present-future. Importantly, as modern times replaced feudal times, a "fundamental historical sensibility" emerged as a dominant cultural code for valuing the present.<sup>105</sup> This historical sensibility demands the continual "acceleration of history" or continual feeling that something new has "always already begun."<sup>106</sup> In Nora's words, this acceleration in history inherent to modern understandings of time and space constitutes:

An increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good, a general perception that anything and everything may disappear—these indicate a rupture of equilibrium. The remnants of experience still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral, have been displaced under the pressure of a fundamentally historical sensibility. Self-consciousness emerges under the sign of that which has already happened, as the

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<sup>105</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History," *Representations*, Spring, no. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989), 7.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

fulfillment of something always already begun. We speak of so much memory because there is so little of it left.<sup>107</sup>

This historical sensibility of a vanishing present emerges, Nora continues, at a “turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn...”<sup>108</sup> For example, breaking with the past tears memory, so to speak, from a more feudal sensibility of time and space—*from the remnants of experience still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, [and] in the repetition of the ancestral*. In feudal societies, time revolved less, for instance, around specific dates than it did around the cyclical nature of the seasons. Moreover, ceremonial practices helped inform individual and societal knowledge of one’s relationship to time and place. In contrast to more archaic modes of cyclical time, modernity organizes the past, present, and future in relationship to capitalist values (i.e., industrial time) and nation-state frameworks of time and space (i.e., national history and museums).

However, this tearing away of memory from a feudal past is “...torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.”<sup>109</sup> Nora calls *these certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists* “sites of memory” (*lieux de memoire*). *Sites of memory* are those forms of memory embedded within modern desires to break with the past, and so they remain attached to history, in that they become woven into the linear narrative that history demands.<sup>110</sup> Memory, in these terms, is site-specific (i.e., embedded in the object world of things, places, and

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 8.

people) while history attempts to stitch together particular sites of memory into the narrative framework of, for instance, the history of the nation. Nora writes:

Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again....History...belongs to everyone and no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive of the relative.<sup>111</sup>

I want to take Nora's helpful distinctions between memory and history here, and the emergence of a historical sensibility with modernity, and tease through some of the ways in which the hospital camps become, for Whitman, sites of memory, or places where memory *takes root in the concrete; in spaces, gestures, images, and objects* of the hospital camps. Before turning to Whitman's writings on the hospital camps, it is helpful to extend Nora's emphasis on the emergence of a historical sensibility as a distinctly, modern phenomenon to Whitman's poetic sensibility of the war. After all, it is exactly this rupture between a feudal past and democratic present-future that Whitman describes as a pivotal rupture—or event space—for how he views his location within literary relations of power and knowledge in post-Civil War America.

Following Nora's political topography on the distinctions between memory and history with the emergence of modernity, Whitman understands his poetic style to be a rupture between the songs and ballads of the "Old World" of pre-industrial Europe and the emerging "modern world" of post-Civil War America. In *Leaves of Grass*, for example, Whitman

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 10.

reflects on the semantic and polemical aspects of his writing and describes his work as a song of a nation's moment in history; a "present" moment in time that is conditioned both by the "Old World" and the present-future of the "New World." Whitman describes this particular *poetic sound* of the "New World" and of "current American civilization" as a historically informed present;<sup>112</sup> as what Gilles Deleuze would call an event space of the past-present-future of literary experiment and genre. Specifically, this modern poetry for Whitman comprises a historical rupture between the feudal past and "democratic present." Reflecting on his life's work for instance, Whitman informs his readers that one of his tasks as a poet is to extend the lines between the ballads of man in feudal past into the personalities of the democratic present. By extending the poetic lines of feudal time into modern time, Whitman desired to stress an extension of the "primal" and "interior something in man" from the feudal ballad into the poetry of the present, enabling for more "grandeur individualities than ever" to emerge.<sup>113</sup>

We might say that Whitman wishes to turn to music and poetry as sites of memory for weaving together a poetics of the Civil War experience. But instead of attempting to stitch the ballads and poems from the feudal past into an overarching historical narrative of the Civil War, Whitman attaches these sites of memory through a musical poetics that embraces the ideal of a diversely unified American individuality. In *Leaves* for example, Whitman evokes the feudal past with its "rich fund of epics, plays, [and] ballads" that comprise the "sun of literature...for us of to-day" in juxtaposition to the age of a modern American

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<sup>112</sup> See Whitman in "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" in Walt Whitman, Karen Karbiener, and George Stade, *Leaves of Grass First and "Death-Bed" Editions: Additional Poems* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2004), 688.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 693.

culture—to the “best parts of current characters in nations, social groups, or any man’s or woman’s individuality, Old World or New.”<sup>114</sup>

Grammatically, Whitman moves back and forth between different present, past and future tenses in order to mobilize these multiple times and interpolate the reader into an unstable, but emerging poetic consciousness of “America” and its attending ideas and practices constituting democracy. In *Leaves* for instance, Whitman asks his readers to contemplate and affirm what might constitute a distinct modern poetry that is “consistent” for “these United States” as they “are and are to be,” arousing desire amongst his readers to create a new song for a “New Word” democracy.<sup>115</sup> Whitman’s temporal corpus therefore reflects not only “Civil War Time” and its attending geopolitical imaginaries and concrete forces, but also the time(s) of modernity. These notions of “modern time” coextend with Enlightenment thought, which Whitman refers to as the “splendid day-rise of science and resuscitation of history,”<sup>116</sup> and its attending theories of reason, liberty, freedom, equality, law, and democratic governance, amongst other things.

Whitman’s evocation of modern time and his affirmations of a democratic present are therefore embedded within discourses of scientific progress and Enlightenment theories of knowledge. Michael J. Shapiro’s elucidation on the limits and political implications of Whitman’s Kantian embrace is instructive here. As Shapiro illustrates, Whitman’s poesies demands that the writer/poet/subject undergoes a Kantian “universalizing expansion” of perception in order to attain a more acute understanding of lived experience.<sup>117</sup> In a Kantian

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 688.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 688.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 688.

<sup>117</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, unpublished version of “Walt Whitman and the Ethopoetics of New York,” 6.

sensibility, Whitman's sense of an enlarged self follows his expanding apperception of the self in relation to the soldiers' and battlescapes surrounding him. Like Kant, Whitman thus articulates an expanding subject's consciousness that involves a continual process of reflection founded in Enlightenment understandings of reason, an enlargement of the self through the "agreement of the faculties [which] defines...*common sense*."<sup>118</sup>

Whitman's poetry is therefore an enactment of a common sense of the people, reflected through Whitman's modern poetics of an emerging post-war nation, united temporarily under the constant, in his words, "leveling tendencies of Democracy," which are those tendencies that flatten-out the multiplicities of "American individuality."<sup>119</sup> In Whitman's words, his poetry attempts to "assist" rather than suppress American individuality by defiantly resisting "ostensible literary and other conventions" and instead chanting the "great pride of man in himself"—a pride that is "indispensable to an American."<sup>120</sup> We might approach *Leaves of Grass* therefore as a poetic text that entices readers to contemplate and affirm what constitutes a distinctly American culture and emergence of modern time. In fact, Whitman describes his individual voice as an "aesthetic Personality" that he desired to concretize through a revolution in poetry and literature; a Personality that can be exploited through its identification "with place and date, in a far more candid and comprehensive sense than any hitherto poem or book."<sup>121</sup>

This candid and comprehensive "aesthetic personality" is enacted and expanded through Whitman's poetic cadence, imagery, and word play, or by playing with *who* becomes a

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<sup>118</sup> See Gilles Deleuze in "The Idea of Genesis in Kant's Esthetics," *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974* (Los Angeles, CA; London: Semiotext(e), 2004), 60.

<sup>119</sup> Whitman, Karbiener, and Stade, *Leaves of Grass First and "Death-Bed" Editions*, 692.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 693.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 683.

subject of grammar in each poem. By switching between different speaking subjects in each poem—from *I* to *You* to *We* to *Theirs* to *Us*—Whitman creates a cacophony of subject-positions throughout his poetic corpus. Each distinct subject in Whitman’s prose however is only an individual subject to the extent that she or he is linked in one way or another to the nation, imagined or real. In “By Blue Ontario’s Shore,” for example, the grammatical injunctions between *you* and *I* and *me* are embedded in “this America” that is always “past, present, future...you and me.”<sup>122</sup>

Whitman’s poetry is therefore constructed and remembered in American literary history as a democratic poetry, or “poetry of the people,” enacted through the musical tones of Whitman’s distinctly American voice. With this political topography of Whitman’s poetic corpus, as a musical poetics mobilizing multiple past-present-futures and loci of enunciations, we can now better appreciate how Whitman situates a growing ethos of common sense around the wounded soldier in *Drum-Taps* and *Leaves of Grass*. While my discussion here is limited to only one of Whitman’s poems due to the limitations of time and space in this chapter, Whitman’s literary figuration of the wounded soldier mobilizes an array of sounds, smells, tactile images and, recalling Pierre Nora’s discussion, other *sites of memory* within American Civil War times surrounding the wounded soldier figure. For example, in a selection from his poem “A March in The Ranks Hard-Prest and the Road Unknown,” Whitman emphasizes odor, amongst other things, as a pervasive sign of the hospital camps. By doing so, Whitman underlines the unrepresentability of the wounded-soldier figure and of trauma. Recalling David Panagia’s emphasis on sensation, Whitman renders visible “The limits posed by sensation’s unrepresentability” which “interrupt our

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 498.

conventional ways of perceiving the world and giving it value.”<sup>123</sup> Throughout Whitman’s poems on hospital life, odor and the scent of blood function as significant signs that surround the disfigurement of soldiers’ faces, bodies, and surgical objects. He writes:

Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in obscurity, some of them dead  
Surgeons operating, attending holding lights, the smell of ether, the odor of blood  
The crowd, O the crowd of bloody forms, the yard outside also fill’d

The poem continues:

Some on the bare ground, some on the planks or stretchers, some in the death-spasm  
sweating  
An occasional scream or cry, the doctor’s shouted orders or calls  
The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint of the torches  
These I resume as I chant, I see again the forms, I smell the odor  
They hear outside the orders given, *Fall in, my men, fall in...*<sup>124</sup>

#### Poetics of the Wounded and Fallen Soldier Body: The First World Wars

These more poetic (or non-historical) accounts of hospital life, war, and wounded soldiers through Whitman’s poetic corpus are both similar to, and depart from, the cult of the fallen soldier that undoubtedly informed Whitman’s writings on wounded soldiers and the Civil War. Whitman’s poetic reflections, as this chapter demonstrates, disrupt more dominant representational practices surrounding the image of the fallen soldiers in important ways.

Following these line of thought, I turn now to the ways in which the image of the

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<sup>123</sup> Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation*, 2.

<sup>124</sup> Whitman, Karbiener, and Stade, *Leaves of Grass First and “Death-Bed” Editions*, 455, original emphasis.

contemporary U.S. wounded soldier in the media is historically informed by the cult of the fallen soldier. As exemplified by contemporary images of the wounded soldier-hero or the “wounded warrior” within U.S. military discourses, the image of the fallen hero significantly informs the poetic image-space surrounding U.S. soldiers before, during, and after their deployments in contemporary war machines. Moreover, by providing a brief genealogy on the cult of the fallen soldier, we can better appreciate how writers and poets contemporary to specific wars, such as Walt Whitman and Annie Proulx, further problematize these historical, symbolic practices of representation surrounding war, death, and suffering.

Soldiers’ identities shifted over the course of the past few centuries, including the nationalization of the fallen soldier figure throughout Europe that emerged before and during Walt Whitman’s writings on the Civil War. As George Mosse illustrates in *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, the revolutionary wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars (1803-1815), effected new perceptions of the soldier in society.<sup>125</sup> No longer conscripted as former vagabonds, prisoners, or as individuals from the margins of society, the volunteers for the revolutionary wars were “...one’s sons, brothers, or neighbors—respectable citizens of the local or national community” and were considered men of a “new status” in society.<sup>126</sup>

This shift in the soldiers’ social position conditioned the possibilities for a nationalization of the common soldier and death throughout Europe, emerging in what Mosse calls the “cult of the fallen soldier.”<sup>127</sup> These myths surrounding the cult of the fallen were mobilized through a variety of popular cultural expressions, such as poetry, music, dance,

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<sup>125</sup> George L Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

stories, and monuments. The creation of mass cemeteries, and their architectural assemblage coded by nationalist symbols and romantic iconographies, also helped represent war as a mythical experience and cemeteries as “national shrines of worship.”<sup>128</sup>

These new cemeteries depoliticized the reality of death and destruction caused by the wars by elevating the status of the fallen soldier to Enlightenment ideals of a peaceful death and nature as an ideal image of man. “The Enlightenment ideal of death as tranquil sleep remained influential,” writes Mosse, “as did a new attitude toward nature as exemplified by the inscription ‘nature and liberty’ on Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s tomb.”<sup>129</sup> For example, the grand shrines and cemeteries constructed during the 1800’s, such as the Père Lachaise in Paris built in 1804,<sup>130</sup> which subsequently became a model for all future cemeteries built in Europe, created elaborate garden pathways designed to ceremoniously enjoin man to the beauty of nature instead of the violent thoughts of war and suffering. In contrast to the elaborate garden cemeteries of Paris, the creation of park cemeteries in the United States, like the one illustrated in the video *Beyond the Front*, as described in another chapter of this dissertation, became morally inscribed spaces that discursively tied the landscape to American patriotism. Bare and sparsely adorned, with wood grave markers for instance instead of elaborate headstones, the park cemeteries were built in rural areas, away from the congestion of the cities, which many people considered morally corrupt in contrast to the rural landscape. American park cemeteries “...would...elevate and strengthen patriotism, for the charm of the landscape where one’s loved ones were buried and its appeal to the

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 40-45.

emotions would lead one to love the land itself.”<sup>131</sup> The sites of memory of the wounded soldier bodies are thus materialized through the symbolic and physical landscape of the park cemeteries.

And yet despite these cemetery movements, the majority of soldiers and civilians who died during the nineteenth century revolutionary wars and the First World War were not buried in specially designated cemeteries nor with special adornments, “if they were buried at all.”<sup>132</sup> But more importantly for the purposes of our discussion, the Myth of the War Experience and the cult of the fallen soldier depoliticized the violent effects and *horror of nothing to see* of war through these representational practices, embedded within a nexus of patriotic symbols and nationalisms, especially during the First World War. “The First World War,” Mosse writes, “was to give the Myth of the War Experience its fullest expression and appeal in its attempt to direct human memory from the horrors to the meaningfulness and glory of war... Here the myth’s task of transcending death in war was of a new and pressing urgency.”<sup>133</sup> These representational practices surrounding the fallen soldier during the first world wars and the myth of the war experience become particularly useful ways for exploring contemporary myths surrounding more postmodern wars, such as the Global War On Terror.

#### A Poetics of the Wounded Soldier-Body

In love as much as in nature or art, it is not pleasure but truth that matters.

—Gilles Deleuze<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>134</sup> See Deleuze on Proust's search for truth in *Proust and Signs*, 15.

Politics happens when a relation of attachment or detachment is formed between heterological elements: it is a par-taking in the activities of representation that renders perceptible what had previously been insensible.

—Davide Panagia<sup>135</sup>

The myth of the war experience and the “The Enlightenment ideal of death as tranquil sleep” surrounding the fallen or wounded soldier has shifted, of course, within contemporary war machines. As illustrated in Chapter One, the myth of the war experience in contemporary war machines circulates within “virtuous war” assemblages and, following Baudrillard, images of “clean wars.” One reoccurring political phenomenon in almost every chapter of this dissertation focuses on how contemporary U.S. war machines render invisible images of U.S. wounded soldiers in the media as the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars. For example, images of “fallen soldiers” in contemporary U.S. military machines circulate within MIMENET assemblages, such as *Beyond the Front*, which provide very particular cinematic narratives on how soldiers are able to facilitate trauma and grief (See Chapter Six). The ballads, poems, and literature surrounding war and wounded soldiers that Mosse describes, and the poetic assemblages of the wounded soldier and of the concrete effects of war on bodies, increasingly circulate within the informationalization of everyday life, which has rendered war, as Kathy Ferguson puts it, rather “unremarkable” in American culture(s).<sup>136</sup> In a related vein, Walter Benjamin describes in “The Storyteller” how the decline of storytelling

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<sup>135</sup> Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation*, 3.

<sup>136</sup> See Kathy Ferguson, APSA (2008) presentation on “Net War—Feminist Contributions.”

through the rise of the novel, new media, and capitalism has effected a “new form of communication [which] is information.”<sup>137</sup> He writes:

Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in newsworthy news. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information. Actually, it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it....the most marvelous things are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves amplitude that information lacks.<sup>138</sup>

This project turns to cultural texts, such as film and short stories, and explores how these texts offer a different way of approaching the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars. By turning to short stories, poems, and films, we are able to map counter-narratives to the informationalization of war and of the wounded soldier-body insofar as literature and the arts locate individual experience within a particular time and place and “openly or covertly, something useful,” Benjamin writes.<sup>139</sup> “This usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim.”<sup>140</sup> Aesthetic texts, such as Annie Proulx’s short story “Tits-Up In a Ditch,” which I explore in detail in Chapter Eight, disrupt what Davide Panagia calls “narratocracy,” or the more dominant narrative

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<sup>137</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, First Edition (Schocken, 1969), 88.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

structures for “making sense” of political life. Panagia illustrates how new media assemblages or, referring to Less Manovich, “cultural interfaces”<sup>141</sup> in contemporary politics, demand that we think beyond the limits of representations and of the subject as a “literary animal.”<sup>142</sup> As Panagia emphasizes, “though the citizen subject many have been a reading subject, the contemporary citizen subject is a viewing subject.”<sup>143</sup> In a similar, albeit slightly different vein, the cultural texts that I turn to in this project—including literary texts such as poetry, the short story, and cinema—also disrupt these modes of narratocracy in subtle though important ways. By exploring the poetic (non-narratocratic) dimensions of particular films and literature surrounding the figure of the wounded-soldier and the *horror of nothing to see* in Global War on Terror, this project redistributes the “distribution of the sensible” surrounding the wounded soldier as a subject of contemporary war trauma in post-9/11 worlds.<sup>144</sup>

The following section of this chapter examines how some veterans of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan enact a competing “truth-practice” of the wars through poetry, art, and storytelling practices. It turns to veterans’ storytelling practices that disrupt the “biopolitical container narrative” of PTSD as a disorder and of “war” as a battleground that happens “over there” in Iraq and Afghanistan. While Americans were able to view the mass suffering of militarism’s effects and the *horror of everything to see* during Whitman’s time, all of America’s “official” wars have been fought abroad as the *horror of nothing to see* since the Civil War. As the previous chapter demonstrated, the U.S. soldier-body and injured soldier-body circulates through disciplinary techniques of control that assemble the soldier’s body as

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<sup>141</sup> Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation*, 153.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>144</sup> Rancière and Rockhill, *The Politics of Aesthetics*.

an assemblage of capacities within postmodern war machines. Thus, it is important to turn to U.S. soldiers' and veterans' strategies and tactics for reoccupying the spaces within these biopolitical forces of power. Cultural texts, such as literature and cinema, shed light on the political complexities and ambiguities between U.S. military-psychiatric narratives on trauma and grief on the one hand, and the more partial, embodied experiences of U.S. soldiers and war trauma on the other.

The next section of this chapter also introduces another key concept—“*Post-Traumatic Stress Order*”—to further set-up the conceptual framework for the remainder of my chapters. The concept is inspired by a conversation with Kathy Ferguson, when she suggested using this term to highlight the ordering effects of trauma and militarization and the de-politicizing effects of terms like PTSD; by conversations with Sam Opondo, when he suggested interrogating the language of the linear narratives of trauma and time signaled by the term “post” in PTSD; and by Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) member and poet Matt Howard, whose poem below inspires much of my thinking on the language of PTSD as a so-called disorder.

Truth-Practices & De-militarizing PTSD—“Post-Traumatic Stress Order” (PTSO)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

How is this a *disorder*?

What part of being emotionally and spiritually affected by gross violence is *disorder*?

How about a *going to war and coming home with a clear conscience* disorder?

I think that would be far more appropriate.

—Matt Howard, *Warrior Writers: Re-making Sense*<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Lovella Calica and Iraq Veterans Against the War, *Warrior Writers: Re-Making Sense: A Collection of Artwork* (Philadelphia: Iraq Veterans Against the War, 2008), 163.

There are multiple ways that veterans from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan resist the militarization of trauma and the de-politicization of violence in the U.S.-led Global War on Terror. While the military-industrial complex attempts to re-circuit wounded soldiers back into the military apparatus—through virtual reality (VR) “therapy” and pharmaceutical drugs for instance—there are other ways of healing from the emotional battles of war. One technique by which some veterans seek alternative forms of healing is through writing and poetry. There is a long tradition of veteran writing workshops as spaces for healing from the traumatic experiences of war and for telling another “truth” of war and violence. Novelists such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Tim O’Brien have organized writing workshops with veterans since the Vietnam War and have helped veterans publish their poems and stories through a variety of creative outlets and formats.

Recently, veterans from the current Iraq and Afghanistan wars have begun to share their experiences with each other and with the public through a project called *Warrior Writers*. The *Warrior Writers* project is a national non-profit organization that focuses on affirming veterans’ creative acts of expression through writing and art. Lovella Calica, a writer, is the founder, director, and catalyst of the *Warrior Writers* project.<sup>146</sup> Her creative vision for the project and her collaboration with veterans across the country has led to the development of three books that include veterans’ art work, poems, and short stories. They include *Warrior*

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<sup>146</sup> See the *Warrior Writers* website at: <http://www.warriorwriters.org/Artists/Lovella.html>.

*Writers: Move, Shoot, and Communicate* (2007),<sup>147</sup> *Warrior Writers: Re-Making Sense* (2008),<sup>148</sup> and *Warrior Writers: After Action Review* (2011).<sup>149</sup>

The practice of writing as a mode of healing from the traumatic experiences of war can be viewed as what Michel Foucault calls a “technique of the self,” or a practice that constitutes an ethical task of reflecting on one’s everyday life and actions. A technology of the self is rooted in Greek principles of “taking care of oneself” as an ethical practice of being in the world.<sup>150</sup> As Foucault puts it, a technology of the self “permit[s] individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, a technology of the self involves a process of reflection that is enacted through various practices and the creation of new habits, such as writing letters to friends, taking notes, and writing treatises.<sup>152</sup>

It is within this context of Greek thought that “taking care of oneself became linked to a constant writing activity. The self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity.”<sup>153</sup> Rather than containing grief—or reprogramming soldiers’ senses of the traumatic experiences of war through virtual simulation machines—writing about one’s

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<sup>147</sup> *Warrior Writers: Move, Shoot and Communicate - A Collection of Creative Writing by Members of the Iraq Veterans Against the War*, Edited by Lovella Calica, by Iraq Veterans Against the War and Warrior Writers, second edition (Burlington: Warrior Writers, 2007).

<sup>148</sup> Calica and Iraq Veterans Against the War, *Warrior Writers*.

<sup>149</sup> Lovella Calica and Warrior Writers, *After Action Review: A Collection of Writing and Artwork by Veterans of the Global War on Terror* (Philadelphia: Warrior Writers, 2011).

<sup>150</sup> Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, Edited by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 19.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

experiences as a soldier on the warfront and the homefront enables soldiers and veterans to remember and acknowledge the pain and suffering of their own experience and of civilians in the current wars. As Audre Lorde exemplified through her poetry and lifeworld, poetry and communicating one's experiences and desires with other women involves a process of becoming that enables women to affirm the passion and erotic power of womanhood.<sup>154</sup> Specifically, Lorde identifies as a black-lesbian-feminist-warrior-poet and writes, as she put it, for black women. At the same time, Lorde emphasizes that all women, including white women, can identify and be touched by her poems. However, she makes clear that black women and white women are different and the differences matter.<sup>155</sup>

For Audre Lorde, poetry and writing is a creative and erotic process of becoming that lies, as she put in, in a “deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling.”<sup>156</sup> Women have been trained to contain and fear passion, love, chaos, and the erotic in their everyday lives. Within patriarchal and western frameworks of knowledge and power, to “be” a woman and feminine is framed as a horrific becoming in contrast to becoming a masculine and reasoning western male subject. “The erotic,” she argues, “has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation.”<sup>157</sup> Hence, poetry and embracing the passion that one feels as a woman involves a process of affirming and reframing what it means to be a woman and these so-called unworthy signs of womanhood.

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<sup>154</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Crossing Press, 2007), 54.

<sup>155</sup> I am referring here to several scenes in Dagmar Schultz's film *Audre Lorde: The Berlin Years 1984-1992* (2012) where Audre Lorde describes herself as a black lesbian poet and underlines a politics of difference.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

U.S. soldiers have also been trained and socialized to contain their passion, love, and emotions in order to become “Strong, Army Strong.” Male soldiers, and women soldiers, are trained to *become* “masculine” and to not express any signs of (perceivably feminine) weakness. Women and men who experience sexual violence in the U.S. military and whose everyday lives revolve around the fear of being sexually and physically abused by one’s fellow service men and women are also highly disciplined and silenced as the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars. As mentioned in Chapter One, masculine and patriarchal gaming programs such as Virtual Iraq render invisible the sexual politics of military violence. In her poem titled “The Sexual Politics of War” from the *Warrior Writers: Re-Making Sense* project, Jen Hogg describes the everyday violence that women in the U.S. military experience:

Part 1:

Leave the vehicle and look around closely  
Make sure no one is ready to attack you  
Turn the corner, look behind you and around the corner  
Make sure no one is waiting to attack you  
Approach the door and check if anyone is inside  
Make sure no one is waiting to attack you  
Close the door so no one will enter behind you  
Ready to attack you  
Enter into the building, look all around  
Make sure no one is waiting to attack you  
Keep calm when someone appears should they be  
More than just walking by  
Realize you are not breathing  
Relax  
Take a deep breath  
War  
It is a place young men, targets in uniform  
Fight in a far off land  
Or is it my walk home at night, womanhood,  
My uniform and target

Part 2:

Are we so different?  
The warrior and the woman?  
Stay in your place  
One fights their wars  
One cleans their kitchens  
Both should just shut-up and listen  
Don't ask any questions  
Fight the good fight  
Same war on different fronts  
So far in front we are facing each other

Part 3:

Is this your choice or our lack of choices?<sup>158</sup>

Jen Hogg tells another “truth” of military trauma and violence that is rendered invisible as the *horror of nothing to see* within virtual therapeutic technologies and in the dominant media. Like Whitman who reframes what the “history” of the Civil War constitutes by focusing on the poetic dimensions of war trauma, Hogg reframes the entire notion of what “war” constitutes by multiplying the “corporeal fronts” of the war.<sup>159</sup> “War...It is a place young men, targets in uniform...Fight in a far off land...Or is it my walk home at night, womanhood...My uniform and target...” Hogg shifts the metaphor of “war” as something that takes place “over there” in Iraq and Afghanistan and instead looks at how the woman’s body becomes a battleground—all the time and everywhere.<sup>160</sup> The temporality and spatiality of war trauma cannot be contained to the streets of Bagdad, as the gaming program Virtual

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<sup>158</sup> Calica and Iraq Veterans Against the War, *Warrior Writers*, 22-23.

<sup>159</sup> I would like to thank my former undergraduate student, Taylor Rugg, for her insight here on what she calls “body fronts.” Rugg used this term to describe the shifting fronts of the war in our “Veteran Activism, Gender, and The Global War on Terror” course at Hobart and William Smith Colleges during the Fall 2013 semester. I liked this term, and I’ve chosen to use the term “corporeal fronts” to forefront the shifting corporeal understanding of the “war front” within a gendered and postmodern context of war.

<sup>160</sup> Feminist theorists of militarism and gendered violence have written extensively on how womens’ bodies become battlegrounds in war. Their works are too extensive to cite here, but see the work of George L Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Iraq presupposes. Instead, the feminization of labor and violence against women in the military takes place in Hogg's poem on multiple "fronts" that are constantly shifting across domestic and public spaces.

Moreover, soldiers, veterans, and civilians do not generally question the normalization of "PTSD" as a military and psychiatric category of knowledge and power. Yet, Matt Howard's poem from the *Warrior Writers: Re-Making Sense* project suggests that PTSD is a depoliticizing categorical "truth." In order to re-make "sense" of how PTSD becomes a problem and for whom, Howard suggests we reevaluate the language of order and disorder surrounding the term. "What part of being emotionally and spiritually affected by gross violence is *disorder*? How about a *going to war and coming with a clear conscience disorder*?" he writes. Howard is suggesting that the gross violence of war and its emotional affects are the "problem"—not the traumatized soldiers with "PTSD" that return home from war. Coming home with a clear conscience becomes a "problem" within psychiatric and militarized networks of power and knowledge when soldiers are trained to contain and forget their traumatic experiences on the warfront.<sup>161</sup> In other words, there is an "order" to the disorder of trauma and war. The militarization of everyday life, the gross violence that soldiers partake in and witness in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the emotional battles they struggle with upon returning home order their everyday lives.

Howard's poem has been turned into a poster, titled "PTSD Shadow," as part of the War is Trauma project [See Figure 4]. The War is Trauma project is organized by members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). Members take the posters and post them around various city spaces to raise awareness about the issues that veterans grapple with on a daily

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<sup>161</sup> See journalistic accounts of the multiple disciplinary techniques that soldiers operate under on the homefront and the warfront in Jamail, *The Will to Resist*.

basis. In effect, they recode the sign-assemblage of various cityspaces to render visible the *horror of nothing to see* amongst soldiers, and civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, through various artworks.

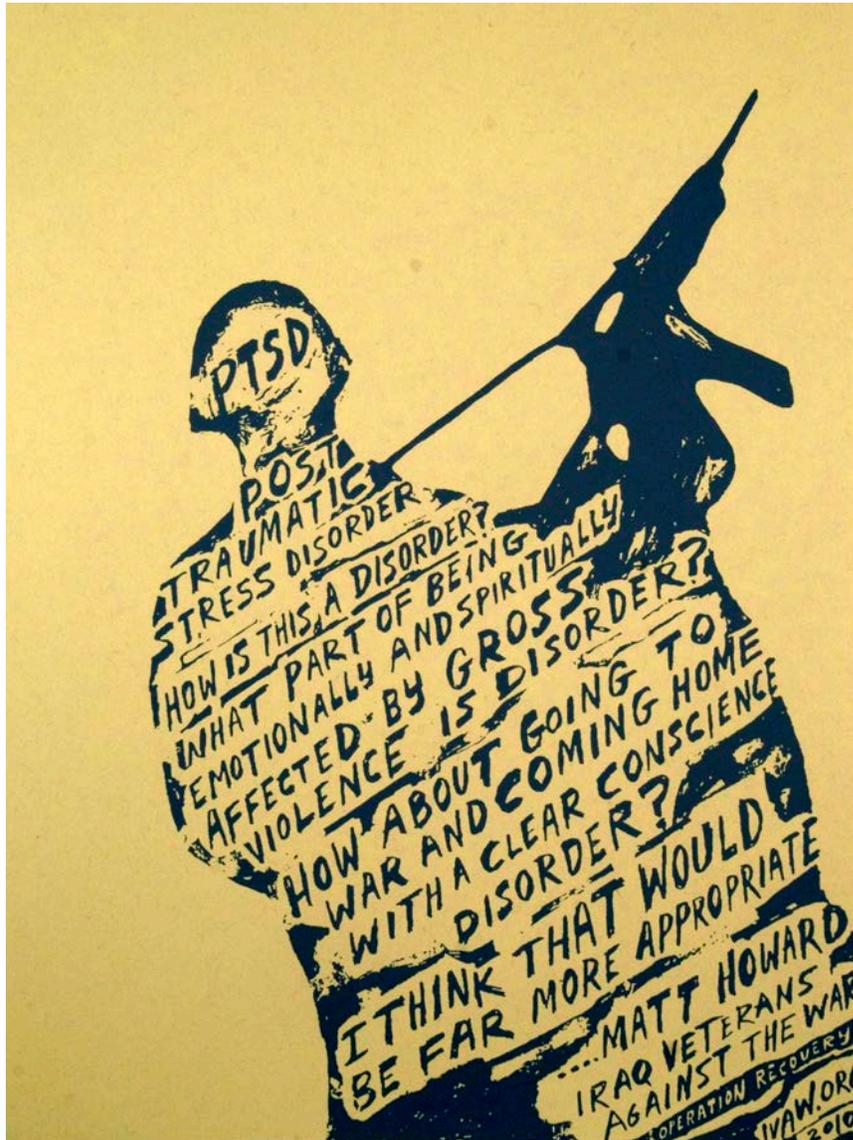


Figure 4: “PTSD Shadow” poster is part of the War in Trauma Project, created by Nicolas Lampert of Milwaukee. Source: Iraq Veterans Against the War, War is Trauma website, <http://www.ivaw.org/war-is-trauma>.

Allison Howell also provides an important critique of how PTSD functions biopolitically as an ordering effect of power in her book *Madness in International Relations: Psychology, Security, and the Global Governance of Mental Health*.<sup>162</sup> In her chapter, “Ordering Soldiers: Contesting therapeutic practices in the Canadian military,” Howell demonstrates how the psychiatric category of PTSD depoliticizes the broader structures of militarism and how trauma has become medicalized through multiple institutional practices. “Efforts aimed at treating PTSD in the military,” she writes, “are ordering practices that serve to medicalize war trauma in an attempt to make such trauma amenable to technical and medical interventions.”<sup>163</sup> Both Howard and Howell thus shed light on how the process of going to war and coming home traumatized is not a “disorder”—it is part of the “ordering practices” of U.S. military violence and terror.

Howell’s analysis, in particular, demonstrates how PTSD as an ordering practice involves the institutionalization of trauma as a biopolitical site of management through what she calls the “psy” disciplines in International Relations. The term “psy,” she states, “refers to all those disciplines that take the psyche as their object: psychology, psychiatry, and all of their sub-disciplines and cognates.”<sup>164</sup> While Howell does not focus on the stories of soldiers who resist or challenge the language of PTSD as a so-called disorder, or the truth-practices of the “psy” disciplines, I think there are many parallels between her critique of PTSD and the critiques of PTSD by soldiers and veterans such as Matt Howard. Indeed, both Howard, as a veteran and poet, and Howell, as an International Relations theorist, provide insight into the complexity and depoliticizing effects of the term PTSD.

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<sup>162</sup> Alison Howell, *Madness in International Relations: Therapeutic Interventions and the Global Governance of Mental Health* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

I want to introduce a new term then and describe the traumatic stresses of the wars and their ordering effects as “Post-Traumatic Stress Order.”<sup>165</sup> Post-Traumatic Stress Order refers to the ways in which the ontological process of becoming a soldier-body is affectively and structurally conditioned by traumatic processes and traumatic events. The term “Post-Traumatic Stress Order” problematizes the notion that the traumatic affects and effects of soldiering should be diagnosed, measured, or evaluated within medical and psychiatric knowledges as so-called disorders. I will return to this concept in more detail in Chapter 5, but for now it is worth noting that it is not only the theorists of the fields of International Relations and Political Theory that provide valuable critiques of PTSD as a so-called disorder. Veterans, artists, and filmmakers also have valuable stories and narratives that disrupt dominant understandings of war trauma within the military-medical complex.

Films and aesthetic texts, for instance, have the capacity to disrupt the ordering practices of militarized narratives of war and trauma and *the horror of nothing to see* in the wars. Richard Robbins’ documentary film *Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience* (2007) is an interesting project that follows the stories of American soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11. The film offers a useful example for navigating the ways in which these soldiers attempt to construct and reconstruct narratives surrounding grief, pain, and trauma. Like Whitman, the veterans in the film are less interested in providing an official account of the war but are instead interested in the wartime experience as a sum of literary and aesthetic relations. Tellingly, the title of the film refers us to the name given to POWs returning from the Vietnam War. As Craig Howes illustrates in *Voices of the Vietnam POWs: Witnesses to Their Fight*, national attention and spectacles

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<sup>165</sup> I thank Dr. Kathy Ferguson for suggesting this extremely helpful term in a personal conversation during the Spring 2013 semester at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

surrounding POWs returning from Vietnam were accompanied by the coining of the phrase “Operation Homecoming,” which “focused American attention tightly and permanently upon these individuals” despite the relatively small number of POWs returning from Vietnam during this time (under six hundred soldiers).<sup>166</sup>

Moreover, as Howes describes, when American POWs did return from Vietnam, the military Code of Conduct became a site of struggle for how a multiplicity of individuals—POWs, lawyers, military officials, and peace activists—all attempted to render the narratives surrounding the POWs and their experiences intelligible. The first article to the code, Howes writes, stated that “I am an American fighting man, I serve the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.”<sup>167</sup> Many POWs found this code irrelevant when they became prisoners; some did not recall the code at all. Military officials and lawyers who had brought charges against the men for breaking the code of conduct, however, eventually dropped the charges. However, “What many POWs found most outrageous...was the government’s willingness to trivialize the Code and the POWs sense of duty simply to avoid unpleasantness” and many Vietnam POWs felt that “...their time in captivity had been whitewashed or ignored.”<sup>168</sup> They sought to document their stories and distribute them through a wide array of media texts, such as interview collections and memoirs. Howes writes:

Within months of Operation Homecoming, biographies, histories, interview collections, and memoirs began pouring from the presses small and large—a flood which continues. Public interest in POW narratives and stories of torture undeniably

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<sup>166</sup> Craig Howes, *Voices of the Vietnam POWs: Witnesses to Their Fight* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1993), 4.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

helped to create the market, but the POWs own agenda was to defend the Code and its followers—to see in short that justice was done. Slighted by their government, the POWs therefore turned to the American people, confessing their weaknesses and crimes, but also proudly describing as well their individual triumphs and many successes as men fighting adversity together.<sup>169</sup>

Following this brief genealogy of the term Operation Homecoming, Richard Robbins's documentary film *Operation Homecoming* follows the stories of American soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11 through similar, albeit different, frames of reference. The film follows the short stories of several servicemen and women, including Colby Buzzel, author of the book, *My War: Killing Time in Iraq*.<sup>170</sup> The eleven stories in the film—written by soldiers in the army, airforce, marines and family members of servicemen and women—are selected from Andrew Carroll's anthology *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan and the Home Front* (2006).<sup>171</sup>

The film, including Carroll's anthology, was funded by the National Endowment of the Arts, which sent distinguished authors, such as Tim O'Brien, to military bases to teach workshops and received over a thousand pages of stories, poems, and other literary works from soldiers and their families. The film is interesting in many respects, because it mobilizes a multiplicity of cinematic shots that disrupt the linear narratives of the soldiers' and families' stories. As Michael J. Shapiro puts it, “a film is not simply told vis-à-vis its

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>170</sup> Colby Buzzell, *My War: Killing Time in Iraq* (New York: Berkley Caliber : Penguin Group, 2006).

<sup>171</sup> Carroll's anthology is a collection of short stories, private journals, and other writings of servicemen and women's accounts of the war. See *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families*, Edited by Andrew Carroll, (Random House, 2006).

narrative composition. Film shots, such as the angle of a shot, or the angle of one look to another look, also convey a story.”<sup>172</sup> Rather than asking what a film represents, it is more productive to ask how films think through moving images and multiple temporalities. I turn now to several scenes from the film and weave through the ways in which it illuminates the ambiguities surrounding soldiers’ narratives on trauma and war experience on the one hand, and the cinematic assemblage of these accounts through a politics of aesthetics on the other.

The film opens with soldiers’ reflections on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through a variety of genres of expression, including poetry, stories, comedy, and graphic art. Many of the soldiers’ stories and poetic reflections on the wars bring to light the *horror of nothing to see* of U.S. military practices on soldiers’ and civilians’ bodies during combat and daily security routines. Rather than contain these traumatic experiences and “suck it up like a man” within dominant discursive productions of masculinity and soldiering, the soldiers in the film turn to various storytelling practices as a way of remembering, rather than forgetting, the traumatic affects of the wars that order their everyday lives on the homefront and warfront.

In the opening vignette to the film, a soldier states that “I may not be a good warrior, but I am a very good witness.” The term witness here remains rooted within psychoanalytic narratives of traumatic experience that emphasize the ongoing effects (i.e., latent effect) of the moment of crisis and its repetition throughout one’s life. As Cathy Caruth puts it, “The story of trauma...as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—rather attests to its endless impact on a life.”<sup>173</sup> To bear witness to these effects of

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<sup>172</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, Lecture, *Genre and the City*, Pols 420, Department of Political Science, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Spring 2008.

<sup>173</sup> Cathy Caruth, “The Wound and the Voice,” in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 8.

traumatic experience upon the body or what Freud calls the “speaking wound” thus “constitutes...not only a parable of trauma and of its uncanny repetition, “ Caruth argues, “but, more generally, a parable of psychoanalytic theory itself as it listens to a voice that it cannot fully know but to which it nonetheless bears witness.”<sup>174</sup> For Caruth then, psychoanalytic theory itself reflects or bears witness to the uncanny repetition of traumatic registers of experience. Following these more genealogical roots to acts of witnessing within psychoanalytic theories of trauma, the film turns next to Tim O’Brien, author of *The Things They Carried* and other novels on the Vietnam War, who offers viewers a way for thinking about trauma, remembering, and healing. He states:

I think that there is a false notion that we all ought to recover from everything: divorce, and broken homes and wars and get on...that we all ought to heal...and I don’t believe in it. I believe the opposite—that there are some things you shouldn’t heal from. They’re un-healable. And if they are healable, you ought not do it anyway. There’s something to be said about remembering and not healing.<sup>175</sup>

O’Brien’s emphasis here on the un-healable aspects of war trauma provides a compelling juxtaposition to how contemporary war machines approach the soldiers’ body and trauma as a “capacities of assemblages,” as described in the previous chapter. In contrast to psychiatric practices that approach the wounded soldier’s body as a site for advancing scientific investigations and knowledges, O’Brien emphasizes here a narrative of *non-cure* surrounding U.S. soldiers’ traumatic experiences during war. While one might argue that the very act of remembering remains embedded within psychoanalytic frameworks of psychosis, we might instead ask how O’Brien’s emphasis here on the un-healable dimensions of trauma relates to

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>175</sup> See Tim O’Brien in the film *Operation Homecoming*.

Judith Butler's emphasis on reframing how grief is facilitated in contemporary political life. Perhaps O'Brien then affirms grief as a source for politics here by underlining, as Judith Butler puts it, the "common human vulnerability" that "...critically evaluate[s] and oppose[s] the conditions under which certain human lives are more vulnerable than others, and thus certain human lives are more grievable than others."<sup>176</sup> Throughout the rest of the film, soldiers' acts of remembering traumatic experiences from the war are focused, through many stories, on their encounters with civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan who died from "friendly fire" and the U.S. military war machine.

By writing about and remembering their experiences of trauma the soldiers practice a different (evoking Foucault) "techniques of the self" for facilitating grief and trauma. Moreover, the film's multiple ways for framing and reframing the subjects disrupts linear narratives on "writing the wartime experience." When soldiers are interviewed, the camera might frame only particular sides of their body or blur the soldiers' face through different cinematic techniques. Hence, the film offers an alternative narrative on war and trauma that is partial and resists totalizing narratives. In these terms, it helps affirm narratives of non-closure surrounding grief and war trauma. Judith Butler underlines this particular way for reframing unknowingness (non-closure) as political a project when she writes that:

To grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself. The disorientation of grief—"Who have I

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<sup>176</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, 30.

become?” or, indeed, “What is left of me?” “What is it in the Other that I have lost?”—  
—posits the “I” in the mode of unknowingness.<sup>177</sup>

Many soldiers in the film describe the various forms of ‘witnessing’ the war and the violent effects of combat and security patrol on the warfront that are rendered invisible as the *horror of nothing to see* in the dominant media. For example, a story titled “Road Work” by U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Jack Lewis recounts how his Humvee crashed into a civilian’s car one night on a highway in Iraq during non-combat operations. The crash killed a young man, but the young man’s father survived the crash. Lewis describes his interactions with the grieving father after the crash:

The old man sat next to me, perhaps too tired to continue his tirade against cruel fate. Careless Americans. War and its accidents. I haven’t lost a full-grown son stamped out by a sudden roaring monster in the middle of the night. Just a little daughter. A baby. And she wasn’t torn from me in a terror of roaring steel. She went so quietly, that her passing never woke her mother...but still sitting on the steel tail of that monster that killed his son, I think maybe I knew how just one Iraqi man felt.

Lewis’s story and process of remembering the death of the Iraqi man’s son circulates as an untimely story when juxtaposed to the ways in which soldiers are trained to view the men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan as lives not worth grieving. At the same time, Lewis does not remain accountable to the “hierarchies of grief” surrounding the ways in which his child died (through the gendered imagery of the mother finding her son) and the Iraqi man’s son who dies during the U.S.-led invasion of his country. Nevertheless, Lewis describes here

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 30.

a point of empathic identification of the Iraqi man and his son whom he has been trained to view as inhuman.

Many soldiers in the film describe, for instance, how processes of militarization and military training involve dehumanizing civilians as ‘hajjis’ who pose a constant threat and danger to the U.S. soldier-body and to notions of American freedom and security on the homefront. As Judith Butler might put it, the soldiers in the film thus affirm grief as political source of affirming a “common human vulnerability” that “critically evaluate[s] and oppose[s] the conditions under which certain human lives are more vulnerable than others, and thus certain human lives are more grievable than others.”<sup>178</sup> Throughout the film, soldiers’ acts of remembering traumatic experiences from the war are focused on their encounters with civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan who died as so-called collateral damage from the violent effects of the U.S. war machine. By writing and remembering trauma, the soldiers practice a different “technique of the self” for facilitating grief and trauma. Rather than contain one’s grief and traumatic experiences, or reprogram soldiers’ senses through VR therapy, the soldiers in the film affirm a process of becoming that resists dominant militarized and masculine apparatuses of power and knowledge.

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<sup>178</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, 30.

## Chapter 3

### Traumatic Affects and Cinematic Time: Assembling the Soldier Body-Machine Complex

#### Introduction: Discipline Societies, the Soldier–Body, and Institutions

For the disciplined man, as for the true believer, no detail is unimportant, but not so much for the meaning that it conceals within it as for the hold it provides for the power that wishes to seize it.

—Michael Foucault<sup>179</sup>

This chapter extends how the U.S. injured soldier-body functions as “an assemblage of capacities,” as Greg Goldberg and Craig Willse demonstrate in their essay “Losses and Returns: The Soldier in Trauma.”<sup>180</sup> I provide a brief historical gloss on the assemblage of the soldier’s body in Foucault’s accounts of disciplinary societies and the emergence of psychiatric and medical power within Western formations of power and knowledge. Goldberg and Willse turn to Foucault’s articulations on governmentality to explore the biopolitical dimensions of trauma. Their suggestion that we turn to the biopolitical aspects of trauma surrounding wounded soldiers is instructive:

The rehabilitation of wounded soldiers is not the first instance of modifying or directing the form and expression of their bodies, but rather constitutes a singular practice within networks of technoscience and capital that continually calculate, engineer, and mutate the matter of life itself. We thus suggest an alternative theory of trauma that does not perceive a soldier’s body as being whole, then broken, and then

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<sup>179</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 140.

<sup>180</sup> *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, (Duke University Press Books, 2007), 264-287.

finally put back together....The so-called re-habilitation of the wounded soldier is therefore incidental before the constant rehabilitation of technologies of power.

*Trauma in this sense occasions unexpected productivity, for which narratives of loss cannot fully account.*<sup>181</sup>

Goldberg and Willse's emphasis on the soldier's body as an "assemblage of capacities," and on the productive aspects of rehabilitating U.S. soldiers' bodies within technoscience and late-capitalism inspire the political aims of this project. Rather than think in terms of loss to explore the politics of trauma surrounding injured soldiers, what if we turned to the ways in which trauma becomes a productive site of biopolitical control and techno-scientific experimentation? Mapping these productive relations of power demands turning attention to the soldier-body within disciplinary societies, processes of biopolitical power, and U.S. military control mechanisms. Hence, it is important to provide right away a brief gloss on Foucault's mapping of the soldier-body from *Discipline & Punish* by highlighting how the soldier-body emerges historically as an assemblage of capacities during the late eighteenth century.

In *Discipline & Punish*, Foucault maps how the soldier-body becomes a "body-machine-complex" within military matrices of power.<sup>182</sup> This body-machine-complex emerges by the late eighteenth century when the soldier-body is constructed through a new set of techniques of control—"...posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times...."<sup>183</sup> Foucault

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<sup>181</sup> Craig Willse and Greg Goldberg, "Losses and Returns: The Soldier in Trauma," in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Clough with Jean Halley, (Duke University Press, 2007), 281, emphasis mine.

<sup>182</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 153.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

defines this body as a “docile body” or as one that can be “subjected, used, transformed and improved” within apparatuses of control.<sup>184</sup> This production of docile bodies demands a new “political anatomy” of the body within disciplinary societies where the most minute details function as sites for constructing disciplinary space. These disciplinary techniques effected a new “distribution of individuals in space” through a multiplicity of disciplinary mechanisms (i.e., spaces of enclosure such as the prison). As Foucault illustrates, disciplinary space:

Tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed. One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation; it was a tactic of anti-desertion, anti-vagabondage, anti-concentration. Its aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was a procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering and using. Discipline organizes an analytical space.<sup>185</sup>

Thus, the organization of soldiers into units, marches, and other group-assemblages functions as a way to distribute the body through a series of disciplinary mechanisms and disciplinary spaces. For instance, the classification and organization of soldiers into squads based on their bodily capacities signals the ways in which disciplinary power multiplies the body of the individual into parts and capacities, or as Foucault puts it, into “small, separate cells, organic autonomies, genetic identities and continuities, [and] combinatory segments.”<sup>186</sup>

“Discipline,” he writes, “ ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>186</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish.*, 170.

regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise.”<sup>187</sup> Bodies are thus produced and constituted by disciplinary techniques of power. Moreover, these techniques of discipline that began to emerge in eighteenth century Europe were layered and “superimposed” upon another mode of “nondisciplinary” or what I will call “extra-disciplinary” power—biopolitics. As Foucault demonstrates in *Society Must Be Defended*, biopolitics involves the emergence of “basic phenomena” in nineteenth century Europe—of “power’s hold over life.”<sup>188</sup> These modes of biopolitical power expand on the disciplinary control of individual bodies that emerged at the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the course of the eighteenth century.

Biopolitical techniques of power slowly begin to emerge during the second half of the eighteenth century in Europe. These biopolitical mechanisms include the control of the human being (and not just the individual) as a general meaning-unit of value within population discourses and state apparatuses of control. It is during this time that “the biological came under State control, [and] that there was at least a certain tendency that leads to what might be termed state control of the biological.”<sup>189</sup> Examples of biopolitics include the mortality rate, birth rate, reproduction, natality, endemics, the formation of the medical sciences, accidents, infirmities, insurance, savings and checking, safety measures and other phenomena where the population and the environment becomes a site of control that can be “regularized” rather than disciplined.<sup>190</sup> These “extra-disciplinary” modes of control over the biological life of the human-species—and as my analysis in this chapter will illustrate, of the

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>188</sup> Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey, (Picador, 2003), 237.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 240-241.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 247.

soldier body—are embedded within a shift from traditional to modern forms of sovereignty.<sup>191</sup> Foucault writes:

Beneath that great absolute power, beneath the dramatic and somber absolute power that was the power of sovereignty, and which consisted in the power to take life, we now have the emergence, with this technology of biopower, with this technology of power over “the” population as such, over men insofar as they are living beings. It is continuous, it is scientific, and it is the power to make live. Sovereignty took life and let live. And now we have the emergence of a power that I would call the power of regularization, and it, in contrast, consists in making live and letting die.<sup>192</sup>

As the above quotation highlights, the superimposition of disciplinary techniques that manage the individual body—and in our example the soldier body-machine complex and the technology of biopower—involves an inversion of traditional powers of the sovereign. It is during this historical shift of sovereign power from the rights of the sovereign to take life and let live to the right of the sovereign to “make live and let die” that we find a productive point of entry for understanding how the soldier-body and soldier wounded-body circulate within biopolitical modes of control. Indeed, not only are the soldier-body and wounded soldier-body an “assemblage of capacities,” as outlined thus far in this chapter. The soldier body also becomes regularized as a “life” that can be modified, cured, rehabilitated, and reassembled back into the military apparatus.

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<sup>191</sup> I would like to thank Kathy Ferguson for suggesting I call these “non-disciplinary” (as Foucault puts it) techniques of power “extra-disciplinary” modes of power in order to signify that biopolitical and non-disciplinary operations of power are co-constitutive of one another rather than mutually exclusive.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

For example, the “shell shock” body of the soldier is historically embedded within both disciplinary and biopolitical formations of medical power. The return of soldiers from the battlefield during WWI instigated numerous psychiatrists, scientists, and doctors to assemble their research aims by attempting to reveal the scientific origins of trauma in their shell-shocked patients. For example, in 1917, W. R. Houston, a Professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of Georgia, wrote an article in *The New York Times* titled “War’s Amazing Effect on Nerves of Soldiers” which supported research initiatives for the medicalization of shell shock amongst wounded soldiers. Houston’s call for concretizing the then contested notion of shell shock amongst traumatized soldiers was based on his treatment of soldiers at an army hospital in Lyons, France. Calling on fellow physicians to travel to Lyons in order to practice medical techniques that focus on nerve treatment of “hysterical” soldiers, Houston describes the hospital’s housing of wounded soldier bodies as an opportune moment for medical professionals and their “study of every injury to the nerves and to the brain.”<sup>193</sup> The bodies of the soldiers’ trauma thus become valuable within the institutional development of the neurosciences and emergence of the military-medical complex.

As feminist psychoanalytic theorists have noted, the early construction of “shell shock” during WWI as a psychiatric disorder remains rooted within Freud’s understanding of the “hysterical female” and normative understandings of sexual difference.<sup>194</sup> Elaine Showalter illustrates how physicians during the nineteenth century viewed hysteria as a “feminine

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<sup>193</sup> W. R Houston, M.D Professor Of Clinical Medicine In The University Of Georgia, “War’s Amazing Effect on Nerves of Soldiers; Distinguished Neurologist Tells from Personal Observation of Remarkable Cases of Hysteria That Have Resulted at the Front,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 1917, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FA0C12FB3F5E11738DDDAC0A94DB405B878DF1D3>.

<sup>194</sup> Karyn Ball, *Traumatizing Theory: The Cultural Politics of Affect In and Beyond Psychoanalysis* (Other Press, 2007).

pathology” and as a “woman’s disease.”<sup>195</sup> During the nineteenth century, physicians and emerging medical and scientific discourses linked notions of what it means to be a hysteric to woman’s nature. For instance, “The hysteric seizure, *grande hystérie*, was regarded as an acting out of female sexual experience”<sup>196</sup> and was viewed amongst physicians as a “specifically feminine protolanguage, communicating through the body messages that cannot be verbalized.”<sup>197</sup> Physicians during the nineteenth century turned to women’s bodies as examples of a disorderly body that was in need of containment, order, and medical cure.<sup>198</sup>

The institutionalization of the “madwoman” and the “madman” is historically embedded within the formation of military hospitals and creation of psychiatric knowledge/power. For instance, it is well known that the Salpêtrière, a former gunpowder factory, was later turned into a hospital for the poor, women, prostitutes, and prisoners during the late seventeenth century. The Salpêtrière, located in Paris, or “*the city of incurable women*,” became the “mecca of great confinement” for women.<sup>199</sup> Beginning in 1690, women who were deemed “paupers, vagabonds, beggars, “decrepit women,” “old maids,” epileptics, “women in second childhood,” “misshapen and malformed innocents,” and “incorrigible women—mad women” were contained in the hospital and abused, tortured, and sometimes murdered in massacres in the courtyard.<sup>200</sup> In 1862, the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, who would later serve as a mentor for Sigmund Freud, visited the Salpêtrière and was appointed as the chief

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<sup>195</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media* (Columbia University Press, 1998), 286.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>198</sup> Ball, *Traumatizing Theory*.

<sup>199</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*, trans. Alisa Hartz (The MIT Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

physician of these “*women from hell*.”<sup>201</sup> The institutionalization of the “mad” thus involved the biopolitical control of women’s bodies and the *horror of nothing to see* of their imprisonment, torture, and of their so-called “invisible” illnesses (perceptible within the male medical gaze).

Charcot’s treatment and investment in this, as he once put it, “*living museum of pathology*,” also supplied him with the “*material*” for his development of psychiatric knowledge and invention of hysteria as a medico-scientific category of knowledge.<sup>202</sup> “For what was at stake was knowledge,” writes Didi Huberman.<sup>203</sup> Despite Charcot’s own supposed descent into madness, the women at the Salpêtrière became for Charcot material sites where he could test his scientific theories of knowledge on pathology. In 1872, he was appointed as Professor of Pathological Anatomy and he remained a prominent figure throughout the remainder of the late-nineteenth century as the Chief physician at the hospital. It is during this period that notions of the “truth” of the pathological subject were emerging alongside the institutionalization of women’s bodies and “medical power.”<sup>204</sup> Yet, while medico-scientific discourses of hysteria during the nineteenth century linked notions of hysteria to women’s fundamental nature, it was during the twentieth century that physicians began to “link hysteria with femininity—with a range of “feminine” personality traits.”<sup>205</sup> It is at this point that the biological determinism underlining the notion of a “female hysteric” was extended to the “other” sex—to men—thus multiplying the population in need of a medical cure for treating the symptoms of hysteria.

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>205</sup> Showalter, *Hystories*, 287.

It is within this historical context that Houston viewed the wounded male soldiers at Lyons hospital as valuable bodies worthy of study for the production of more neuro-scientific understandings of pathology. In particular, Houston viewed the maimed and “hysterical” bodies of soldiers as an opportunity for medical researchers to develop more concrete understandings of hysteria at a time when the medico-juridico definitions of hysteria (and shell shock) were contested psychiatric notions in the military-scientific community. Referring to the hospital’s numerous wounded soldiers and their ensuing cases of hysteria as a “wealth of material” for the neurologist, Houston relates the wounded-soldier’s psychiatric-medical care at Lyons hospital to the possible expansion of existing knowledge practices in the neurosciences:

To the neurologist, the care and study of this unprecedented wealth of material is of high value in broadening and refining his knowledge of the function and structure of the nervous system; yet of still greater interest and offering still greater possibilities for the enlargement of our comprehension of the nature of nervous diseases are those cases, comprising more than two-thirds of the patients in the institution, who are grouped under the name of the hysterical.<sup>206</sup>

Houston’s accounts here on the research rewards that “shell-shocked” soldiers’ bodies might afford the neurological investigator and the advancement of the sciences, along with psychiatry, illustrates Foucault’s accounts of psychiatric power and medical discourses operative within disciplinary and biopolitical techniques of control. As Foucault illustrates, the psychiatrist—as an interlocutor of power and knowledge—functions as an “agent of a

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<sup>206</sup> Georgia, “War’s Amazing Effect on Nerves of Soldiers; Distinguished Neurologist Tells from Personal Observation of Remarkable Cases of Hysteria That Have Resulted at the Front.”

surplus-power of reality” or as a “sort of intensifier of reality to madness” within psychiatric-disciplinary assemblages of power.<sup>207</sup> Psychiatric treatment, he writes, involves the assemblage of multiple tactical procedures, plans, and strategies that, taken together, form what constitute the mad, the hysteric, the psychiatrist, and more broadly, psychiatric knowledge.

Disciplinary mechanisms such as routine showering time, isolation, and regulated diet, illustrate how these disciplinary mechanisms operate in the asylum that Foucault outlines.<sup>208</sup> For example, the distribution and management of food in asylum spaces functioned as a means by which individuals were punished (by withholding food) or disciplined in terms of regulated diet (distribution in small rations). In the asylum, “psychiatric power is [therefore] the creator of needs and the management of deprivations it establishes.”<sup>209</sup> Psychiatric power is therefore a particular truth-practice that conditions the possibilities for what constitutes the “disorderly” bodies and psyches of the patients.

The body in these examples is not fixed in any particular position or space. Instead, “discipline is an art of rank, a technique for the transformation of arrangements,” Foucault writes. “It individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations.”<sup>210</sup> These disciplinary practices help produce the “*operation of truth*” in psychiatric knowledge practices. These operations of truth are accomplished when the patient identifies with the “asylum machine” (i.e., yes I am mad, and therefore I need to be cured). As an intensifier of reality, the asylum

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<sup>207</sup> Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-1974*, ed. Jacques Lagrange and Arnold I. I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell, 1 Reprint (Picador, 2008), 143.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-144.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>210</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 146.

is thus an institution of spatial and temporal practices where power moves instrumentally through the individual, in effect reproducing the reality of psychiatric power, which “has no other function than to be the agent of reality itself.”<sup>211</sup> As Houston’s account of rehabilitation techniques practiced at Lyons hospital in early twentieth century France illustrates, disciplinary techniques functioned as political technologies by classifying soldiers according to the wounds they suffered and daily regimenting soldiers in a military sensibility of time and order:

Every morning from 8 until 9 o’clock, and again of an afternoon from 2 until 3, in the quadrangle of the Lycee the men are gathered at the sound of the bugle for drill. They are grouped in squads according to their several disabilities. The club-footed squad, the hemi-contracted squads, the contractures of the left arm, the contractures of the right arm, and so on. Each squad has its non-commissioned officer, who is himself convalescing from the same disorder, and the whole battalion is under the command of a Sergeant.<sup>212</sup>

While the soldiers are arranged and classified according to their physical disabilities in this example, so too are other relationships of power. These mechanisms of classification and order, as Foucault illustrates, necessitate disciplining the movements of the body through regulatory mechanisms that are biopolitical. These biopolitical mechanisms of control include regulating the activities of soldiers’ bodies and hierarchical relations between soldiers based on the physical, external (visible) injuries to their bodies. These regulatory mechanisms involve an assemblage of various timetables, classifications, orders, supervising

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>212</sup> Georgia, “War’s Amazing Effect on Nerves of Soldiers; Distinguished Neurologist Tells from Personal Observation of Remarkable Cases of Hysteria That Have Resulted at the Front.”

practices, ranks, and observation practices that organize the disciplinary space of the hospital. It is these general systems of regulation that condition the possibilities for the discipline of the soldiers' wounded bodies. As Foucault illustrates, the hospital-space of the late-eighteenth century functioned as a significant site for the construction of new disciplinary spaces and medical knowledges. Many of the first hospitals to be reorganized within disciplinary mechanisms were military hospitals, which "provided the model for the entire reorganization of hospitals in the eighteenth century" Foucault writes.<sup>213</sup> The development of the military-medical complex is therefore indebted to the development of psychiatric power and knowledge.

Biopolitically, the shell shocked soldier and wounded soldiers at Lyons hospital during and after World War I become bodies that sovereign formations of power found worthy of "making live" rather than "letting die." Yet as Foucault emphasizes, disciplinary and biopolitical mechanisms are not separate and they interact at multiple levels and across various strata of society—at both the institutional and state level. He describes both techniques of power as a series that are distinct but that overlap—the "body-organism-discipline-institutions-series" and the "population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms-state."<sup>214</sup> These overlapping mechanisms of disciplinary and biopolitical power are evident in today's U.S. military networks of power and knowledge.

This chapter revisits Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* as a filmic example of how the soldier body-machine complex operates within both disciplinary and biopolitical formations of power. Methodologically, films have the capacity to shift one's perception of the violent affects of disciplinary power and soldiering by bringing her attention to the macropolitical

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<sup>213</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 210.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

and micropolitical dimensions of everyday life. As Gilles Deleuze puts it, “The cinema does not just present images, it surrounds them with a world.”<sup>215</sup> For Deleuze, the cinema constitutes a particular lifeworld of images such as images of time, sensation, and affect. Inspired by Deleuze’s provocation of what constitutes the political lifeworld of “thought-montage,” this chapter examines how Kubrick’s film multiplies the spaces and temporalities of the traumatic effects of the Vietnam War and the *horror of nothing to see* in the war from the loci of enunciation of the U.S. soldier-body and wounded soldier body.

While Kubrick’s film *Full Metal Jacket* is widely viewed within academia and popular culture, its popularity and circulation amongst multiple viewing publics renders it worthy of revisiting as a text that offers useful insights on the relationships between the soldier’s body, militarism, culture, and trauma. As my analysis suggests, Kubrick’s film invites us to consider how the process of *becoming* a soldier-body also functions as a traumatic assemblage that often remains “hidden” as the *horror of nothing to see* in dominant U.S. culture and media. In Kubrick’s film, the *horror of nothing to see* of military training and combat are rendered visible through a particular “thought–montage” that forces viewers to think and feel how trauma is experienced in a particular time and place as a U.S. soldier. Well known as an anti-war film, *Full Metal Jacket* compels us to consider how the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have produced traumatic affects similar to yet different from those of the Vietnam War.

Indeed, a smaller number of American youth serve in the current war in Afghanistan, and until recently, Iraq, due to the elimination of the draft and the creation of an all-volunteer military force. Hence, the violence of the war’s effects on soldiers and civilians appears to be

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<sup>215</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (U of Minnesota Press, 1989), 68.

distant reality, perhaps, for many Americans. Kubrick's film provides a historical and political perspective on how the processes of becoming a soldier and fighting in America's increasingly unpopular wars abroad are constituted by multiple traumatic affects—physical, psychic, and spiritual. Rather than focus on narratives of loss and soldiers' trauma, Kubrick's film sheds light on how bodies are produced in war.

### Full Metal Jacket: Biopower, Disciplinary Power, and "Thought Montage"

Stanley Kubrick's film *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) provides a striking example of the disciplinary mechanisms of control surrounding the U.S. soldier body within contemporary military formations of power. In the opening scenes of the film, viewers are introduced to a marching squad of U.S. marines singing a military cadence at a Marine Depot in Parris Island, North Carolina. In these opening shots, the soldier-body operates as part of a body-machine complex marching in unison through the disciplinary techniques of the soldier-body. As these scenes illuminate, the movement of the soldier-body is disciplined through the repetition of marches, cadences, and by de-individualizing each soldier body by shaving his head before he enters boot camp. As Carol Burke demonstrates in her research on gender, military culture, and manhood, military culture and disciplining the soldier-body in boot camp functions as a ritual that depends on transforming the individual into a member of a group assemblage. Importantly, these military rituals depend on dominant ideas of masculinity and femininity and humiliating acts that instill the belief within recruits that "to be degraded is to be female." As Burke puts it:

Boot camp transforms recruits from jocks to nerds, boys from the 'hood and women from the suburbs, into knockoffs of model soldiers by stripping them of their clothes, shaving off their hair, forbidding them from accustomed freedoms, and instilling

military discipline in them as second nature. Drill instructors, the engineers of their transformation, control every minute of the recruits' days: they deprive them of sleep, tax them physically, infantilize them, and, if the recruits are male, feminize them through the kind of humiliation designed to impress on them that to be degraded is to be female ("Come on, ladies").<sup>216</sup>

Kubrick's film frames the U.S. soldier-body in these opening scenes as a subject that is embedded within these processes of becoming a masculine warrior. First, this becoming of the subject and the soldier body-machine complex is illuminated to the viewer through a dialectics of cinematic images. As Jacques Rancière puts it, a "dialectical montage"<sup>217</sup> of images involves "organizing a clash, presenting the strangeness of the familiar, in order to reveal a different order of measurement that is only uncovered by the violence of the conflict."<sup>218</sup> The "dialectical way" can be found in the cinema, literature, poetry, the arts, and new media and "invests power in the creation of little machineries of the heterogeneous."<sup>219</sup> A dialectics, or clashing of images, involves "revealing one world behind another" such as "the far-off conflict behind home comforts."<sup>220</sup> It is also interrelated to "symbolic montage," which too "relates heterogeneous elements and constructs little machines through a montage of unrelated elements."<sup>221</sup> While the dialectical way "aims" at showing the "secret of a

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<sup>216</sup> Carol Burke, *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and the High-and-Tight: Gender, Folklore, and Changing Military Culture* (Beacon Press, 2005), 13.

<sup>217</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (Verso, 2007), 56.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

heterogeneous order” through the clashing of images, the symbolic way “assembles elements in the form of mystery.”<sup>222</sup>

The dialectic montage and symbolic montage of the opening scenes of *Full Metal Jacket* involve a clashing of images between romantic and sentimental war imageries within nation-state frameworks and the biopolitical assemblage of the soldier body-machine complex. For instance, the opening shots begin with a popular heroic war narrative—Johnnie Wright’s country music hit *Hello Vietnam* (1966). Wright’s *Hello Vietnam* circulated in the American public sphere as a sentimental sweetheart song of two lovers separated by war. The song begins with a nationalist narrative that equates America’s war in Vietnam as a calling of all citizens to their patriotic duty as soldiers defending the nation: “America has heard the bugle call, and you know it involves us one and all...Goodbye my darling, Hello Vietnam .” In the next verse, Wright frames communism as the enemy of “our” freedom that Americans must stop in “that land” in Vietnam: “We must stop communism in that land . / Or freedom will start slipping through our hands. / Goodbye my darling.”<sup>223</sup>

The nationalist and heteronormative sweetheart narrative of *Hello Vietnam* circulates as a clashing image to the new bonds of intimacy that the men will forge with their Drill Instructor, their rifles, and with each other at basic training. In juxtaposition to the country western and masculine hero narrative of *Hello Vietnam*, the marines at boot camp become

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>223</sup> While the song *Hello Vietnam* evokes a nation-state narrative of defending America’s freedom, the location of the Marine Corps Depot on Parris Island simultaneously evokes a history of French colonialism and militarization on the North American continent. For instance, the island is named after Englishman Colonel Alexander Parris who purchased the island in 1715—the island became a colonial plantation until the Civil War until Marines were first stationed on the island in 1891. In chapter eight of this dissertation, I will turn to the story of Lance Cpl. Joshua Bernard and his death in Afghanistan when he was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade. He too trained at Parris Island, two years before his death in June 2009 at the age of twenty-four.

docile bodies through disciplinary practices and through the *becoming-one* with one's "other" sweetheart—his rifle. As Carol Burke demonstrates, military chants in basic training are often structured around narratives where recruits leave their sweethearts to forge new relationships with their rifles. These chants and narrative practices "celebrate the need to repudiate the pleasures associated with a recruit's civilian past and to embrace a martial future (or, more literally, to leave your girlfriend and love your rifle)."<sup>224</sup> The men are thus trained to exchange their previous identities and familial attachments for new ones at the individual and group level. The body of war is thus produced through these discursive and somatic repetitions of the body. In Burke's words:

The education of all military trainees exchanges guns for lovers, harsh drill sergeants for fathers, and group survival for the needs of the individual. The freshly forged identity of the young trainee distinguishes him from other military professionals and celebrates group identity.<sup>225</sup>

The men are disciplined to become killers by becoming affectively, psychically, and physically attached to their rifles as part of the assemblage of the soldier body-machine complex. On their first night of basic training, Drill Instructor Sergeant Hartman tells the soldiers that they will sleep with their rifles and give their new sweetheart—or rifle—a girl's name. "This is the only pussy that you are going to get!" Hartman yells at the Marines. "You're married to this piece—this weapon of iron and wood. And you *will* be faithful!" In the following scenes, the marines will pray in bed and chant in unison as they hold their rifles close to their chest; clean and reassemble their rifles through multiple repetitions; march with their rifles while singing cadences; and practice at the firing range. Chanting in unison, the

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<sup>224</sup> Burke, *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and the High-and-Tight*, 13.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

soldiers repeat at night: “This is my rifle; this is my gun. This is for fighting; this is for fun” as they lay in bed with one hand on their rifle and the other on their genitals.<sup>226</sup> As Foucault might put it, these repetitions of the soldier-body “make” the docile body of the soldier-body machine complex. It is through these specific techniques of power that the soldier-body is regarded both as an object and as an instrument of the military-industrial complex for the creation of trained killers.<sup>227</sup>

Moreover, the spatial composition of the training room illuminates the cellular operations of disciplinary power that condition the possibilities for the soldier’s body to become circuited into these disciplinary, technological, and sexualized machinic assemblages.<sup>228</sup> For example, Kubrick uses wide-angle shots in the opening scenes that render visible the disciplinary spaces of each soldier who stands in front of his bed, assembled in a visible, clean, orderly row; upright, facing forward. Significantly, Sgt. Hartman (R. Lee Ermey) circulates as the only body with the capacity to move around the room with ease, as each soldier stands motionless against the bare white walls and empty spaces. Through each wide-angle frame, the de-individualization of the soldier-body is rendered visible and functions as what Siegfried Kracauer calls a “cinematic subject” that reveals certain things normally unseen within daily habits of perception.<sup>229</sup>

For example, the wide-angle shots convey to viewers the “haptic space” of disciplinary mechanisms of control; or all the things that are going on at the same time in one place. Indeed, as Siegfried Kracauer puts it, “The motion picture camera has a way of disintegrating

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>227</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 170.

<sup>228</sup> I describe this concept of the cyborg soldier-body and the metallization of the soldier-body within technological assemblages in Chapter Seven.

<sup>229</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 41.

familiar objects and bringing to the fore—often just in moving about—previously invisible interrelationships between parts of them.”<sup>230</sup> Put another way, while our embodied vision is always partial, the camera is able to capture these haptic spaces in ways that afford us with a more unfamiliar way of seeing the body in space and time. Significantly, Kubrick’s film directs our attention to the forces of intensity and the *horror of nothing to see* embedded within disciplinary practices and the affective assemblage between these techniques of power and the body. For instance, the opening scenes provide viewers with a more unfamiliar way for “seeing” how disciplinary space and the biopolitical assemblage of the U.S. soldier-body is constructed. I use the term haptic here to describe how cinema has the potential to “touch” the viewer through sensory mechanisms of experience.<sup>231</sup>

As Deleuze illustrates, it is better to ask “What does the image *show*?” rather than “how [are] images are linked”<sup>232</sup> in modern cinema. “This identity of montage with the image itself,” Deleuze writes, “can appear only in conditions of the direct time-image.”<sup>233</sup> Specifically, the time-image of the postwar cinema renders visible the materiality of the body, such as the intensities and forces on the body that constitute the “unthought” materiality of a “a life.”<sup>234</sup> On the one hand, the movement-image and time-image of cinema has the capacity to affectively move the viewer and the masses through propaganda by provoking affect amongst viewers within dominant regimes of representation and ideology. As is well known, D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and Frank Capra’s WWII propaganda films *Why We Fight* (1942-1945) operate by affirming dominant racist and sexist

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>231</sup> See Laura U Marks's use of the term haptic in *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>232</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 42.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>234</sup> Deleuze, *The Time Image*, 189.

images of African Americans as biologically inferior—as “uncivilized” persons (or inhumans) as compared to white Americans. These films reaffirm and perpetuate dominant systems of representation surrounding the U.S. Warrior figure and African American women and men. On the other hand, cinema also has the capacity to move “us,” or the masses, in new ways that disrupt conventional ways of thinking by producing a shock to thought—to what is typically *not* thought within our limited imaginaries of ourselves and our relationships to bodies, objects, landscapes, and spiritual becomings.

A philosophical reflection on the materiality of the body, and the “unthought” of what our limited imaginaries and perceptions of the world normally constitute, demands a reversal of philosophical traditions that depend on dualisms between the mind and body. A montage of images multiplies the spatial and temporal forces that affect bodies, both physically and psychologically. In these terms, cinematic montage does not privilege the mind over the body. Nor does it produce a hierarchy between the inside (i.e., psychic life) and outside (i.e., the body and external landscapes). To this effect, the cinema has the capacity to shock the film viewer’s habitual ways of seeing the relationship between the interior and exterior forces of the body and, in effect, forces her to think under such modes of thought.

These processes of producing affect and forcing new modes of thought to emerge for the viewer is a neurological process that depends on touching the cerebral system of the body. In Deleuze’s words, cinematic montage has the capacity to produce a “shock to thought, communicating vibrations to the cortex, touching the nervous and cerebral system [of the viewer] directly.”<sup>235</sup> Again, while the “shock effect” of film can be wielded within micro-fascist systems of power it also has the capacity to ‘touch us’ by evoking a very different

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 156.

process of sensation that smashes, rather than reaffirms, dominant systems of representation of the self and other. Cinematic montage is therefore a system of thought and of the unthought and evokes within the viewer a feeling and sensation that surpasses the dominant regimes of representation that organize human imaginations and the distinctions between the parts and the whole. As Deleuze puts it, “thought montage” has a spiraling effect that redistributes our capacity to differentiate between the parts and wholes of bodies and systems, of landscape and ideologies, and of images and sounds.<sup>236</sup> In his words:

Montage is in thought ‘the intellectual process’ itself, or that which, under the shock, thinks the shock. Whether it is visual or of sound, the image already has harmonics which accompany the perceived dominant image, and enter in their own ways into suprasensory relations....this is the shock wave of nervous vibration, which means that we can no longer say ‘I see, I hear,’ but I FEEL, ‘totally physiological sensation.’ And it is the set of harmonics acting on the cortex which gives rise to thought, the cinematographic I THINK: the whole as subject....The cinematographic image must have a shock effect on thought, and force thought to think itself as much as thinking the whole. This is the very definition of the sublime.<sup>237</sup>

Following Deleuze’s approach to a cinematic montage of sensation, the thought-montage of *Full Metal Jacket* produces a shock effect for the viewer on multiple sensorial levels. It is worth noting too at this point that my analysis of the film is partial and subjective—the film will affect viewers differently and the viewing process is informed by our bodily contingencies and experiences in everyday life that differ across racial, sexual, gendered, and colonial historical presents. Yet despite these important differences amongst viewers, the

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 158.

structure and “thought–montage” of any film does inform and affirm particular ways of “thinking” rather than others. For example, Gilles Pontecorvo’s film *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) provokes viewers to “see” the violence of French colonialism in Algeria through a multiplicity of images and sounds that is more sympathetic to the struggles of the indigenous peoples of Algeria rather than the National Liberation Front (FLN). Particularly, the rhythmic sound of drums, an instrument and rhythm used by the indigenous peoples of Algeria, is played throughout the film and functions in such a way as to provoke the viewer to identify with the indigenous resistance movements rather than the FLN.<sup>238</sup> Similarly, the montage of Kubrick’s film compels viewers to identify with the subjective process of becoming a U.S. soldier–body by focusing on the multiple effects of violence surrounding the figure of Private Leonard Lawrence (Vincent D’Onofrio).

For instance, the body of Private Leonard Lawrence, aka Private “Gomer Pile,” becomes a “cinematic subject” that forces the viewer to think about how the individual soldier–body—including the individual parts of his body, movements, and gestures—are assembled within a greater whole as part of the soldier body–machine complex. Just as importantly, Kubrick’s montage thought system forces the viewer to think and to FEEL how bodies that fail or resist the disciplinary techniques of the soldier–body become abject and feminized bodies.<sup>239</sup> As Carole Burke demonstrates, military training historically and presently disciplines soldiers by recruiting dominant notions of manhood. In a traditional all–male military realm, “men who failed to meet the standards were cast as females, branded by the drill instructor as ‘girls,’ ‘ladies,’ ‘faggots,’ ‘fairies,’ or ‘pussies.’ Those scapegoats symbolically absorbed the group’s

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<sup>238</sup> See Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics*, 3–4.

<sup>239</sup> I elaborate on the term “abject body” in Chapter 4 when I describe Judith Butler’s concept of abjection.

weaknesses and when punished or driven out ritualistically sanctified the group's manhood."<sup>240</sup> Private Pile becomes the scapegoat and symbol of the group's weaknesses in these terms and it is these weaknesses that must be expelled. The drill instructor plays a significant role in disciplining so-called weak bodies. As Burke puts it, "the drill instructor is complicitous in this extreme example of boot camp violence; he sets the scene by signaling out someone who can stand for everything weak, inferior, and unmanly and on whom the others can express their *rage*."<sup>241</sup>

For instance, Pvt. Pile is framed by Sgt. Hartman as an abnormal body—as a "disgusting fat body" that fails to comply with the normalizing techniques of a lean, muscular, and masculine soldier-body machine. He also fails to conform to the normalizing and disciplinary techniques of power insofar that he is unable to police his desires to exceed these disciplinary techniques. In one scene, he is caught with a doughnut that he stole from the mess hall that he hides in his lock box. In other scenes, he is unable to physically perform the harsh and strenuous drill duties—he cannot perform well on the military obstacle course; he is unable to tie his boots properly; he cannot assemble and disassemble his rifle in time; he cannot contain his laughter at Sgt. Hartman's initial drill instructions when he degrades the marines through sexist, homoerotic, racist, and excitable modes of speech. In response to Pvt. Pile's excess, Sgt. Hartman attempts to discipline Pile with great force and intensity by shaming him in front of the other marines and by feminizing Pile's body as a child-body.

For instance, Hartman forces Pile during drill marches to walk with his pants down and around his ankles and to suck his thumb behind the rest of the marine squad. When Hartman discovers that Pile has hidden a doughnut in his lockbox, he forces Pile to eat the doughnut

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<sup>240</sup> Burke, *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and the High-and-Tight*, 45.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, emphasis mine.

and disciplines the rest of the marine unit to do push-ups in order to pay for Pile's resistance to disciplining his bodily appetites. Hartman encourages the soldiers to take the initiative to discipline Pile as well, for if he cannot force Pile to comply with these techniques of discipline then his fellow marines should—they must expel his difference in order to suture group cohesion. In the following scene, the Marines torture Pile by hitting him in the stomach with soap bars wrapped in their towels in the middle of the night—one by one the soldier body-machine-complex is rendered visible to the viewer as each soldier disciplines Pile with great force. Private J.T. "Joker" Davis (Matthew Modine), who is assigned by Hartman to guide Pile through each drill routine and who befriends Pile, reluctantly hits Pile with the soap bar. However, after the first blow, Private Joker and his former compassionate side are shadowed by his rage that now fills him. As a traumatic effect of discipline and training at boot camp, Pvt. Joker has become an instrument of delivering pain on bodies that fail to conform to the group. He delivers multiple blows to Pile's body as Pile screams in agony and cries, "My stomach hurts." Notably, this is the first scene when Pile or any soldier in the film verbally expresses the pain that he feels.

Sgt. Hartman's drill instructions and speech acts attempt to further discipline the men's bodies into the soldier-body machine complex. These speech acts also illustrate the "performative terrains" of language whereby "oppressive language," as Judith Butler puts it, "enacts its own kind of violence."<sup>242</sup> The time-image and *horror of nothing to see* of oppressive language is conveyed through the image of sound—through the violent forces of Sgt. Hartman's voice. For example, in the opening scenes, Sgt. Hartman screams at the

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<sup>242</sup> Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: Contemporary Scenes of Politics* (Psychology Press, 1997), 9.

soldiers as they reply in unison: *Sir Yes Sir! Sir No Sir!* Through the close-up shot, Sgt. Hartman approaches a fidgeting Private Pile and, before calling him a faggot, screams:

**Hartman:** Are you royalty?

**Pile:** Sir, no sir!

**Hartman:** Do you suck dicks?

**Pile:** Sir, no sir!

**Hartman:** Bullshit, I bet you could suck a golf ball through a garden hose!

These forces of intensity and *horror of nothing to see* are illuminated in the film through close-up shots of the face, which help convey the psychological aspects of the film.<sup>243</sup> The close-up shot is a particular cinematic shot that produces, as Gilles Deleuze suggests, a time-image.<sup>244</sup> For instance, Pile is unable to discipline the smirk that has overcome his face as Hartman's series of statements continue [See Figure 5]. Kubrick's close-up shot of Pile's smirk and Hartman's rage at Pile's bodily reactions, including his inability to discipline his facial muscles, renders visible the forces of disciplinary mechanisms of power on the body.

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<sup>243</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics* (Routledge, 2008), 8. I take this insight on the close-up shot and its ability to convey the psychological dimensions of the story from Michael J. Shapiro's analysis of the film *The Pledge* in *Cinematic Geopolitics*.

<sup>244</sup> According to Deleuze, the time-image replaces the action-image of the former WWII cinematic machine.



Figure 5: Private Pile's smirk in *Full Metal Jacket*.

As the film progresses, Pile's body becomes a more pliable body within these violent effects of sexist and racist language and military repetitions of the body in time and space.

Following the torture of Pvt. Pile by his fellow marines, and after spending time with Private Joker practicing how to effectively perform each drill operation, Pile's body slowly becomes a more docile body that is integrated into the soldier body-machine complex. Instead of becoming excessively resistant to the discipline of the body within the military apparatus, he becomes excessively assembled into the soldier body-machine complex. He begins to talk to his rifle; he becomes one of the best rifle men in the squad, and Sgt. Hartman even states that he may make Pile his line rifleman after training given his progress—"We've finally found something that you're good at," he tells Pile. In effect, Pile eventually becomes an effective trained killing machine.

Indeed, Pile's body becomes actualized as a virtual soldier-body—one unified, literally, with his rifle. Remarkably, Kubrick illuminates this process of becoming through a series of close-up shots of Pile's face that renders visible these stages of intensification and the *horror of nothing to see* for the viewer. In one close-up shot, Pile gazes at Sgt. Hartman who has been describing to the men how some of the most famous killers in recent American history—such as Lee Harvey Oswald—were trained to kill and fire their rifles in the Marines. Sgt. Hartman boasts about these stories and describes these assassinations as examples of what calculated and targeted killings look like when one has been trained to be a marine. At the same time, Kubrick provides a close-up shot of Pile's face as he returns a cold and calculated stare at Hartman [See Figure 6]. The close-up shot of Pile's face in this scene is significant insofar that it illuminates the psychological aspects of Pile's subjectivity and his excessive drive to kill.



Figure 6: The excessive drive to kill: Private Pile's calculated stare at Hartman.

The composition of the scenes involves a dialectics of competing images of thought. On the one hand, Hartman praises the men for surviving basic training—for becoming men and trained killers who can kill like the famous assassin Oswald. On the other hand, Hartman has become the target of Pile’s excessive desire to kill—he has created a killer. Yet, he is unaware that he has created an assassin who will kill him rather than the so-called “enemy” in Vietnam. Moreover, Pile will kill Hartman but he will also commit suicide before he even enters battle on the warfront. Indeed, basic training and the disciplinary techniques for training the soldier-body is a war for Pile. Hartman has become Pile’s enemy and the Marine Corps training grounds is a war zone on the homefront. For instance, when Private Joker finds Pile with his rifle in the latrines right before he kills Sgt. Hartman, and then himself, Private Joker says, “Leonard, you’re going to get us in a world of shit.” Pile responds, “I *am* in a world of shit.”

The close-up shot of Pile’s face in this final scene before his death, as well as the previous series of close-up shots described earlier, function as a time-image that renders visible the affective and biopolitical relationships between the body and the “series of time” that constitute Pvt. Pile’s “life” at this moment [See Figure 7].<sup>245</sup> He stares back not only at Pvt. Joker but also directly at the film viewer. Recalling Kracauer’s understanding of a “cinematic subject,” Pile’s body functions as a cinematic body in these terms; one that illustrates the violent effects of oppressive language and its physical, psychological forces on the soldier-body within contemporary war assemblages.

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<sup>245</sup> Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, 189.



Figure 7: Private Pile's gaze at Joker and the audience before his suicide.

The close-up shot of Pile's face, including his own suicide after killing Sgt. Hartman, also forces the viewer to think and feel about how the violent forces of the soldier-body-machine complex create killers. The previous scenes up to this point revolve around a dominant imaginary of the perceived enemy and "other" in Vietnam, and the violence of the disciplinary techniques seem like distant realities of what is to come after basic training. Yet this scene provokes a shock to thought in the viewer that renders visible the violent effects of the meshing between disciplinary techniques, guns, bullets, processes of militarization, and biopolitical-physiological desires to kill through the assemblage of the soldier body-machine complex. If someone like Leonard, who seems at first relatively naïve and non-violent before he enters basic training, can become a trained killer, then perhaps the viewer could also become trained to desire to kill? Perhaps this is one of the subtle shocks to thought of the

“unthought” in the first half of *Full Metal Jacket*. Could you too, the viewer, become a killer and desire to take your own life after your body becomes the object and instrument of disciplinary power within the U.S. soldier body-machine complex?

### The Soldier Body-Machine Complex, Racism, and Necropower

Yet if we take heed to Michel Foucault’s concept of biopolitics, then Pvt. Pile’s suicide can also be viewed as an act of agency that resists both the disciplining of the individual body and of the population or the “human-species” within modern formations of sovereign power. Recalling Foucault’s discussion on the new right of the sovereign to make live and let die, human life as a biological process becomes regulated within biopolitical techniques of control. At the same time, death becomes not a passage from one world to another, or ascension into heaven or descent into hell, within traditional and religious notions of the natural passage between life and death. Instead, death becomes a limit of the new right of sovereign power to make live and let die—“death now becomes...the moment when the individual escapes all power.”<sup>246</sup> Put crudely, perhaps Pvt. Pile’s suicide can thus be understood as an event-space or act of agency—a moment when he escaped the disciplinary and biopolitical mechanisms of power that had seized his body as an object and instrument of the U.S. war machine.

The sovereign power over the biological processes of life is embedded within racial and colonial formations of power. Foucault does not suggest that racism emerges for the first time during this historical formation of disciplinary and biopolitical power. He does suggest however that the withering away of traditional sovereign power and the increase of the new right of sovereign power to make live and let die shifts the ways in which racism operates.

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<sup>246</sup> Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 248.

Foucault describes racism as “primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die.”<sup>247</sup>

Racism, he continues, is “the appearance within the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction amongst races, the hierarchy of races, the fact that certain races are described as good and that others, in contrast, are described as inferior: all this is a way of fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls...It is... a way of establishing a biological-type caesura within a population that appears to be a biological domain.”<sup>248</sup>

Hence, racism involves the classification of the human-species into sub-species, groups, different races, and, arguably, peoples who are deemed inhuman.

Just as importantly, Foucault highlights a second function of racism and it involves an evolutionary and positive relationship to the right of the sovereign to make live or let die. This function is related to war and the notion that if one kills more, then one will be more likely to survive and become part of the “healthier and purer” race.<sup>249</sup> In these terms, the death of the other has a positive effect on the survival of the so-called fittest race (as in Darwinian models of survival of the fittest and theories of degeneracy). As Foucault puts it, the logic of this function of racism is as follows: “If you want to live, you must take lives, you must be able to kill.”<sup>250</sup> There is in effect then a direct correlation between the exercise of State power and racism insofar that “racism is the precondition for exercising the right to kill.”<sup>251</sup> Yet while this function of racism is enacted in many ways through war, it also operates on a more biological level. Racial formations of power fragment the “human–

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 254-255.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 255.

species” into ‘those people’ whom are deemed by the state apparatus to be fit, pure, healthy and ‘those people’ whom are deemed by the state apparatus to be degenerate, impure, and diseased. In Foucault’s words:

One the one hand, racism makes it possible to establish a relationship between my life and the death of the other that is not a military or warlike relationship of confrontation, but a biological-type relationship: “The more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole, and the more I—as species rather than individual—can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous I will be. I will be able to proliferate. The fact that the other dies does not mean simply that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety: the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race...is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer.”

Historically, these racist functions of the State are enacted through scientific racism, the eugenics movement, the creation of more “civilized” forms of punishment and killing through new weapons technologies, the classification of bodies and physiologies within medical-scientific knowledges, discourses of the “savage” other of the colonies, and more. Foucault for instance focuses on the murderous Nazi state and the infiltration of the entire Nazi social body by disciplinary and biopolitical practices, including new *and* old rights of the sovereign power. However, Achille Mbembe multiples the geopolitics of “politics as the work of death” in modern formations of power by drawing on the work of critical scholarship that examines these biopolitical assemblages between racism, terror, death and sovereignty that extend beyond the German Nazi state. Drawing on Foucault’s concept of biopower and its relationship to notions of sovereignty and the state of exception, Mbembe examines how

Agamben's concept of the state of exception extends beyond the permanent reign of terror and death found in Nazi Germany. While the spatial establishment of the concentration camps are held up as an example of the state of exception in Agamben's theory of modern forms of sovereignty and racist systems of power, Mbembe starts from the premise that "modernity was at the origin of multiple concepts of sovereignty—and therefore of the biopolitical."<sup>252</sup>

Mbembe highlights the creation of more so-called civilized modes of punishment and death in Europe and the French Revolution that Foucault outlined in *Discipline and Punish*. These biopolitical administrative apparatuses of punishment and death include the formation of the American slave plantations, the reign of terror in the colonies of British and American colonial imperialism such as in Africa, and late modern colonial occupations such as in Palestine. In all these complex historical and modern formations of racial terror and violence, the modern and colonialist state is upheld within racist regimes of identification and terror as a "the model of political unity, a principle of rational organization, the embodiment of the idea of the universal, and a moral sign."<sup>253</sup>

Modern forms of killing and "race war" are formed through the historical production of technologies, bureaucracies, and industrialization that conditioned the possibilities for the state apparatus to kill more "efficiently" and in a so-called more "civilized" manner of extermination. For example, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault analyses how the guillotine, formerly reserved for the execution of nobility, later became a means for capital punishment for all French citizens in the late nineteenth century. The spectacle of death and torture was formerly deployed by the state vis-à-vis, for instance, public displays of suffering bodies.

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>253</sup> Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (December 21, 2003), 24.

These modes of punishment became problematic when many French citizens described these modes of punishment as “savage” forms of brutality by the state. Hence, the movement of public executions by the guillotine from outside the fortress walls to inside the corridors of the fortress became a routine form of capital punishment in the late-nineteenth century as the state apparatus attempted to enact more “civilized” and hidden executions.<sup>254</sup>

Mbembe calls the positive effects and excess of *death* within the new sovereign right to make live and *let die* “necropolitical” dimensions of power in contemporary wars. He extends on Foucault’s concept of biopower that focuses on how lives are governed—as lives worthy of making live—within systems of power and disciplinary techniques. Mbembe pushes the limits of Foucault’s analysis on the governmentality of everyday life and bodies by asking: “But under what practical conditions is the right to kill, to allow to live, or to expose to death exercised? Who is the subject of this right?” Mbembe defines necropolitics as “contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death...[that] profoundly reconfigure the relations amongst resistance, sacrifice, [and] terror.”<sup>255</sup> Within this system of control, necropower involves “the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*.”<sup>256</sup>

Following Foucault’s political topography on biopolitics and racism, and Mbembe’s political topography on necropolitics within modern modes of racism, contemporary wars, and colonial formations of power, I turn to a filmic analysis of the second half of Kubrick’s

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<sup>254</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 15.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

*Full Metal Jacket*. I return to how the close-up shot and “thought-montage” of the film forces the viewer to “think” about the violent effects of racism, biopolitics, necropolitics and the traumatic effects of U.S. soldiering from both a micro- and macropolitical perspective. I examine how these mechanisms of power operate in contemporary wars as interactive, rather than distinct, mechanisms of power surrounding the soldier body-machine complex. While the first half of the film focuses on how bodies are produced as soldier-bodies and as killing machines in contemporary warfare, the second half of the film examines the effects and affective dimensions of these bodily productions and their horrific returns.

Born to Kill: Get Some!<sup>257</sup>

While the first half of *Full Metal Jacket* takes place on the homefront, the second half of the film follows the everyday life of the Marines on the warfront in Vietnam. Pvt. Joker, who wears a peace sign on his jacket and a helmet that bears the slogan “Born to Kill,” becomes a particularly compelling cinematic subject that forces the viewer to think about the dualities of war and peace. The slogan “Born to Kill” is fascinating, and concerning, insofar that it evokes the dominant nature versus culture binary that permeates histories of violence, racism, and eugenics. If one is born a natural killer, then the socio-political-racist-colonial structures that influence the ways in which people become embedded within and prone to violence are rendered invisible and depoliticized.

The slogan “Born to Kill” on Pvt. Joker’s helmet is playful in this sense. Indeed, viewers at this point in the film have learned how the men are not “natural” killers—instead they have been disciplined and trained to *become* killing machines. Recalling Simone De Beauvoir’s

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<sup>257</sup> On an interesting note, I recently saw a Marine Recruiting Center on the Jersey Shore and on the front door in bright letters were: Get Some!

famous statement, “One is not born, but becomes, woman.”<sup>258</sup> One is not born a criminal, but one becomes “framed” as a criminal subject within disciplinary and juridical techniques of power as a “dangerous individual.”<sup>259</sup> One is not born a killer, but one *becomes* a killer within the soldier body-machine complex. Before one becomes a killer, one must become a soldier through boot camp training, and in today’s contemporary wars, through cyborg training. The production of soldier-bodies as masculine bodies is also a process of becoming. The soldiers become men by being masculinized, and in contemporary wars, women too become men by being masculinized.

There is no pure, natural, or “whole” body that is broken down in military training. Instead, military training creates a body that is gendered and sexed through a series of productions. The production of these bodies is not separate from the production of sexed and gendered bodies outside of military training. As I describe in more detail in Chapter Four, the performative production of sexed and gendered bodies occurs through a series of repetitions that cite existing norms of recognition (as exemplified by Butler’s concept of gender performativity). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the marines are trained to think of their weapons as their other “sweethearts” and as extensions of their phallus as a process of becoming—“This is my rifle; this is my gun. This is for killing; this is for fun.” These

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<sup>258</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, 1st ed. (Vintage, 2011), 283. For De Beauvoir, processes of *becoming* a woman demand an imaginary “Other” that one is not. In De Beauvoir’s words: “No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine. Only the mediation of another can constitute an individual as an *Other*.”

<sup>259</sup> See Michel Foucault, “About the Concept of the ‘Dangerous Individual’ in 19th-century Legal Psychiatry,” *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 1, no. 1 (February 1978): 1-18.

processes of becoming a masculine warrior subject also depend, moreover, on an imaginary “Other”—such as what it means to become a woman.

The violent affects of training the men to become killing machines within masculine and sexist assemblages of knowledge/power, such as the notion that killing is fun and akin to “getting laid” or “getting off,” is rendered visible throughout the second half of the film. In each scene, the language of “getting some” arises as the Marines express their desire to kill in the field; their desire to “get some” with Vietnamese prostitutes; and their desire to “get some” and kill civilians. In the opening scenes on the warfront, the viewer is not brought to a heroic battle scene or a Commander’s patriotic speech. Instead, Kubrick brings the viewer’s attention to the relationship between militarization and prostitution as a Vietnamese prostitute approaches Pvt. Joker and his fellow marine, Rafterman (Kevyn Major Howard). Kubrick renders visible how the commodification and militarization of Vietnamese women’s bodies demand racist imaginaries and the de-humanization of the Vietnamese “people” who are described by Pvt. Joker and the rest of the Marines as “gooks,” or as Joker puts it—“Gook whores.” Recalling Foucault’s emphasis on how racism demands discourses about the degeneracy of the “other” race that is less pure and healthy, Pvt. Joker refers to the prostitutes as diseased bodies. “You know half these gook whores are serving men in the Viet Cong. The other half got TB. Be sure you only fuck the ones that cough.”

Significantly, racist and sexist statements—or dominant imaginaries surrounding the “Other”—structure the relationships between the Marines in Vietnam and condition the possibilities for the processes of becoming masculine warrior subjects. In the following scene, for instance, Rafterman describes his restlessness at the Camp Da Nang and his desire to experience combat. “I hate Da Nang Joker, I want to go out to the field. I’ve been in

country almost three months and all I take is handshake shots at award ceremonies...a high school girl could do my job. I want to get out into the shit. I wanna get some trigger time.” While killing in the fields is viewed as doing a man’s job, especially for Rafterman, the Marines at Da Nang who have already experienced combat are quick to tell Joker and Rafterman that after they “get some” they too will come back like the remainder of the Marines—with the thousand yard stare.

The violence of the war and going to the fields, also called “the shit,” is viewed in many ways by Pvt. Joker as a joke or as a distant reality. However, another Marine who has experienced combat, “Payback” (Kirk Taylor), responds to Joker’s comments about being bored and wanting to experience combat by stating: “You listen to Joker, big guy. He knows...very little. You know he’s never been in the shit cuz he ain’t got the stare.” Payback brings to Joker and Rafterman’s attention the traumatizing effects of combat experience. Rafterman, suddenly very interested in the conversation, asks Payback what the stare is. Payback responds, “The thousand yards stare. A Marine gets it when he’s been in the shit for too long. It’s like...it’s like you’ve really seen beyond. I got it. All field Marines got it. And you’ll have it too.” Strikingly, Kubrick provides a close-up shot of Rafter Man’s face at this point as Payback says the statement “And you’ll have it to.” The close-up shot of Rafter Man’s face functions as a time-image of what is to come—how will his gaze alter after experiencing “the shit” in the fields [See Figure 8]. Will he come back?



Figure 8: Before the Thousand Yard Stare: Rafterman looking at Payback.

Nevertheless, Private Joker and Rafterman are soon sent to “the shit” as reporters for *Stars and Stripes* when the Vietnamese take advantage of the Tet Offensive and begin striking all of the major U.S. military installments in Vietnam. In a striking scene, Private Joker and Rafterman sit across from a Marine in an Apache helicopter, as they are air lifted to their military assignment. Kubrick provides a striking aerial view of the landscape below them that is covered with mist. Suddenly, the camera turns to Rafter Man’s face as he foams at the mouth and begins to gag at the horror of what he is witnessing in front of him. Sitting across from him and Private Joker is a Marine who fires down on civilians, including women and children, from the aerial view of the helicopter. “Get some! Get some!” the Marine yells as he continues firing his machine gun. “Get some, get some, yeah! Yeah!” the Marine continues to yell. “Get some, get some! Get some, baby!”

Kubrick then turns the camera onto the men, women, and children running from the bullets below them [See Figure 9]. “Anyone who runs is a VC! Anyone who stands still is a well-disciplined VC! You guys ought to do a story about *me* sometime,” the Marine tells

Joker and Rafterman. The Marine then boasts about how he's "gone get me 157 dead gooks killed." Joker responds by asking, "Any women or children?" When the Marine responds that he has, Joker asks how he could kill women and children. Joker's question evokes the moral implications of "making live and let die" while the Marine's response is devoid of moral calculations. His response to Joker's moral provocation is instead procedural. For the Marine, the question of morality surrounding the killing of innocent women and children is, perhaps, unfathomable because he has come to "see" the civilians below him as targets. "Easy," he responds to Joker, "you just don't lead them so much. Ain't war hell?" By "leading them," the Marine is referring to a firing tactic where soldiers are trained to shoot just ahead of civilians when they are running so that the bullets will hit civilians as they run forward. Crudely put, the Marine is referring here to how women and children run slower than men, and hence, why he doesn't "lean them" so much— he aims at them directly. Kubrick provides a striking close-up shot of the face of the Marine as he laughs and holds onto the machine gun [See Figure 10].



Figure 9: Helicopter scene and the *horror of nothing to see*.

As Achilles Mbembe might put it, the lawless killing of civilians as targets for the Marine's pleasure and desire to "get some" stems from racist assemblages of power that are evident in colonial practices and imaginaries. "That the colonies might be ruled over in absolute lawlessness," he writes, "stems from the racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native."<sup>260</sup> Within a racist and colonialist framework, the colonies are "...inhabited by "savages."" In Mbembe's words:

In the eyes of the conqueror, *savage life* is just another form of *animal life*, a horrifying experience, something alien beyond imagination or comprehension. In fact, according to Arendt, what makes the savage life different from other human beings is less the color of their skin than the fear that they behave like a part of nature, that they treat nature as their undisputed master. Nature thus remains, in all its majesty, an overwhelming reality compared to which they appear to be phantoms, unreal and ghostlike. The savages are, as it were, "natural" human beings who lack the specifically human character, the specifically human reality, "so that when Europeans massacred them they somehow were not aware that they had committed murder."<sup>261</sup>

These processes of dehumanizing the multiplicity of men, women, and children in Vietnam—as "gooks" and as "savages"—thus demands equating their lives to animal life or to a life "beyond imagination or comprehension" in colonial warfare. As the *horror of nothing to see* within militarized processes of dehumanizing the civilian body, the civilians become dehumanized and the soldiers are unable to "see" the civilians below as human. Hence, the Marine who kills the men, women, and children in this scene does not, perhaps, view the

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<sup>260</sup> Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 24.

<sup>261</sup> Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 24.

persons below him as humans or as people whose lives matter at all—hence the evacuation of any moral framework for situating his acts of brutal violence in this particular scene. The Marine instead views the men, women, and children in Vietnam as “targets” and as “phantoms.” Indeed, this one scene remarkably illuminates how the men, women, and children who are running for their lives below the Marines are, from the Marine’s subjective locus of perception, “merely” animals running from a hunter.



Figure 10: “Get some!” Marine laughing after killing civilians.

These traumatizing effects of dehumanizing the “Other” and the becoming of the soldier-body in combat operations recalls Sven Lindqvist’s auto-ethnography on his journey into European racism in the colonial wars in Africa during the late 1890s. As Lindqvist demonstrates, the rifle and automatic weapons that were used by the British against the “savages” in Africa became problematic for Europeans only when these weapons were used against men, women, and children in Europe during the first and second World Wars. For example, by the late 1890s the rifle had become revolutionized as a weapon that the British

and European colonialists used in the colonies, in Africa and Asia, as a way to enact brute force and wield colonial control in the name of progressing “civilization.” One of the ways in which the rifle, and later the automatic rifle, became revolutionized was through the discovery of nitroglycerin by the Frenchman Paul Vieille in 1885. Whereas the musket operated through the use of gunpowder, the use of nitroglycerin in firearms enabled soldiers to shoot without any smoke or ashes becoming expelled upon firing the weapon. Hence, soldiers were able to fire their weapons without being seen, which further concealed their location from the enemy. By the end of the 1890s the European powers had equipped all of their soldiers with this new weapon, used against the Ashanti in 1874 and in Egypt in 1884.<sup>262</sup>

The new automatic rifles were also said to be particularly useful in tropical climates, but less so insofar that the “savage” was still able to survive the brute force of automatic weapons after four to five bullets. “The answer” for the Europeans, as Linsqvist illustrates, “became the dum dum bullet” which was patented in 1897 and named after the factory in Dum Dum outside Calcutta.<sup>263</sup> The Dum Dum bullet was a lead bullet that exploded inside the body of the victim, creating wounds that healed less easily than wounds caused by a regular bullet. Tellingly, “the use of the dum dum bullets between “civilized” states was prohibited. They were reserved for big-game hunting and colonial wars.”<sup>264</sup>

During the colonial and imperial wars in Africa, especially during the colonial massacres in the Congo during the late 1800s, the use of automatic weapons, torture tactics, and horrific violence wielded against men, women, and children in Africa were viewed as necessary and

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<sup>262</sup> Paraphrased from Lindqvist, *Exterminate All the Brutes*, 52.

<sup>263</sup> Paraphrased from Lindqvist, 52.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

“civilized” modes of killing in order to “exterminate all the brutes”—the famous line from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* that Lindqvist revisits. It is important therefore to contextualize the killing of Vietnamese women, children, and men in *Full Metal Jacket* to the histories of colonial warfare that condition the possibilities, at least in part, for such images and ideologies of the “inhuman” in Vietnam to emerge. While the next chapter of this dissertation discusses these mechanisms of racial and colonial violence in the current U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, it is worth noting at this point that the killing fields in the “Middle East” are not rendered problematic in the dominant American media and/or within public discourses about the “horror” of the wars.

Indeed, at a time when national debates are emerging around the use of automatic weapons and gun control laws in the U.S. due to an ongoing series of massacres that have taken place in American schools and public spaces, what does not become problematic is the everyday violence against women, men, and people of color in America’s inner cities and gun violence against women, men, and children everyday in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The murder of (mostly) white children and young adults, such as at the Newtown Massacre and Columbine shootings, are rendered “horrific” events in the U.S. media. Meanwhile, the ongoing massacre of civilians in the current wars is rendered intelligible to the U.S. public as “business as usual”—if their deaths are rendered visible at all—to the American public. While it is central, according to emerging U.S. public discourses, to prevent gun violence and address mental health as a national emergency, the racial and colonial assemblages of power that enable sovereign powers to let everyday peoples in Iraq and Afghanistan die circulates as a peripheral and “phantom” reality for many Americans. The colonial present of American empire building on the homefront and warfront hence demands casting the deaths of poor

people and people of color in the United States, and the lives of women and men in the “Middle East” as expendable, unworthy lives that are not worth grieving in comparison to the lives of young, white children in the U.S.—best understood as “Our” children within formations of whiteness in the dominant media.

I have taken a detour from our topic, but only to contextualize the “historical amnesia” surrounding the death of civilians in Vietnam that continues to inform how many Americans do not “see” the violent and traumatic effects of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>265</sup> As Fredric Jameson describes in his well known essay “Postmodernism and Consumerism,” contemporary consumer culture in the U.S. is structured by an aesthetics of a “disappearance of a sense of history” as popular culture and media structures the ways that many persons “live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social information have had, in one way or another, to preserve.”<sup>266</sup> As Jameson puts it, the contemporary news media conditions the possibilities for the evacuation of any sense of history from “our” perceptions of one self and her relationship to others in the world. He writes:

One is tempted to say that the very function of the news media is to relegate such recent historical experiences as rapidly as possible into the past. The informational function of the media would thus be to help us forget, to serve as the very agents and mechanisms for our historical amnesia.<sup>267</sup>

Kubrick’s film is instructive in this sense, for though it also circulates as a popular cultural text of the Vietnam War, it forces viewers to think about how the traumatic effects of war are

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<sup>265</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (Verso, 2009), 20.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>267</sup> Jameson, *The Cultural Turn.*, 20.

policed within media assemblages of power. Rather than merely providing information on the traumatic effects of the Vietnam War, Kubrick's film evokes viewers to see the violent effects of militarization from the loci of enunciation of the soldier-body and soldier's wounded body. For example, let us return to the image of Rafterman and ask how it is that Kubrick frames his locus of perception of violence in juxtaposition to the dominant media of the violence in the Vietnam War. Tellingly, Rafterman takes a photograph of the Marine who laughs while clenching onto his machine gun after shooting civilians from the helicopter. The viewer can assume that it is this picture of the event and of the Marine's story that will be rendered visible in the dominant media.

However, the horror of killing the innocent civilians below will be rendered invisible as the *horror of nothing to see* to the American public. Similar to the ways in which the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are screened to the American public as so-called clean wars, the media images of the Vietnam War were both censored and subject to a multiplicity of images that always "leaked" from Washington's desire to screen an honorable war worth fighting to the American public. Put this way, Kubrick's camera shots in this scene disrupt dominant media images of the horror of the Vietnam War by rendering visible these violent effects of the dehumanization of civilian men, women, and children and the biopolitics of "a life" in colonial systems of power, knowledge, and necropolitical warfare.

In juxtaposition to this first photograph taken by Rafter Man, the next set of photographs include images of dead civilians covered in lime, lined-up in a row in a ditch. The dead civilians are said to be victims of the Vietcong, and hence the military-media apparatus gathers around the ditch of bodies and takes photographs in order to reaffirm the dominant image in the U.S. and global media that it is the Vietcong, rather than the U.S. military, that

is the cause of civilian deaths in Vietnam. Private Joker interviews the Commander about the death of the civilians—while he does so, the Commander repeatedly smiles at the camera as Rafterman takes his picture. The viewer is again forced to consider how the violence of the wars will be screened to the American public. While the *Stars and Stripes* will cover the story of the death of civilians by the Vietcong, the stories of civilians killed by U.S. soldiers in the Vietnam War were significantly policed within dominant military-media apparatuses, especially during the Tet Offensive and the late 1960s when public support for the war in Vietnam began to decline.

The staging of the violence of the Vietnam war's effects is striking especially when we consider the ways in which the Abu Ghraib photographs circulated in the American and global public in the, until recently, Global War on Terror in Iraq. Similar to the ways in which the images of the Mai Lai Massacre helped fuel anti-war sentiment amongst the American public in the Vietnam War, the leaking of the Abu Ghraib photographs significantly shifted the context for the "framing" of the Global War on Terror in Iraq and led to a decline in public support for the war.<sup>268</sup> In Errol Morris's documentary film *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008), Sabrina Harman, famously known for smiling with a thumbs-up as she posed for the camera next to a corpse of an Iraqi man at Abu Ghraib, describes why she smiled at the camera while sitting next to the corpse of a prisoner [See Figure 11]. Like the Commander who automatically smiles at Rafter Man and the camera as he takes photographs of him during his interview with Private Joker, Harman states that everyone smiles when their picture is being taken. While many Americans may have found the image of her smiling next to a corpse of a tortured prisoner abhorrent and unfathomable (especially

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<sup>268</sup> See Butler, *Frames of War*. I provide a more detailed analysis on Butler's concept of the "frames" of war in my chapter on the feminization of trauma.

since she is a woman), Harman describes to the viewer how smiling at the camera was a normal reaction, even when next to a corpse.



Figure 11: Sabrina Harman, famously known for smiling with thumbs-up as she poses for the camera next to a corpse of an Iraqi man at Abu Ghraib prison.

I am not suggesting that the habit of smiling in front of a camera during combat fully captures the complexities of the events of Abu Ghraib and the screening of war and violence to the American public. Instead, my point is that posing in front of the camera during U.S.-led wars operates within systems of power whereby photographs, and posing for photographs, becomes another performative and normalizing operation of power in combat relations. As the soldiers describe it in the film *Standard Operating Procedure*, the photographs of soldiers' use of torture tactics against Muslim men were actually quite unremarkable and ordinary to the soldiers stationed at Abu Ghraib. The homoerotic and racist

assemblage of power, and use of torture, was not exceptional at Abu Ghraib—it was Standard Operating Procedure.

The Standard Operating Procedure of killing civilians, and reporting one's experiences and/or conveying a particular narrative of the atrocities as part of the assemblage of enacting such modes of violence, also operated as Standard Operating Procedure during the Vietnam War. Throughout the film *Full Metal Jacket* the soldiers are continually seeking to tell their stories to the media as they attempt to shape a very particular narrative and image of the war “back home” to the American public. Which images are circulated to the American public and which images are not circulated operate within military-media apparatuses of power and knowledge. Which stories are told and which stories are not told are political.

Images in these terms function as weapons, especially within contemporary forms of warfare and security apparatuses. It is interesting to note in this sense that the cinema can function as a space of propaganda (as mentioned earlier) and also as an instrument of war. Indeed, the *image of time* in contemporary cinema and war is increasingly becoming an extension of the “war machine,” and a “logistics of military perception” in which “a supply of images would become the equivalent of an ammunition supply” in post WWII global configurations of geopolitical time and space.<sup>269</sup> As Paul Virilio illuminates in *War and Cinema*, a new “global vision” in military logistics of perception supplied by new surveillance technologies, drones, stealth equipment, and global weapon systems, along with the re-territorialization of film by the state as a means in which to propel new propaganda machines for war and peace, requires critical attention to what *thinking in images*

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<sup>269</sup> Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (Verso, 2009), 1. Originally published in 1989.

demands.<sup>270</sup> In a famous passage from *War and Cinema*, Virilio writes:

We can now better understand the crucial importance of this “logistics of perception” and of the secrecy that surrounds it. A war of pictures and sounds is replacing the war of objects (projectiles and missiles). In a technicians’ version of an all-seeing Divinity, every ruling out accident and surprise, the drive in on for a general system of illumination that will allow everything to be seen and known, at every moment and in every place.<sup>271</sup>

Virilio’s statement above grossly depoliticizes how projectiles and missiles are still very much a part of contemporary warfare, in both the Vietnam War and the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the logistics of military perception and image politics is instructive because the camera in Kubrick’s film functions in many ways as a weapon—the viewing of the wars on the American homefront is filtered through a series of military security apparatuses. Kubrick’s film forces the viewer to consider the securitization of images in the Vietnam War and how media and Hollywood imaginaries structure the soldiers’ relationships, subjectivities, and imaginaries of war.

For instance, the clashing of images between the smiling soldiers posing for the camera and dead civilians are juxtaposed side by side in the following scene when a Marine poses, smiling, next to a dead Vietnamese man killed after a recent battle. In this shot, the Marine poses with the corpse of the man as he describes how the Marines will be remembered as the “Jolly Green Giants” [See Figure 12]. The image is striking and evokes for me, again, the image of Sandra Harman’s smile in the Abu Ghraib photographs. However, the Marine’s

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, 4.

speech about the dead Vietnamese man offers a narrative code that is superimposed over the image of him smiling next to the corpse. In his words:

This is my bro. This is his party. He's the guest of honor. Today is his birthday. I will never forget this day. The day I came to Wei city and fought one million NVA gooks. I love the little Commie bastards, man I really do. These enemy grunts are as hard as slant-eyed Drill Instructors. These are great days we're living bros. We're Jolly Green Giants walking the earth with guns. These people we wasted here today are the finest human beings we will ever know. After we rotate back to the rest of the world we're gonna miss not having anyone around who's worth shootin.'

Toward the end of the film, and following a battle in the cityspace, the Marines stage once again another narrative of the Vietnam War by performing the battle that just passed. This time the military-embedded media arrives with video cameras to screen America's first televised war. The soldiers reenact the combat scene as the battlespace now becomes a field of simulation and theater—wounded soldiers and men on cots pass by the camera; Marines fire artillery from the tanks; the marines stare back blankly at the camera. "This is John Wayne the Movie!" yells Private Joker and the others. "I'll be the Indian!" yells Rafter Man. "Hey, we'll let the gooks play the Indians," yells "Animal Mother" (Adam Baldwin).



Figure 12: Marine poses with the corpse of the man as he describes how the Marines will be remembered as the “Jolly Green Giants.”

In these scenes, the racialized imaginaries of the uncivilized “other” in Vietnam are correlated to the dominant imaginaries of native peoples of the North American continent. The multiplicity of native tribes and genealogical origins become flattened-out through the colonial representation of native peoples as simply “Indians.” It is through the creation of the image of John Wayne as a masculine, white hero fighting in the frontiers of the “empty” West that helps suture—or normalize—the simulacrum of violence surrounding the “historical amnesia” of colonial violence against native peoples on the North American continent.

Moreover, it is through the simulacrum of representation surrounding the image of John Wayne, as a hero fighting the “bad guys,” that structures the subjectivities of the soldiers in

Vietnam. Whether they are playing the “Jolly Green Giants” or “John Wayne,” it is clear to the viewer that it is the soldiers who too have become targets of U.S. militarized violence and trauma. It is almost playful when the soldiers shout that they are playing the characters from a John Wayne film—for the soldiers realize they are embedded within a war where images are just as important, and indeed function as, weapons. For instance, during the next combat mission they are unable to receive support from the Command when one of the men is injured in the middle of the field—no help comes from Central Command. In this final combat scene, several of the Marines lay dying in the middle of the blown-out cityspace as they attempt to kill the hidden sniper before they are eventually killed. However heroic their musings are in the previous scene then, it becomes increasingly clear that the image of the “John Wayne” Western Hero film is only a representation of masculinity that renders invisible the concrete experiences of the *horror of nothing to see* of militarism and violence. Indeed, the soldiers are not trying to “rescue” anyone during this combat mission—they are only trying to rescue their own lives from the violence that they are surrounded by.

Kubrick ends the film with a compelling anti-hero narrative—the sniper that has killed their friends and attempted to kill the entire platoon turns out to be a young girl, perhaps only fifteen years old. How heroic would it be for the men to kill a fifteen year-old girl who is now wounded and lies on her back, praying for the men to kill her? Private Joker stands over the young girl, along with the rest of the Marines, as Kubrick provides a compelling close-up shot of both Private Joker’s face [See Figure 12] and the young girl’s face [See Figure 13].



Figure 13: Private Joker stands over the young girl, along with the rest of the Marines, as Kubrick provides a compelling close-up shot of both Private Joker's face.

The question before Private Joker is: to let her die or kill her? Tellingly, the question of “making her live” never arises as a possibility—her death is certain. “She’s wasted,” says one of the Marines. “Leave her to the rats,” says another. Kubrick uses the close-up shot of the soldiers’ faces, especially Joker’s, in order to convey the psychological dimensions of the inner struggles that they all face as they stand over the young girl. The viewer is able to see a divided self in this scene through the use of lightness and darkness of the face shot—the peace/war dualism that Joker struggles with throughout the film now culminates in a final decision of whether to kill the young girl (as she prays for) or let her die. The thousand yards stare, which not long ago seemed like a distant reality, becomes a site of meditation in these final scenes of the film as Kubrick provides a close-up shot of each of the soldiers’ faces. They have seen another world “beyond” the ones they were trained to engage as soldiers; as young men imagining themselves as heroes; and as “Jokers” who never imagined, perhaps, that they would kill a young woman at point blank. Their stare becomes concretized as they

look at the stare of the young girl who too sees “beyond” the present moment of her body as she prays and pleas for the soldiers to kill her [See Figure 14].



Figure 14: The young girl who pleads for the Marines to kill her after she is wounded

Joker does kill the young girl instead of letting her die. The perceived dualism between peace and war, lightness and darkness, and good and evil become blurred within the limits of any perceived “choice” with the girl’s death and their future memories and trauma of the war. If he kills her, he will answer her wishes and perhaps alleviate any further agony from the wounds of the gunshot. If he lets her die, she will be made to suffer. The violence of the war’s effects leaves no “humane” options for alleviating suffering and the violence of the war is viewed as, perhaps, senseless.

Nevertheless, it is quite telling that while Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* circulated as an anti-war film upon its release that it has become—as Fredric Jameson might put it—commoditized perhaps as another war film that many Americans view without necessarily challenging the violence of U.S. military practices in the present. Indeed, many persons, in the U.S. and globally, perhaps view the film as a satire or anti-war narrative of the Vietnam

War while not necessarily challenging the violence of the current wars effects in Iraq and Afghanistan. Perhaps this is because the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are viewed, in contrast to the Vietnam War, as “clean wars,” like a video game. Moreover, only one percent of the American public currently serves in the Armed Forces. Hence, the productive returns of soldiers’ trauma from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan do not affect as many Americans as they did during the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, this chapter demonstrates how the process of becoming a soldier and a trained killer is embedded within disciplinary and biopolitical apparatuses of power that narratives of loss cannot take into account. The production of the soldier “body-machine complex” as an “assemblage of capacities” thus involves producing a soldier body that is worthy of making live but only through the simultaneous production of the death of civilians.

The following chapter fast-forwards to the present and examines how the soldier’s body, as an assemblage of capacities, is also disciplined by discursive formations of power surrounding what it means to be a masculine warrior-body in the recent U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite images of a so-called clean war waged in the dominant media, many soldiers are experiencing the horror of wars and challenging what it means to be a “man” both on the homefront and the warfront. While the following chapters focus mostly on male soldiers, in order to re-center masculinity as a complex process of becoming, later chapters focus on women soldiers as well the process of becoming a “man” as a woman-soldier. The following chapter also provides a brief historical gloss on the militarization of masculinities, especially during the Vietnam War and up to the present Global War on Terror. It is important to historicize the militarization of masculinities and the politics of PTSD, and it is the aim of the next chapter to highlight how the assemblage of the soldier’s

body is part of a broader historical assemblage of becomings that are inherently gendered, racialized, and sexualized.

## Chapter 4

### PTSD Pussies! Framing and Reframing the Feminization of Trauma from the Vietnam War to The Global War on Terror

#### Introduction: Breaking the Rules of Engagement

Civil society honors military service partly because of the sacrifice it entails. Lengthy and repeated deployments stress our closest relationships with family and friends. The realities, traumas, and stresses of military life take an emotional toll. This emotional battle is part of the sacrifice that we honor. That any young soldier might wrestle with his or her experiences in the military, or with his or her identity beyond military life, should never be wielded as a weapon against them.<sup>272</sup>

—Former U.S. Army Specialist Ethan McCord

In the above statement, U.S. veteran Ethan McCord responds in *The Nation* magazine to the detainment of twenty-five year old Private First Class Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning by the U.S. government. Manning's trial is by now well known. In brief, PFC Manning, a former army intelligence analyst, was charged with twenty-two counts for allegedly leaking classified documents and video to WikiLeaks, including 260,000 diplomatic cables, over 90,000 intelligence reports from the war in Afghanistan, and a video of a military attack in Baghdad taken from an Apache helicopter.<sup>273</sup> Manning was arrested by the military in May

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<sup>272</sup> See "Ethan McCord On 'New York' Magazine Profile of Bradley Manning: It 'Erases' His Political Motives," *The Nation*, accessed February 25, 2013, <http://www.thenation.com/blog/161902/ethan-mccord-new-york-magazine-profile-bradley-manning-it-erases-his-political-motives>.

<sup>273</sup> Jason M. Breslow, "Bradley Manning Hints at Guilty Plea in WikiLeaks Case – WikiSecrets," *FRONTLINE*, accessed November 16, 2013,

2010 and was sent to a Marine Corps jail in Quantico, Va. where he was subjected to disciplinary control and, as Julian Assange and others argue, torture tactics by prison guards.<sup>274</sup> In August 2013, he was sentenced by a military judge to thirty-five years in prison for the release of over 700,000 files to WikiLeaks.<sup>275</sup> The video that Manning uploaded onto WikiLeaks, which Manning titled “Collateral Murder,” was uploaded onto WikiLeaks on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and was viewed by millions of people. In the thirty-nine minutes of classified footage, shot from the cockpit of an Apache helicopter in Baghdad in 2007, two unarmed journalists and civilians are killed and wounded by U.S. soldiers over the course of three airstrikes using 30 mm firepower.

Viewers of the video are only able to see the violent effects of the air strikes vis-à-vis the field of perception or “vision machines” taken from the helicopter.<sup>276</sup> From this field of vision and structure of perception, the event-space of the air raid is remote and distanced. That is to say that the soldiers in the Apache helicopter could only see the supposed enemy as one identifies the enemy in a videogame. However, Army Specialist Ethan McCord’s description of the event is more gruesome. Unlike the soldiers in the helicopter with an aerial view of the bodies hovering below them, McCord and others were on the ground and therefore experienced a very different “shock effect” from the “collateral damage” and

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<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/foreign-affairs-defense/wikisecrets/bradley-manning-hints-at-guilty-plea-in-wikileaks-case/>.

<sup>274</sup> Ed Pilkington in New York, “Bradley Manning’s Treatment Was Cruel and Inhuman, UN Torture Chief Rules,” *The Guardian*, March 12, 2012,

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/12/bradley-manning-cruel-inhuman-treatment-un>.

<sup>275</sup> Charlie Savage and Emmarie Huetteman, “Manning Sentenced to 35 Years for a Pivotal Leak of U.S. Files,” *The New York Times*, August 21, 2013, sec. U.S.,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/22/us/manning-sentenced-for-leaking-government-secrets.html>.

<sup>276</sup> Virilio, *The Vision Machine*.

*horror of nothing to see* of the bodies. As he describes the scene of violence and murder of civilians in a *Time* article, "The top of one guy's head was completely off...another guy was ripped open from groin to neck. A third had lost a leg ... their insides were out and exposed. I'd never seen anything like this before."<sup>277</sup>

McCord is spotted in the video helping two wounded children, whom he brought to a nearby hospital following the strike [See Figure 15]. By helping the two wounded children and by bringing them to a hospital to receive medical care, McCord broke his Commander's order to put the needs of U.S. soldiers first before helping wounded civilians. In an interview, McCord describes his experience helping the two wounded children and his platoon leader's resistance to his act of attending to the children during the attack. When McCord approached the van, he states that:

That's when I saw the boy move with what appeared to be a labored breath. So I started screaming, "The boy's alive." I grabbed him and cradled him in my arms and kept telling him, "Don't die, don't die." He opened his eyes, looked up at me. I told him, "It's OK, I have you." His eyes rolled back into his head, and I kept telling him, "It's OK, I've got you." I ran up to the Bradley and placed him inside. My platoon leader was standing there at the time, and he yelled at me for doing what I did. He told me to "stop worrying about these motherfucking kids and start worrying about pulling security." So after that I went up and pulled security on a rooftop.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Mark Thompson, "Invisible Wounds: Mental Health and the Military," *Time*, August 22, 2010, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2008886,00.html>.

<sup>278</sup> See Bill Van Auken, "U.S. Soldier in Wikileaks massacre video: "I relive this every day," *World Socialist Website*, April 28, 2010, <http://www1.wsws.org/articles/2010/apr2010/emcc-a28.shtml>.



Figure 15: Ethan McCord is spotted in the “Collateral Murder” video helping two wounded children, whom he brought to a nearby hospital following the strike.

Following the attack, McCord was distraught over the event and of the children whose blood was still on his clothing and hands. When he asked his Sergeant if he could speak to a mental health specialist because he was having a hard time grappling with the attack, he was “smoked” by his Sergeant. As McCord describes, “I was called a pussy and that I needed to suck it up and a lot of other horrible things. I was also told that there would be repercussions if I was to go to mental health.”<sup>279</sup> In another interview, he states his Sergeant told him he

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<sup>279</sup> See Kim Zetter, “U.S. Soldier on 2007 Apache Attack: What I Saw | Danger Room | Wired.com,” *Danger Room*, accessed February 25, 2013, <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/04/2007-iraq-apache-attack-as-seen-from-the-ground/>.

was “being a homo and needed to suck it up.”<sup>280</sup> In addition, McCord’s Sergeant told him to “get the sand out of your vagina.”<sup>281</sup> It is this statement and these “injurious” modes of speech by McCord’s Sergeant that inspire my political investigations of soldier trauma in this chapter.<sup>282</sup>

It examines how the feminization of trauma amongst male soldiers in the current U.S.-led wars operates as a regulatory mechanism of power for disciplining soldiers’ bodies. It explores how many soldiers, such as Ethan McCord, become framed as “women”—as giving into grief as “PTSD Pussies”—when they disrupt the normative frames for viewing the war’s violent effects on the homefront/warfront. How does grief, as a process of unraveling and becoming undone, often become feminized as the *horror of nothing to see* within not only the dominant media of the Global War on Terror but through the process of becoming “Strong, Army Strong?” What does “feminizing” a soldier entail and how is this process of feminizing soldier-bodies historical, gendered, sexualized, and racialized?

The chapter examines the conditions of possibility for how masculine military subjects become feminized as deviant bodies and as women within U.S. military apparatuses of power in the current wars. The feminization of soldiers and of trauma is by no means a new concept to feminist security studies and gender and militarism studies. I am not proposing to introduce a new concept on the feminization of soldier-trauma through the systemic use of terms like “PTSD Pussies” by military Commanders. Instead, it is useful to historicize the relations of power that lead to the normalization of terms like “PTSD Pussies” and how the U.S. military is historically shaped by dominant ideas about masculinity and femininity.

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<sup>280</sup> Thompson, “Invisible Wounds.”

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Butler, *Excitable Speech*.

The first section provides a brief political gloss on the concept of “militarized masculinities” and what it means to “feminize” U.S. soldier-bodies as unmanly, weak, and feminine. It focuses on how America’s defeat in Vietnam was viewed as a feminized assault against the nation-state, and how military leaders have continued to try to exert images of America’s strength through masculine language and images in popular culture and through high-tech weaponry. We cannot appreciate the significance of the use of the term “PTSD Pussies” by current military Commanders without understanding why appearing “weak” and like a “woman” is historically linked to America’s defeat in Vietnam.<sup>283</sup> The second section provides a brief literature review on the feminization of soldier-trauma within the context of racism, colonialism, sexuality, and gendered violence on the homefront and the warfront since the events of September 11, 2001. It is by no means an exhaustive account of the feminization of trauma and of U.S. soldiering in the current wars, but it does provide a helpful overview for how terms and statements like “PTSD Sissies” and “Get the sand out your vagina, soldier!” are historically gendered and how they operate as productive discursive formations of power within U.S. military networks of power and knowledge.

### Framing the Feminization of Trauma

As described in the previous chapter, the feminization of male soldiers is a historical phenomenon that can be traced back to the discursive production of female “hysteria” and “shell shock” amongst soldiers during the first and second world wars. Feminist theorists have also demonstrated how soldiers in contemporary warfare become feminized as “sissies” (once known as hysterics) when they disrupt the normative conventions of militarized masculinities. According to Sandra Whitworth the category of PTSD is a storytelling practice

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<sup>283</sup> I would like to thank Craig Howes for encouraging me to historicize the feminization of soldiers in the current U.S.-led wars to the Vietnam War.

embedded within dominant ideas about masculinity and femininity. As she puts it, “PTSD tells us a series of stories about militarized masculinity; stories that those who support militaries and militarism would prefer we not think about too deeply.”<sup>284</sup> As Whitworth demonstrates, processes of militarization construct sexed and gendered bodies. Anxieties surrounding PTSD as a feminine disorder, she argues, sheds light on the fragility and performativity of militarized masculinities. While the Canadian and U.S. militaries are discursively produced as a brotherhood of equals, the differential ways in which soldiers experience PTSD—such as the different stories female soldiers and soldiers of color have to tell about PTSD—shed light on the myth of brotherhood and the invisible stories of soldiering that never make it into the official accounts of war.<sup>285</sup> Whitworth thus brings our attention to the importance of approaching PTSD as a storytelling practice that also tells us about how soldiers experience the traumatic affects of militarization differently within gendered and racial formations of power.

Judith Butler’s emphasis on the relationship between the body, frames, and norms of recognition within the context of war also enables us to critically reframe the “framing” of soldiers as feminized subjects within narrative contexts. In *Frames of War*, Butler describes how the context of war is continually shifting as the “frames” of war break and create new frames and contexts of war.<sup>286</sup> These processes of normalization that frame the intelligibility of the subject and the “text of war”—such as dominant ideas about masculinity, femininity, soldiering, and trauma—are continually shifting and disrupted by “frames of recognition” that are historically, politically, and culturally contingent.

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<sup>284</sup> Sandra Whitworth, “Militarized masculinity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” Parpart and Zalewski, *Rethinking the Man Question*, 109.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-111.

<sup>286</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*. P. 10.

The “bodily ontology” of the subject, Butler contends, is preceded by existing norms and “frames of recognizability” that produce both intelligible and unintelligible bodies, norms, and processes of doing and undoing norms.<sup>287</sup> For instance, Butler demonstrates in *Bodies that Matter* how gendered and sexual norms are not simply attributes of preexisting bodies. The materiality of the body is instead an effect of power. Gender and sexual performances constitute bodies as culturally intelligible bodies within regimes of cultural intelligibility.<sup>288</sup> Regimes of representation and the qualification of a body within domains of cultural intelligibility are produced through the repetition and citation of existing norms of recognition.

The ontological production of bodies brings our attention to how bodies are governed by apparatuses of power that are beyond the subject’s control. Particularly, a “bodily ontology” of the subject is one that “implies the rethinking of precariousness, vulnerability, injurability, interdependency, exposure, bodily persistence, desire, work and the claims of language and social belonging.”<sup>289</sup> Historically, U.S. soldiers are “framed” as masculine subjects within militarized networks of power that are produced and reproduced by dominant ideas and regimes of cultural intelligibility of sex, gender, sexuality, race, class, and ethnicity. As described in the previous chapter, military culture and disciplining the soldier-body functions most broadly as a ritual that trains soldiers to become masculine subjects by degrading women as the inherent “other” of order, reason, bravery, courage, and strength. What it means to be “feminine” and a “woman” and a “man” and “masculine” within militarized

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>288</sup> See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (Psychology Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 2.

networks of power are thus productive and performative discursive formations of power that produce both intelligible and unintelligible bodies.

There is a rich literature within feminist International Relations theory and masculinity studies that provides a critical approach to the production, or “framing,” of militarized masculinities and the feminization of trauma. Masculinity studies scholars R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt define the concept of masculinity as a “configuration of practice organized in relation to the structure of gender relations.”<sup>290</sup> In these terms, masculinity is mutually constituted by ideas and practices of femininity. As an ongoing set of practices, the production of masculinity is thus inherently relational and functions as an unstable, rather than natural and stable, configuration of gendered relations.<sup>291</sup>

The concept of *hegemonic masculinity* underlines how masculinities are embedded too within systems of domination and control across multiple differences. As Connell puts it, “We must also recognize the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination.”<sup>292</sup> He draws on Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, or the cultural dynamic where one group of persons utilizes class relations to elevate themselves as culturally superior and to subordinate another group of persons in the social

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<sup>290</sup> R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (December 1, 2005): 829-859, doi:10.1177/0891243205278639, 843.

<sup>291</sup> The concept of masculinity within this context does not presuppose an essentialist or biologically determined “nature” of masculinity (and femininity) that is universal, pre-determined, and scientific in scope. Instead, there is a plurality of masculinities that is rooted within a particular gendered, social, geopolitical, and historical context. As a recent concept that arises out of early modern Europe and through the formation of warrior identities and capitalist systems (which I describe in more detail in another chapter), masculinity is historically produced within cultural, semiotic, discursive, normative, and economic formations of power. There is also a multiplicity of different masculine identities and practices within racial, classed, colonial, sexual, heteronormative, and imperial frameworks of power.

<sup>292</sup> *Masculinities*, 37.

realm.<sup>293</sup> The hegemonic masculinities of contemporary warfare practices are viewed within American culture as a rite of passage, as an affective process of becoming, whereby boys become men. For instance, the historical relationships between the state apparatus and the U.S. film industry directs us to how images of a tough, hard, and white heteronormative male soldier-body emerges as the quintessential model of the masculine U.S. soldier-body since the Vietnam War. Films such as Oliver Stone's *Born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July* (1989) provides a striking example of how young men, such as Ron Kovic, were recruited by the U.S. Marines to fight a war that was viewed at the time as an honorable and manly rite of passage. In these terms, masculinity and militarized masculinities are not natural identities or attributes of one's presumably natural "sex." Instead, the construction of sexual difference and of a militarized masculine body is socially, historically, and culturally constituted and always capable of becoming undone.

For instance, many cultural constructions of warring bodies and the myths of the war-hero become undone once soldiers are sent to war. The myth of the masculine war hero—and of John Wayne as an embodied ideal of a white, heteronormative, manly, and rugged hero who honorably fought the "bad" guys and "native other" of the American frontier—was shattered for many Vietnam soldiers when they were sent to Vietnam. Once deployed to the warfront, the soldiers experienced a very different reality of war than the one they read about

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<sup>293</sup> Connell extends on this concept by focusing on how masculinity too can be "culturally exalted" at any time to position one group of "peoples" as superior to another. He thus defines *hegemonic masculinity* as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." Significantly, hegemonic masculinities are non-totalizing and they are never complete. Rather, masculine identities and power formations are provisional and always subject to change and contestation.

in war fiction, comic books, and watched in Western and WWII films. Instead, “For most soldiers, the realities of Vietnam led to disenchantment with war mythology.”<sup>294</sup> Military leaders went to great lengths to assert—through brute violence and force on Vietnamese bodies—that Americans could win the war in Vietnam. However, “all these assertions of mythic grandeur and all the displays of American power, such as the massive B-52 bombing of North Vietnam in 1972, could not sustain the myth that that this was a country that always won its battles.”<sup>295</sup> When Communist forces entered Saigon in May of 1975 and as Americans watched on television as soldiers evacuated Saigon, the myth of the war hero and of America’s warrior images was (partially) destroyed.

America’s defeat in Vietnam was also viewed as a feminized assault on the U.S. military and on the bodies of Vietnam veterans who returned from the wars. Veterans of the Vietnam War returned not as John Wayne heroes, but as men who had experienced psychic trauma and physical injuries of war. As John Kerry recounted in his testimony on behalf of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 22, 1971, Vietnam veterans returned to a country that “simply didn’t care about them.”<sup>296</sup> The men returned with serious physical and psychic injuries and were left in VA hospitals without adequate medical attention or federal funding. In addition, the majority of Vietnam veterans who returned from the wars came from working class families and rural communities.

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<sup>294</sup> *Warrior Dreams: Paramilitary Culture in Post-Vietnam America* (New York: Hill and Wang), 24.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>296</sup> Read John Kerry’s speech at:

[http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML\\_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/VVAW\\_Kerry\\_Senate.html](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/VVAW_Kerry_Senate.html).

Nearly 27 million men came to be of draft age during the years of 1964 to 1973.<sup>297</sup>

While 2.5 million men of the baby boom generation served in the war, it was still a small portion of the American population who knew a family member or friend who served in the war. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 1,857,304 men were drafted between August 1964 and February 1973. A total of 8,744,000 people served during that period.<sup>298</sup> In contrast, nearly 12 million men and women served in the military during WWII, and most Americans had a family member, a niece, a mother, a sister, a father, or a brother who served in one capacity or another in the U.S. Armed Forces.

African American men also served in disproportionately higher numbers than white males in the Vietnam War. According to Christian Appy, “At the beginning of the war blacks comprised more than 20 percent of American combat deaths, about twice their portion in the U.S. population” and “The total percentage of blacks who served in Vietnam was roughly 10 percent throughout the war.” The military was officially desegregated in 1948, and most African American men did serve in integrated units during the Korean War. However, it was the Vietnam War that was “hailed in the mass media as America’s first truly integrated war.”<sup>299</sup> The disproportionate number of African American male casualties in Vietnam was politicized and critiqued by prominent black leaders such as Malcom X, Muhammad Ali, Adam Clayton Powell, Dick Gregory, John Lewis, Julian Bond, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.<sup>300</sup> It was the Civil Rights movement that put pressure on the government to ensure that

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<sup>297</sup> Christian G Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 18.

<sup>298</sup> See the breakdown of the statistics in the NPR article, “By the Numbers: Today’s Military,” July 3, 2001, at [<http://www.npr.org/2011/07/03/137536111/by-the-numbers-todays-military>].

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

African American men were not disproportionately sent to Vietnam and in the front lines of combat. He writes, “By late 1967, black casualties had fallen to 13 percent and then to below 10 percent in 1970-72.”<sup>301</sup>

These racial differences also structure the current U.S. Armed Forces in similar albeit different ways. Of course, today’s U.S. military is no longer sustained through the draft but by what many call the “economic draft”—a term that has de-politicizing effects because it flattens out the complex reasons for how soldiers come to enlist in the military. According to the Department of Defense, U.S. Census Bureau, military personnel make up less than one percent of the total U.S. population (309 million people in 2010).<sup>302</sup> Approximately 2,266,883 people comprise today’s U.S. military personnel, of which 2.28 million military personnel have deployed in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (many have served multiple tours).<sup>303</sup> In addition, 82 percent of the U.S. military is comprised of male recruits in contrast with 18 percent of military personnel who are women.<sup>304</sup>

Today’s military is also comprised of mostly rural recruits, and many women and men are recruited from the American South and Midwest.<sup>305</sup> As I described in Chapter One of this dissertation, soldiers from the first and second World Wars, such as Audie Murphy, were generally heralded by the media and dominant popular culture as war heroes when they returned to the homefront. However, Vietnam soldiers returned to the homefront with these

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>302</sup> See “By The Numbers: Today’s Military,” *NPR.org*, accessed September 29, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/2011/07/03/137536111/by-the-numbers-todays-military>.

<sup>303</sup> “Military personnel” includes active duty, reserves, National Guard, and Air National Guard. See the breakdown of the statistics in the NPR article, “By the Numbers: Today’s Military,” July 3, 2001.

<sup>304</sup> Again, I take all the above statistics from the NPR article, “By the Numbers: Today’s Military,” July 3, 2001.

<sup>305</sup> “Who Bears the Burden?”

injures and found themselves a part of, resistant to, or outside of the antiwar movement. The second wave of the feminist movement, the Civil Rights movement, and a growing decline of American support for the Vietnam War also significantly challenged the masculine war hero mythology of American imperialism.

Military leaders continued to assert America's military strength and dominance throughout the Vietnam War and after the war by emphasizing America's new model of "techno-war" that had been developing since WWII.<sup>306</sup> From the perspective of military leaders, "technowar would have inevitably produced victory if it hadn't been for the influences of liberals in Congress, the antiwar movement, and the news media, who together stopped the military from unleashing its full powers of destruction."<sup>307</sup> The production of high-tech warfare, the professionalization of soldiering, and the bureaucratic structure of the military corps were all viewed by military leaders at the time—and today—as the solution for winning battles. As William Gibson puts it:

In this new model of warfare...war was conceptualized as a kind of high-technology production process in which the office corps were managers, the enlisted men were workers, and the final product was death: whoever had the biggest, most sophisticated apparatus was sure to produce the highest enemy body count and thus win. The "soft" variable of war, such as the history, culture, and motivations of a people, were not seen as being important because they had none of the "hard" reality of weapons.<sup>308</sup>

The language above that equates "softness" to culture, history, and the everyday lives of people and the "hardness" of reality to weapons technology is also inherently gendered.

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<sup>306</sup> *Warrior Dreams*, 294.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

Particularly, the language of warfare, securitization, and enemy threats within the field of International Relations is structured by dominant discourses of masculinity.<sup>309</sup> To be “hard” (masculine) means that military leaders rely on weapons technologies, “reason,” and order while all other modes of thinking about relationships between the state and society—through “peace” talks, cultural differences, and economics are deemed as being too “soft” (feminine). The sexing of soldier-bodies is therefore embedded within discursive and institutional structures of power that govern the ways in which soldiers are able to make “sense” of their reality of war experiences.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described the new “techno-warfare” model and the Vietnam War as a war on America’s poor and as a war on the indigenous peoples of Vietnam within colonial histories of violence. In his speech, “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” delivered at the Manhattan’s Riverside Church in April 1967, King demonstrated how racism, poverty, and militarism within the U.S. and globally are structurally linked and normalized.<sup>310</sup> Rather than provide federal funding for ending poverty in the United States for whites and African Americans, such as through the Poverty Program, the government had decided to invest all of its funds to fight a war against so-called Communists.

The U.S. claimed it was protecting the Vietnamese peoples from Communist control when the U.S. had historically helped suppress the indigenous people of the region by supporting French colonial violence in Vietnam. King also describes how African American men were fighting a war in Vietnam for the so-called freedom of the Vietnamese people. Yet,

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<sup>309</sup> See Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>310</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King, “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” *Common Dreams*, April 1967, Published online on January 15, 2004 edition, <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0115-13.html>.

he argues, African Americans are still living in a racist and segregated society in the United States and they are not entitled to any of the liberties of so-called democratic freedom in their own country. King's eloquent words are worth quoting at length, especially since they resonate today in light of the current War on Terror on the homefront and in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen:

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the young black men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.<sup>311</sup>

King's description of the Vietnam War as a vicious process that "continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube" is timely when we consider the current U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and now U.S.-occupied Iraq. As I discuss in greater detail shortly, there are some similarities between these intersectionalities of cruelty and difference and the structure of today's U.S. military. However, it is worth noting

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

at this point that the long duration of the Vietnam War, which had become an increasingly unpopular war, along with the widespread use of illegal drugs and indiscipline, led to low morale amongst many troops who refused to obey the chain of command.<sup>312</sup> Significantly, many soldiers in Vietnam began to turn their weapons on their Commanders and higher officials. This act became known as “fragging,” which referred to the fragmentation of hand grenades often used in these assaults.<sup>313</sup> David Zeiger’s documentary film, *Sir, No Sir!* (2005), demonstrates how there was a vibrant GI Resistance movement that became increasingly influential as the Vietnam War escalated and as more veterans returned to the homefront and became involved in and leaders of the growing anti-war movement.

The creation of counter-public spaces such as GI coffeehouses, like the Olelo Strut, and underground newspapers were textual communities where veterans could meet and discuss the politics of the Vietnam War and devise various strategies of resistance. Significantly, these acts and sites of resistance to militarization and the chain of command that demands obedience amongst soldiers posed a serious threat to the U.S. military, and they continue to pose a threat to today’s U.S. military. Indeed, the creation of an all-volunteer force and the censorship of American media illustrate how the government attempts to police dissent and encourage further obedience amongst recruits and the American public.

It is thus important to contextualize the feminization of Ethan McCord—who challenged his Commander’s orders in battle and was called a “PTSD Pussy” after he sought mental health treatment—to these historical processes of the militarization of masculinities, the feminization of trauma, and GI resistance during the Vietnam War. Indeed, the defeat of

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<sup>312</sup> George Lepre, *Fragging: Why U.S. Soldiers Assaulted Their Officers in Vietnam* (Lubbock, Tex.: Texas Tech University Press, 2011).

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

American Armed forces in Vietnam was viewed as a feminized assault on military leaders within national imaginaries. Oftentimes, being “tough” on so-called war criminals, whistleblowers, and any soldiers who challenge the legitimacy of the U.S. war machine and securitization of images of the current wars is in this sense was viewed as Standard Operating Procedure for many military officials and Commanders. To seek help for mental health treatment, to share one’s feelings and grief with a fellow soldier or Commander, or to disobey orders and help a wounded civilian during combat, challenge the notion that soldiers are supposed to be “hard,” manly, and obedient to their chain of command. Moreover, expressing one’s grief as a U.S. soldier is often viewed as feminine, weak, and disorderly within these dominant frames of war. Within these militarized networks of power and control, the military cannot be seen as too “soft” with soldiers who are traumatized and “weakened” by their combat experiences and PTSD. As the saying goes, “Boys don’t cry.” The ordering of militarized male soldier-bodies thus demands the continual attempt to manage disorderly warring bodies within gendered frameworks of power.

It should not be surprising then that the U.S. government has repeatedly used the Espionage Act to criminalize whistleblowers such as Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning and NSA analyst Edward Snowden. In her reference to Chelsea Manning’s actions, Hillary Clinton said that Manning was “putting the international community at risk” by leaking documents to Wikileaks.<sup>314</sup> Male soldiers that transgress the boundaries and dominant “frames of war” of what it means to be a “hard” soldier-body within the U.S. war machine—a war machine that is supposed to be able to control its soldier-bodies—often become threatening subjects to military leaders. Deviant and disorderly U.S. soldier bodies are

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<sup>314</sup> See “Clinton Condemns Leak as ‘Attack on International Community,’” accessed September 29, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/11/29/wikileaks/index.html>.

disciplined and ordered within these military apparatuses of control through a multiplicity of material and discursive formations of power.

### Historicizing/Theorizing Trauma and the Feminization of Soldier-Trauma

The production and normalization of hegemonic militarized masculinities demands a lot of work on the part of institutions, everyday people, the police, media, and others to make it seem like U.S. masculine military identities and ideologies are “natural” and outside of power relations. As Connell and Messerschmidt remind us, “To sustain a given pattern of hegemony requires the policing of men as well as the exclusion or discrediting of women.”<sup>315</sup> For example, it may seem “natural” to many Americans that male soldiers who transgress what it means to be a “man” are called “sissies” and “PTSD pussies.” Yet, if we take heed to George Chauncey’s study of white middle class men and sexuality in New York City at the turn of the century then we can begin to see how the meaning of the term “pussy” as a derogatory term is a rather modern phenomena. Chauncey emphasizes how terms like “pussyfoot” and “sissy” have only recently come to denote injurious modes of speech.

As sexuality and heteronormative masculinities emerged as central identity formation practices in America at the turn of the century, so too did notions of homosexuality and effeminacy emerge as potential threats to what it means to be a masculine subject. While the term “sissy” was used affectionately during the 1840s to refer to one’s sister, it had come to denote a negative description of non-masculine men by the 1880s.<sup>316</sup> Terms like “pussyfoot” and “sissy” had thus become associated with effeminacy, cowardice, and lack of

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<sup>315</sup> *Gender and Society*, 844.

<sup>316</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 114-115.

aggression.<sup>317</sup> Hence, terms such as “sissy” and “pussyfoot” were derogatory terms that many white heterosexual men used to affirm their identity-making practices in relation to the effeminate, womanly, “homosexual” white male subject in turn of the century New York City.

The Commander’s speech act—by calling McCord a “PTSD Pussy” and “to get the sand out of your vagina, soldier”—also demonstrates how the Commander’s sexual and gendered identity as a (presumably heterosexual) “man” is performative and discursively produced. In other words, the formation of his subjectivity and identity as a masculine military Commander is produced through the inclusion of what it means to be a “man” and “heterosexual” (strong, heroic, aggressive, heteronormative) and the exclusion of what it means to be a “woman” and a “homosexual” (weak, cowardly, effeminate, queer). The ordering of militarized masculinities and heteronormative identities is therefore effected by the entire chain of command.

The feminization of U.S. soldiers as “PTSD Pussies” is also linked to the perceived feminization of the nation-state through the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 could have been an opportunity for Americans to reflect on and consider the historical and present role of the U.S. in the international world order. Rather than invading Afghanistan, the events of 9/11 and the grief of the attacks could have been a moment to rethink our fundamental dependency with others globally.<sup>318</sup> As Mahmood Mamdani puts it, the attacks of 9/11 could have been a moment for Americans to reframe what it means to think of humanity. “Before 9/11,” he writes, “I thought that tragedy had the potential to connect us with humanity in ways that prosperity does not. I thought that if prosperity tends

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>318</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, 31-32.

to isolate, tragedy must connect. Now I realize that this is not always the case. One unfortunate response to tragedy is a self-righteousness about one's own condition, a seeking proof of one's special place in the world, even in victimhood."<sup>319</sup> Rather than seize the opportunity to reflect on the conditions of possibility for why the terrorist attacks took place, the Bush administration immediately took this "crisis" as an opportunity for waging war on Afghanistan and Iraq.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were "framed" by the Bush Administration and by military leaders as a feminized attack upon the nation by the "uncivilized" terrorists of the Non-West. The attacks were followed by national calls and fantasies to restore "traditional" manhood, coupled by dominant media and discourses that exalted women as "supermoms" and protectors of the family against the perceived threats of the foreign terrorist-subject.<sup>320</sup> The anti-terrorist policies for securitizing the homefront and the warfront since 9/11 have been produced through a multiplicity of masculine discourses and disciplinary techniques embedded within colonial, racialized, and heteronormative formations of power.

The masculine terrorist subject of the Global War on Terrorism is also produced as a sexual perversity and "monster-terrorist" within Orientalist and colonial fantasies.<sup>321</sup> Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai recruit Michel Foucault's concept of monstrosity to demonstrate how the production of the abnormal body is historically rendered intelligible as a deviant body within

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<sup>319</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2004), 10.

<sup>320</sup> Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America*, First Edition (Metropolitan Books, 2007).

<sup>321</sup> Particularly, they draw on Michel Foucault's concept of the "abnormal" subject of western knowledges to illuminate how the contemporary terrorist-body of the War on Terror is embedded within historical formations of power and knowledge. As Foucault's genealogical study on abnormality demonstrates, bodies that transgress heteronormative and sexual norms of chastity are historically rendered deviant and monstrous bodies in western knowledges.

Western formations of disciplinary power and violence.<sup>322</sup> The historical production of the monstrous other is embedded within western civilization discourses that produce not only a notion of what abnormality is but of what it means to be “normal” as well. The West’s abnormal bodies, they argue, “have always been racialized, classed, and sexualized. The undesirable, the vagrant, the Gypsy, the savage, the Hottentot Venus, or the sexual depravity of the Oriental torrid zone shares a basic kinship with the terrorist–monster.”<sup>323</sup> The terrorist–monster of the Global War on Terrorism—including the bodies of Osama Bin Laden, Arab Americans, Muslim men, and brown male bodies—are produced as sexually deviant bodies within dominant racist representations in the media and within heteronormative and patriotic frameworks.

For example, dominant images of turbaned brown male bodies and of Osama bin Laden after the events of 9/11 linked dominant representations of sexual deviancy to queerness, monstrosity, and terrorism. One particularly striking example they provide is a poster in Manhattan after the attacks that showed an image of Osama bin Laden being anally penetrated by the Empire State building. In this image, bin Laden is feminized and racialized as a sexual deviant and as a “fag” that is being sodomized by a symbol of phallic order and of so-called American freedom.<sup>324</sup> These dominant representational practices of the “monster–terrorist” are also productive insofar that they help produce and normalize the population of “docile patriots” who are disciplined through these discourses of the “other.” As Puar and Rai put it, “what these representations show...is that queerness as sexual deviancy is tied to the monstrous figure of the terrorist as a way to otherize and quarantine subjects classified as

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<sup>322</sup> See Jasbir K. Puar and Amit Rai, “Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots,” *Social Text* 20, no. 3 (2002), 117-148.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

‘terrorists’ but also to normalize and discipline a population through these very monstrous figures.”<sup>325</sup> Through these multiple representational practices, “American retaliation promises to emasculate bin Laden and turn him into a fag. This promise not only suggests that if you’re not for the war, you’re a fag, it also incites violence against queers and specifically queers of color.”<sup>326</sup> These dominant representations illuminate how the production of U.S. soldier masculinities are intricately linked to the production of nationalist, patriotic, and heteronormative soldier-bodies that are defending the nation from the monstrous, feminized, and sexually deviant “other” on the homefront/warfront.

These monstrous and sexually deviant “other” bodies include the bodies of turbaned brown men who are racially profiled, Arab Americans and Muslim men and women, and the terrorist other in Iraq and Afghanistan. Dominant representational practices of the “terrorist-other” are also embedded within civilization discourses and so-called Western “feminist” missions. As the Bush Administration rhetoric put it, it was part of America’s mission to “rescue” Muslim women from Muslim men from a “backward” Islamic culture. The dominant discourse of the Global War on Terror and the justification for invading Iraq and Afghanistan within this rescue framework recalls Gayatri Spivak’s emphasis on the colonial framework of “protector discourses” in her essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” As Spivak put it, colonial and imperial wars are fought in the name of “white men protecting brown women from brown men.”<sup>327</sup> The ordering of disorderly soldier bodies and the militarization of masculinities is thus rooted in these heterosexist and colonial discursive formations of power.

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 126

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>327</sup> See Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 92.

Many youth, women and men, enlist in the U.S. military not to defend the nation however from the “monster-terrorist” subject. Instead, most youth join the military in the hopes of gaining an education, travelling abroad, receiving health care benefits, gaining expedited citizenship, avoiding prison sentences, proving their masculinity and/or continuing a tradition of military service in their families. Nevertheless, soldiers are trained to view the terrorist “other” in Iraq and Afghanistan as inhuman and as a monstrous figure. As described in the previous chapter, the training of U.S. soldiers to become killers depends on dehumanizing the enemy as well as the soldier’s body.

#### Enlisting in the U.S. Military and “Structured Cruelty”: Intersectionalities of Difference

Arguably, being called a “sissy” or a “pussy” or a “fag” within sexist formations of power is a traumatizing event for anyone, including U.S. soldiers. Many U.S. soldiers who enlist in the military do not want to be viewed as a “PTSD pussy” or as a dishonorable soldier. However, I do not want to speak on behalf of veterans because that would enact more violence through abstract processes of representation. It is important to listen to the stories of veterans who describe how these operations of power have traumatizing affects.

Recently, veterans from the current Iraq and Afghanistan wars have begun to share their experiences and testimonies of violence on the homefront/warfront with each other and with the public through a project called *Warrior Writers*. As described in Chapter Two, the *Warrior Writers* project is a national non-profit organization that focuses on affirming veterans’ creative acts of expression through writing and art. Lovella Calica, a writer, is the founder, director, and catalyst of the *Warrior Writers* project.<sup>328</sup> Her creative vision for the

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<sup>328</sup> See the *Warrior Writers* website at: <http://www.warriorwriters.org/Artists/Lovella.html>.

project and her collaboration with veterans across the country has led to the development of three books that include veterans' art work, poems, and short stories.

In one brief essay from the second collection, *Warrior Writers: Re-Making Sense*, veteran Martin Smith provides a critique of how Marine Corps boot camp training involves the dehumanization of both the soldier's body and of the so-called enemy body. The title of his essay, "Structured Cruelty: Learning to Be a Lean, Mean Killing Machine," is interesting because it directs our attention to the structural dynamics in which racism, sexism, and homophobia permeate all facets of life in the military. While the previous chapter described how these structural dynamics of dehumanizing the soldier-body during boot camp training operate in the film *Full Metal Jacket*, the essay from the Warrior Writer project provides a contemporary glimpse at these operations of power for training today's soldiers for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Smith opens his essay by describing his experience in boot camp training at Camp Pendleton as a process of transition from recruit to Marine. Interestingly, many of the soldiers expressed their emotions and cried following their "transition" from recruits to "newborn" Marines. Smith describes this transition and the *horror of nothing to see* as a birth and an emotional process.

The description of the men's transition, and the hopes they had by becoming "Marines," sheds an important light on the affective and emotional battles and struggles that many soldiers grapple with. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, boot camp training and the process of becoming a soldier-body operates on a more ontological, rather than epistemological, matrix of power relations. This process of becoming is a productive dimension of power. Bodies-becoming-soldiers are experienced across differences of gendered, class, and racialized norms. It is worth quoting his story at length:

Mixed in with the refrain of Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA" belting from a massive sound system were the soft and gentle sobs emanating from numerous newborn marines. Their cries stood in stark contrast to the so-called "warrior spirit" we had earned and now came to epitomize. While some may claim that these unmanly responses resulted from a patriotic emotional fit or even out of a sense of pride in being called "Marine" for the very first time, I know that for many the moisture streaming down our cheeks represented something much more anguished and heartrending.

Smith continues:

What I learned about Marines is that despite the stereotype of the chivalrous knight, wearing dress blues with sword drawn, or the green killing machine that is always "ready to rumble," the young men and women I encountered instead represented a cross-section of working-class America. There were neither knights nor machines among us. During my five years in active-duty service, I befriended a recovering meth addict who was still "using"; a young male who had prostituted himself to pay his rent before he signed up; a Salvadoran immigrant serving in order to receive a green card; a single mother who could not afford her child's health care needs as a civilian; a gay teenager who entered our platoon by singing Madonna karaoke in the barracks to the delight of us all; and many of the country's poor and poorly educated. I came to understand very well what those cries on top of the Grim Reaper expressed. Those teardrops represented hope of a promise of a change in our lives from a world that, for many of us as civilians, seemed utterly hopeless.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Calica and Iraq Veterans Against the War, *Warrior Writers*, 32-33.

Smith's description of the Marines and their displays of seemingly "unmanly" emotion following their "birth" as a "newborn" Marine is telling. When I first read this part of his story, I imagined he was going to state the Marines were crying because they had endured the tough physical and psychological abuses of boot camp training. Yet, he instead describes how these tears might more aptly express the sense of hope that many of the men felt for beginning a new life. The story of the men's desire for a new and better life evokes the struggles that one soldier and his family experience in Phil Donahue and Ellen Spiro's documentary film *Body of War*. The film follows the story of Iraq war veteran Thomas Young, who returned from the war with a spinal injury and is paralyzed from the waist down. While Thomas is a very inspirational figure in the film, so is his mother. His mother became active in the anti-war movement along with Thomas, and both her and Thomas participate in the first Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) events that took place at former President Bush's ranch in Texas. It was here that Cindy Sheehan addressed President Bush through television, but it is also important to note that IVAW members, Thomas Young, and other activists were also present at the ranch during this political anti-war gathering.

Upon her son's return from Iraq, her other younger son was called upon to deploy to Iraq. Since her other son was severely injured by the war, she could have asked the U.S. military to not send her other son to Iraq. However, the youngest son is intent on serving in Iraq and admires his older brother who he considers a war hero. Throughout the film, neither Thomas nor his mother asks the youngest son not to deploy to Iraq or question his desire to serve in the U.S. military. In a key scene, Thomas's mother watches her son at basic training where the recruits are doing various practices where they climb down walls and do parachute drills. Furiously, she states to the viewers, "they will never do this in Iraq. All of this training

is for nothing. Isn't it sad that they have to do this to consider themselves honorable. I would have been happy if he was a clerk at a store.”

Her statement here brings our attention to the importance of “honor” and of what it means to be honorable as a young person in the United States. I imagine that many of the Marines that Smith describes at boot camp are like Thomas’s younger brother insofar that they want to have a job and do something with their lives that is viewed as honorable and worthy. At the private liberal arts college where I currently teach students are told they are here to gain a quality education and, as the College’s slogan states, to “Gain Worlds of Experience” and “Live Lives of Consequence.” However many American youth do not live “lives of consequence” within this context. As is well known, many lower-income Americans cannot afford to attend private Liberal Arts Colleges or even well-funded public Universities. Moreover, there is a minority of international students from the Global South and lower-income American students who attend elite or expensive American colleges. Hence, the structural inequalities of the educational system are more complex when we take into account students’ access to attaining an education across differences of sex, race, class, ethnicity, nation, colonial historical presents, and more.

My own location within these matrices of inequalities and power is perhaps worth noting at this point of the dissertation project. I am a privileged white woman who grew up in a single-parent female-headed household. My father left when I was four years old and never contributed financially to the household, and my mother worked as a sales clerk and later as a department manager at a retail store for thirty years. We moved around a lot in different towns in New Jersey with my Mom and sister. In terms of my privilege, I grew up in many wealthy neighborhoods because my Mother wanted us to live in the “nice” part of town in

New Jersey, especially since they had better schools. I also grew up in segregated, predominantly white neighborhoods. My white privilege and socialization as a white woman was reaffirmed and culturally conditioned by the dominant media and popular culture. For instance, the Barbie dolls I played with were all white and I watched images in the media that taught me that to be beautiful was to be thin, white, heterosexual, and wealthy. My nickname in fourth grade, given by my teacher, was “Barbie,” further reinforcing my identity as a white female.

I learned the importance of what it meant to be “white” and “civilized” from an early age from my grandparents, who were raised in Brooklyn and Harlem. Catholic nuns in a boarding school in Staten Island raised my grandmother, and she always said she hated the color black because of the lack of color in the boarding school. She decorated her home in the patriotic colors of red, white, and blue and we were always told that we were “white lace curtain” Irish. They were born in the U.S. as the children of Irish immigrants, who moved to New York City in the 1920s. My grandparents stressed the importance of what it meant to live in the “nice” part of town in the New Jersey suburbs as compared to what my grandfather referred to the now dangerous neighborhoods of Brooklyn that “those people” (African Americans) had “ruined.” When he drove me around Brooklyn, and Harlem, where his parents owned an Irish Bar for thirty-five years—called “O’Brien’s Irish Bar & Restaurant”—he would tell me to roll up the windows because “they” would come and steal your watch right off of your wrist. Even though I didn’t have a watch, I learned that neighborhoods with people of color were “dangerous” and that you couldn’t trust “those people.”

I had many happy moments growing up, and my grandparents were always loving toward me and, in many ways, my grandfather was a father-figure. Nevertheless, my

grandparents were very traditional and refused to financially help my mother when she left my physically and emotionally abusive father. While my grandparents could have been considered middle-class, they did not offer any financial help or a place to live when my mother was having difficulty “making ends meet” without child-support payments. I grew up recognizing the importance of welfare programs, and our family utilized the welfare system for a while and made use of food pantries and food stamps. When my grandfather died, my grandmother gave my mother some money and they moved together from Bergen County, a wealthy area of New Jersey, to Pinellas County of Florida, a much less affluent area with poorly funded public schools.

Yet despite having a seemingly more affluent life in Florida, due to lower costs of living, I often went to the Emergency Room or took out medical credit cards because I did not have health insurance once I could no longer be on my mother’s health insurance after high school. Nevertheless, I did grow up with white privilege and this became especially apparent when I lived in Florida and realized how racially segregated the South was. I also lived in a racially segregated area in New Jersey, but due to my white privilege and because I was younger, I never really questioned the fact that I lived in a neighborhood with mostly white people. The majority of African-American and Latino students who attended my high school in Florida, on the other hand, were bussed from poorer sections of town and the school cafeteria was, mostly, “unofficially” segregated between whites and people of color.

The educational system in Florida was horrendous, especially compared to the wealthy county in New Jersey I was raised in. I was lucky, because with the help of my mother, I was able to obtain a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship (sponsored by the Florida State Lottery). Eventually, after several years of uninspiring professors at a Community College and various

Florida State Universities, I took a Women's Studies class that altered my perspective on all of my life experiences. I was finally inspired by a teacher in Florida, and finished my degree in Women's Studies at the University of South Florida. I decided I wanted to pursue a higher education, but my Masters and Doctoral degree cost me a lot of money in debt. Due to lack of confidence in seeking funding for my degrees, coupled by poor financial decisions, I am both privileged as a white female Ph.D. student and unprivileged as a young person with extreme educational debt during a recession. Despite all of this, I still do not regret pursuing a higher education.

As I read about the dismantling of the U.S. educational system and of higher education in the media, I am reminded of how the conversations about the American educational debt crisis, or what is often called the "financial imprisonment" of many people of my generation, can still be somewhat privileged conversations. Indeed, my financial burdens of medical and educational debt are far less violent than the actual imprisonment that many people of color experience in the United States and globally. As Angela Davis has shown, the United States has the largest prison population in the world, and one out of four African-American men are imprisoned within the United States.<sup>330</sup> As Davis recently put it at a rally in London, there are around 2.5 million people in U.S. jails and prisons, in prisons in Indian country, and immigrant detention centers. "The majority of those people are people of color," she states. "The fastest-growing sector consists of women, women of color. Many prisoners are queer, and trans—trans people of color are the group most likely to be arrested and imprisoned. Racism provides the fuel for the maintenance, reproduction and expansion of the prison

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<sup>330</sup> Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 10.

industrial complex.”<sup>331</sup> Davis urges us to consider the links between the military-industrial complex and what she terms the global prison–industrial complex. The *horror of nothing to see* in the current wars is therefore rooted in the prisonization of everyday life for people of color and indigenous peoples in the U.S. and globally.

Angela Davis also reminds us that many men and women join the military to avoid prison sentences. Her years as an anti–prison and feminist activist have led her to witness how Black, Native American, and Latino communities are more likely to find themselves in prison than they are of obtaining a decent education.<sup>332</sup> She makes the links between the devastating and cruel effects of the Global War on Terror for poor people, indigenous people, and people of color in the U.S. and globally that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made forty-seven years ago in his speech “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence” (as described earlier in this chapter). Echoing King’s call to end the recruitment of poor people and people of color into the U.S. military to fight America’s unjust and colonial wars abroad, Davis recently wrote: “When many young people decide to join the military in order to avoid the inevitability of a stint in prison it should cause us to wonder whether we should not try to introduce better alternatives.”<sup>333</sup> Davis inspires me to try to make the links between the prisonization of everyday life, the militarization of everyday life, and the militarization of education and of America’s youth.

Boot camp training is a mode of imprisonment insofar that the disciplinary mechanisms of control used in boot camp are similar to the ones used in prisons. As described in the

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<sup>331</sup> “Angela Davis: “Support BDS, and Palestine Will Be Free,” *The Electronic Intifada*, accessed January 20, 2014, <http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/angela-davis-support-bds-and-palestine-will-be-free>.

<sup>332</sup> See Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, 10.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

previous chapter, western and “modern” hospitals were built from old military depots and installations. Moreover, medical knowledge is indebted to disciplinary and military techniques of knowledge and power. Another selection from Smith’s essay on “structured cruelty” and the dehumanizing effects of boot camp training is helpful in this respect because he begins to make these important links between education, militarization, and imprisonment. Smith demonstrates how many youth are “educated” in the U.S. military through structures of cruelty. Boot camp, rather than a liberal arts education, is their education in a “structure of cruelty.” In his words:

Marine Corps boot camp is a thirteen-week training regimen unlike any other. According to the USMC’s recruiting website, “Marine recruits learn to use their intelligence...and to live as upstanding moral beings with real purpose.” Yet if teaching intelligence and morals are the stated purpose of it’s training, the Corps has a peculiar way of implementing its pedagogy. In reality, its *educational method is based on a planned and structured form of cruelty*. I remember my first visit to the “chow-hall” in which three Drill Instructors (DIs); wearing their signature “Smoky Bear” covers, pounced upon me for having looked at them, screaming that I was a “Nasty Piece of Civilian Shit.” From then on, I learned that you could only look at a DI when instructed to by the command “Eyeballs!” In addition, recruits could only speak in the third person, thus ridding our vocabulary of the term “I” and divorcing ourselves from our previous civilian identities.<sup>334</sup>

Recruits are therefore not taught “emotional intelligence” as bodies in the process of becoming soldiers. Instead, they are dehumanized and “divorced” from their previous

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<sup>334</sup> Smith in *Warrior Writers*, 33, emphasis mine.

identities as civilians. In order to become a newborn Marine one must become separated not only from any sense of the self but of what it means to be human. In addition, Smith describes how the Marines were called pussies and “shit bags” during their training, and women’s bodies were especially the objects of scorn. As his DI told the Marines each night after suggesting that they’d see what’s really cruel after boot camp training: “You’ll see what tough is when you knock up your old woman. You’ll realize what’s cruel is when you get married and find yourself stuck with a fat bitch who just squats out ungrateful kids. You’ll learn what the real world’s about when you’re overseas and your wife back home in the states robs you blind and sleeps with your best friend.”<sup>335</sup> Put simply, Drill Instructors at boot camp discipline the soldier’s body through humiliating acts that instill the belief within recruits that “to be degraded is to be female.”<sup>336</sup> Soldiers are also degraded within racist and sexist assemblages of power through the Drill Instructor’s racist epitaphs, cadences, and hazing rituals.

These processes of dehumanizing the soldier’s body are never partial and finished. Judith Butler is instructive in this respect, because she demonstrates how processes of normalization are never deterministic and complete. Rather, normative schemes are fragile operations of power that are always already at risk of becoming disrupted and called into question by subjects as legitimate claims to authority and knowledge.<sup>337</sup> In Butler’s words, there is a “limit internal to normative construction itself, a function of its iterability and heterogeneity, without which it cannot exercise its crafting power, and which limits the

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>336</sup> Burke, *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and the High-and-Tight*, 13.

<sup>337</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*, 4.

finality of any of its effects.”<sup>338</sup> As Foucault might put it, as soon as one tries to discipline a body then one is also trying to contain resistance.

The process of becoming a masculine soldier subject through processes of feminization is thus never complete. Instead, soldiers are continually disciplined through these structures of cruelty on the homefront and the warfront.<sup>339</sup> Smith describes these processes of dehumanization as a two “phase” process within militarized structures of cruelty. After divorcing recruits from their civilian identities by dehumanizing them and degrading women, they enter a second phase of boot camp training: “the process of rebuilding recruits into Marines.”<sup>340</sup> This process involves dehumanizing the enemy or the “other.” Smith describes this traumatizing process whereby soldiers are trained to de-humanize and kill the enemy. He draws on David Grossman’s book, *On Killing*, to illustrate how less than twenty percent of U.S. troops fired their weapons during WWII in combat. In order to train recruits to fire their weapons, the military began to integrate processes of dehumanizing the enemy, leading to a ninety to ninety-five percent of soldiers who fired their weapons during the Vietnam War.<sup>341</sup> John Protevi provides an interesting historical and philosophical overview of the biopolitical and affective assemblage of the soldier’s body in boot camp training in this sense. He examines how the act of killing is never “natural” but is instead historically and politically produced through various militarized training programs that involve “levels of distance,

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>339</sup> However, as the latter chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, soldiers are not “educated” on how to return to “normal” civilian life. Part of the structure of cruelty is not educating soldiers on how to *unlearn* the violence and hatred that has led them to de-humanize and (desire to) kill others. Another aspect of this structure of cruelty involves not teaching soldiers how to unlearn the processes by which their bodies, and their former “selves,” have become dehumanized.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>341</sup> Smith *Warrior Writers*, 35.

mechanics, teamwork, command, and dehumanization.”<sup>342</sup> Jonathan Shay and Van der Kolk demonstrated how soldiers are trained to become killers through the intensification of the senses and production of rage, or the “rage agent.”<sup>343</sup> Soldier bodies are thus produced through physiological as well as psycho–somatic operations of power.

The berserker rage—where one kills anything that moves in the “death zone” in close combat—is a chemically-induced reaction to the rage agent.<sup>344</sup> As Protevi puts it, “In the berserker rage, the self-conscious and controlled subject is overwhelmed by a chemical flood that triggers an evolutionary primitive module that functions as a rage agent, running the body’s hardware in place.”<sup>345</sup> The production of rage and of killers within ancient warrior societies and in contemporary biopolitical military formations of power is important. It is this process that is traumatic and that reproduces the symptoms of PTSD. In Protevi’s words, “It is important to understand that such rage is itself traumatic: it sets endorphin release thresholds so high that only more combat will provide relief, initiating a cycle of rage, trapping many of those who enter it in the berserker state and greatly increasing the chance of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).”<sup>346</sup> It is therefore best to understand PTSD less as a disorder, and more as, recalling the concept outlined in the previous chapters, as “Post-Traumatic Stress Order.”

Instead of thinking of the traumatic affects of war as “symptoms” of a disease or psychiatric disorder, the history of producing warrior bodies through rage inducing somatic assemblages directs us to how PTSD is produced and reproduced through the biopolitical

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<sup>342</sup> *Life, War, Earth—University of Minnesota Press*, 64, accessed December 1, 2013, <http://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/life-war-earth>.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

assemblage and ordering of soldier-bodies—of becoming a killer. Smith illuminates many of the ways in which U.S. soldiers are trained to dehumanize the enemy “other” within racist and colonial frameworks of power. His story of boot camp training illuminates how these stereotypes and racist ideologies are enacted through the process of becoming a soldier-body-monster-killer:

The process of dehumanization is central to military training. During Vietnam, the enemy in Vietnam was simply a “gook,” a “dink,” or a “slope.” Today, “rag head” and “sand nigger” are the racist epithets lodged against Arabs and Muslims. After every command, we would scream, “Kill!” But our call for blood took on particular importance during our physical training, when we learned how to fight with pugil sticks, wooden sticks with padded ends: how to run an obstacle course with fixed bayonets; or how to box and engage in hand-to-hand combat. We were told to imagine the “enemy” was of Middle Eastern descent. “When some rag head comes lurking up from behind, you’re gonna give ‘em ONE,” barked the training DI. We all howled in unison, “Kill!” Likewise, when we charged toward the dummy on an obstacle course with our fixed bayonets, it was clear to all that the lifeless form was Arab.”<sup>347</sup>

The process of becoming a masculine military subject thus involves dehumanizing the soldier’s body and dehumanizing the imagined Arab “other” of the Global War on Terror (and dehumanizing women’s bodies). The soldiers’ new identities are forged through processes of abjection and processes of normalization. Smith brings this process of abjection to light when he describes how structures of cruelty and militarization trained him and other

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<sup>347</sup> *Warrior Writers*, 35.

recruits to speak only in the third person, “thus riddling our vocabulary of the term “I” and divorcing ourselves from our previous civilian identities.” This “previous identity” or former “self” becomes the excluded or abject “other” of the men’s new identity and “birth” as a newly minted Marine.

Smith uses the term “divorce” to describe the process of stripping the soldier of any sense of individualism. I take Smith to mean then that this former “self” becomes disassociated as a sort of shadow of the self through processes of dehumanization and structures of cruelty in boot camp. It is helpful to think of these former “selves” of the soldier as processes of abjection whereby the boundaries between the inside/outside and self/other become blurred. Butler describes abject bodies as the “constitutive outside’ of the subject within norm-making practices. In her words: “The abject designates... precisely those ‘unlivable’ and ‘uninhabitable’ zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the ‘unlivable’ is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject.”<sup>348</sup> In other words, any sense of who “I” am as a subject is always already indebted to a sense of “otherness”—to who “I” am not. I cannot become an intelligible subject without the simultaneous exclusion of bodies and lifeworlds that exceed the limits of representation. For men and women recruits to “become” marines, they must exclude and reject what it means to be a “civilian,” a “woman,” a “pussy,” a “fag,” a “hadji,” a “rag head,” an “Arab,” and more. It is through processes of dehumanization that the men become “monsters” and commit atrocities and violences against civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. A final quote from Smith’s story is worth sharing:

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<sup>348</sup> Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 3.

The war crimes committed by U.S. troops in Iraq—such as the brutality at Mahmoudiya, in which soldiers allegedly gang-raped a teenage Iraqi girl and burned her body to destroy the evidence—are, in fact, part of all imperialist wars. The USMC’s claim that recruits learn “to live as upstanding moral beings with real purpose” is a sickening ploy aimed to disguise its true objectives. Given the fact that Marines are molded to kill the enemy “other” from TD (Training Day)...combined with the bestial nature of colonial war, it should come as no surprise that rather than turning “degenerates” into paragons of virtue, the Corps is more likely transforming men into monsters.<sup>349</sup>

Smith’s use of the term “monster” is compelling, especially when juxtaposed to how Rai and Puar emphasize how the terrorist-subject is framed as a “monstrous” other in the Global War on Terror. Specifically, the structures of cruelty of processes of militarization create “monsters” in the U.S. military. The war crimes that soldiers commit while abroad and at home are not simply isolated incidents of cruelty, violence, or of a “few bad apples.” Instead, the entire barrel is the problem. These crimes and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars are conditioned by their education in structures of cruelty.

Many soldiers however resist these processes of normalization and dehumanization and break with the dominant frame of the wars and of what constitutes a life worth grieving. Indeed, there will always be soldier-bodies, images, signs, and texts that “leak” from the dominant frames of recognition and norms.<sup>350</sup> As illustrated by my brief overview of soldiers’ acts of resistance to the chain of command during the Vietnam War earlier in this chapter, these sites of resistance threaten the order of the U.S. military and its foundation

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<sup>349</sup> *Warrior Writers*, 37.

<sup>350</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*, 9.

within masculine and disciplinary structures of power. For instance, Ethan McCord broke with the process of dehumanizing the “other”—civilian children—within a militarized sensibility of what constitutes “a life worth grieving” in the current Global War on Terror.

Ethan McCord’s sense of grief over the children’s death in Iraq and his sense of moral responsibility for the injuries of the children disrupts these affective and technical military assemblages of training men to become killers. As John Protevi emphasizes, military training, through boot camp training (“reflex training”) and “cyborg training” (i.e., videogames), attempts to desensitize the soldier’s sense of “proto-empathic identification” with others (i.e., the enemy). Yet many soldiers feel empathy toward the “other” and develop a sense of guilt or shame for killing. Protevi describes the dilemma that many soldiers thus face, insofar that they may feel morally responsible for killing others even when the individual soldiers killed another as part of a larger group assemblage. The relationships between the individual soldier then and the larger unit becomes more problematic when soldiers return home and are separated from the biopolitical assemblage of the military and cybernetic unit.

The guilt and shame that many soldiers feel for killing others in Iraq and Afghanistan is thus constituted at the individual and group level. Any sense of moral and ethical responsibility for killing the other becomes a paradox. However, it is worth noting that Ethan McCord, and soldiers in the film *Operation Homecoming* and from the Warrior Writers Project, seem to have developed this sense of guilt and shame not only when they returned home. Instead, many soldiers seem to have experienced a sense of guilt while in Iraq, and many soldiers, including McCord, have attempted suicide while deployed. Clearly, Ethan McCord had some sense of “proto-empathic identification” with the two children in Iraq

even though he was part of his unit—or part of the “larger cybernetic organism”—on the warfront at the time. We might pay more attention then to how military Commanders, like McCord’s military Commander, use phrases like “PTSD Pussies” to discipline soldiers who begin to FEEL for the “other” wounded body of war during and after one’s deployment. The use of the phrase “PTSD Sissies” and the feminization of trauma becomes a regulatory mechanism of power in this sense for policing the moral impulses that many soldiers feel both on the warfront and the homefront.

Rather than focus simply on soldiers’ sense of moral responsibility, we might extend this sense of moral responsibility, guilt and shame by examining how soldiers become feminized within a military order of things when they express signs of grief. Indeed, civilians killed and injured in the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are “framed” as lives not worthy of grieving at all within military and media networks of power. Moreover, civilians’ everyday lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the multiple temporal layers of grief they experience because of U.S. militarism in the region since the events of 9/11, are also unthinkable for many Americans. In these terms, McCord’s acts of resistance became problematic for the U.S. military insofar that they involved “exposing the orchestrating designs of the authority who sought to control the frame” of the Iraq war’s violent effects in the world.<sup>351</sup> Rather than focus on narratives of loss surrounding the soldier’s wounded body, it is therefore best to examine the productive relations of power that condition the possibilities for how soldiers are able to grieve both on the homefront and the warfront.

#### Conclusion: Giving Into Grief, Becoming Woman

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 12.

As demonstrated thus far, the *frames of intelligibility* and scenes of recognition condition the possibilities for many male military subjects to become feminized within the U.S. military apparatus. It is within this context that the Sergeant's statement to McCord—"Get the sand out of your vagina" has political significance. Minimally, the statement functions as a "weapon" by the U.S. military for framing the masculine military subject as a criminal, a woman, and as a "pussy" when he transgresses the normative disciplinary functions of the soldier-body and of what it means to be masculine. As weapons of the U.S. war machine, such statements and modes of "injurious speech" attempt to silence and order the disorderly soldier-bodies that resist militarized discourses on soldier honor, bravery, heroism, and masculinity. This statement and the feminization of trauma also functions to biopolitically manage soldiers' sense of empathic identification with the "other" wounded body of war and soldiers' sense of moral responsibility for killing others.

Statements such as "Get the sand out of your vagina, soldier!" illustrate how male soldiers who visibly express their emotions, feelings, and conflicting perspectives on the violence of the wars become "framed" within broader military discourse and strategies as *becoming "women" or becoming like women*. I have only described the experience of several soldiers, and I do not claim to speak on behalf of all masculine military subjects. However, there are recognizable patterns of the feminization of trauma and of U.S. male soldiers who are called "PTSD Pussies" when they speak out and challenge their Commanders and higher officials. In the following chapter, I follow the stories of several soldiers who resist the feminization of trauma and the *horror of nothing to see* in the current wars.

## Chapter 5

### **Managing Disorder: The Multiple Affects of “Post Traumatic Stress Order” and Burdens of Proof**

Caring, emotive, feeling human beings who experience a connection with other human beings are not, it seems, what most militaries want.

—Sandra Whitworth<sup>352</sup>

This chapter teases through the ways in which PTSD as a stigma, “disease,” and disability category is gendered and structured by multiple narrative practices. In the previous chapter, I focused mainly on the story of Ethan McCord and how his military Commander called him a “PTSD Pussy” for seeking to speak to a mental health expert. This chapter extends on Ethan McCord’s story on the feminization of trauma and turns to his narrative accounts of everyday life when he returns from Iraq. It also turns to the story of John Needham, another white male soldier who was told by his military Commander to stop being a “pussy” when he disrupted normative conventions of militarized masculinities. I draw on journalistic accounts of McCord and Needham’s experiences, as well as their interviews with various media. Though I only focus on Ethan McCord’s and John Needham’s stories, the chapter turns to other studies and journalistic accounts of men and women soldiers who are stigmatized by the psychiatric category of PTSD.

In addition, I juxtapose the ways in which PTSD functions as a “biopolitical container narrative”—as a particular “truth-telling” narrative—within the military-medical complex to how soldiers and veterans attempt to tell a different story about the traumatic affects of war. I

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<sup>352</sup> Sandra Whitworth, “Militarized Masculinity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” in *Rethinking the Man Question*, Edited by Jane Parpart and Marysia Zalewski, 116.

focus specifically on how soldiers challenge the language of PTSD as an official “disorder” and how they disrupt the militarization of masculinities and feminization of trauma through various acts of resistance. Particularly, I elaborate on the term Post-Traumatic Stress Order—which I described in Chapter Two—to examine the ordering practices and effects of militarization and its traumatic affects and effects on soldier-bodies.

I have chosen to focus on these two soldiers’ stories since their experiences of being called “PTSD Pussies” circulated widely in the media. Ethan McCord is an especially interesting figure, since he is a critic of the Global War on Terror and member of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). Hence, he has spoken openly in the media about his experiences of being called a “PTSD pussy” by his Commander in Iraq (whereas many other soldiers might not disclose this process). However, there is a limit to my analysis insofar that both soldiers are white and heterosexual men and so the stories of women soldiers and soldiers of color are absent in my analysis of the feminization of trauma. The scholars whose ethnographic research I draw on, however, do interview women and men soldiers and soldiers of color. In addition, my analysis focuses on how the feminization of white masculinities is linked to violence against women, especially poor women and women of color.

Taking soldiers’ stories as the sites of political inquiry, this essay thus asks: How do many soldiers who question the legitimacy of U.S. military policies or military life, and who wrestle with multiple conflicting identities, often become feminized and told by their Commanding Officers to stop being “PTSD Sissies?”<sup>353</sup> How does this language that is often

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<sup>353</sup> See interview with Darh Jamal on *Democracy Now*, hosted by Amy Goodman, “When the War Comes Home: Iraq Veteran at Fort Hood Speaks Out About Last Week’s Mass

used by military Commanders attempt to contain male soldiers' capacity for grieving in the wars? Further, how does the feminization of soldier-trauma perpetuate a militarized system of punishment, rather than healing, for many soldiers who return from the wars and continue to struggle with the "emotional battles" that Ethan McCord describes? Who pays the costs for providing the burden of proof of soldiers' invisible and hidden (feminized) traumas of war? How does the feminization of male soldiers within the military apparatus produce violent affects—as *the horror of nothing to see*—on women's bodies? Rather than provide a summary of research findings to these questions, I turn instead to the stories of veterans such as Ethan McCord and John Needham and allow their stories to come to the forefront of the analysis. Let's turn to McCord's story.

Burdens of Visible Proof: Historicizing/Theorizing PTSD as Stigma, Disability Category, and Disease

Ethan McCord's emotional battle to speak to a mental health specialist and receive adequate mental health services for the trauma he experienced in Iraq only continued when he returned home to Kansas five months following the incident in Baghdad. In an interview with the *Times*, McCord describes how he continued to have nightmares upon his return from Iraq. After a two week wait period to see a mental health expert, "he was told by his civilian Army psychologist to calm his nighttime shakes with a blanket and a scented candle. Several weeks later, he saw a civilian Army psychiatrist, who prescribed him thirteen prescriptions—including Geodon, Depakote, and Prozac—that McCord says turned him into a zombie.<sup>354</sup> "I

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Shooting," available online at:

[http://www.democracynow.org/2009/11/9/when\\_the\\_war\\_comes\\_homes\\_iraq](http://www.democracynow.org/2009/11/9/when_the_war_comes_homes_iraq)

<sup>354</sup> "I couldn't Stop Crying: Ethan McCord Relives Collateral Murder Video," accessed January 21, 2014, *Russian Today*, published on April 6, 2013,

[http://www.correntewire.com/i\\_couldnt\\_stop\\_crying\\_ethan\\_mccord\\_relives\\_collateral\\_murder\\_video](http://www.correntewire.com/i_couldnt_stop_crying_ethan_mccord_relives_collateral_murder_video).

started daydreaming of killing my own children and everybody around me,” he said in an interview.<sup>355</sup>

Soon he began downing pills with whiskey and walking around his house brandishing his military knife with its 7-in. (18-cm) blade. As he puts it, “I’d already begun drinking pretty heavily and I had downed all the pills and I drank a fifth of Crown Royal. 10 o’clock in the morning. And my wife at the time found me.” This was the first time that McCord attempted to take his own life. His wife tricked him into letting her drive him to the hospital, where an Army counselor committed him to a private mental center.”<sup>356</sup> McCord was soon discharged from the military without any disability benefits, or *any* benefits from the Army.<sup>357</sup> Upon returning home from the medical center, he tried to kill himself a second time. “I actually wrote a poem right before I did it,” he states, “before I put the gun in my mouth.”<sup>358</sup>

McCord’s attempt to speak to a mental health expert following the attack in Baghdad is a significant act insofar that many soldiers are reluctant to seek mental health treatment. While the medical category of PTSD was created to help Vietnam veterans claim disability benefits from the Veterans Administration (VA) for the traumatic stresses of war, there is a significant stigma surrounding PTSD in the U.S. military. The psychiatric category of PTSD functions as a “biopolitical container narrative” or as a particular truth-telling practice about the U.S. soldier’s traumatic affects from the wars. The Greek origin of the term “bio” means

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> Thompson, “Invisible Wounds.”

<sup>357</sup> See “I couldn’t Stop Crying: Ethan McCord Relives Collateral Murder Video,” accessed January 21, 2014, *Russian Today*, published on April 6, 2013,

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

“course of human life.”<sup>359</sup> As Michel Foucault demonstrates, and as described in detail in Chapter Three, biopolitics involves the emergence of a “basic phenomenon” in nineteenth century Europe—of “power’s hold over life.”<sup>360</sup> Biopolitical techniques of power slowly begin to emerge during the second half of the eighteenth century in Europe. These biopolitical mechanisms include the control of the human being (and not just the individual) as a general meaning-unit of value within population discourses and state apparatuses of control. Examples of biopolitics include the mortality rate, birth rate, reproduction, natality, endemics, the formation of the medical sciences, accidents, infirmities, insurance, savings and checking, safety measures and other phenomena where the population and the environment becomes a site of control that can be “regularized” rather than disciplined.<sup>361</sup>

By using the term “biopolitical container narrative” I am therefore referring to how the course of a human life is regularized or “contained” by particular narratives that are structured by state institutions. In contemporary militarized networks of power and institutions, PTSD, as a psychiatric category, has become a biopolitical narrative practice that helps produce which lives qualify as lives worthy of rehabilitating and which lives are unqualified for grieving and rehabilitating. The discursive and institutional assemblage of PTSD as a psychiatric category is structured by multiple classification systems, psychiatric and medical knowledges of the body, genealogies of war and trauma, medical institutions, disability rating systems, bureaucratic paper trails, gendered ideologies and practices, and colonial formations of power.

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<sup>359</sup> See Oxford Online Dictionary at:  
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/bio->

<sup>360</sup> Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 237.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

Military Commanders, mental health experts, and members of the military-medical complex are able to manipulate which soldier-bodies are diagnosed with PTSD and which bodies are not worthy of being diagnosed with this supposed “disorder” within disciplinary and control societies. In addition to the multiple stigmas surrounding PTSD in the military, many soldiers are encouraged to contain their grief from their traumatic experiences from the wars. The biopolitical management of soldiers’ trauma and wounded bodies are controlled through the narrative practices of PTSD on multiple levels. These ordering effects and affects of PTSD as a biopolitical container narrative within the military-medical complex are forcefully felt amongst U.S. soldiers and others (i.e., family and civilians) across gendered, racialized, sexualized, and colonial formations of power and differences.

The psychiatric category of PTSD, as a biopolitical container narrative, regulates and modifies soldiers’ bodies and their claims to traumatic injury and disability benefits. For example, PTSD becomes a stigma because there are unequal relationships of power between the soldier patient-body and military physicians, psychiatrists, and mental health experts. In her preliminary ethnographic research with veterans, medical anthropologist Katinka Hooyer charts how PTSD becomes a stigma for many women and men veterans from the Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan wars. She focuses on soldiers that have gone AWOL to seek mental health treatment and veterans that have been discharged from the military and who are unable to make PTSD claims.<sup>362</sup>

Hooyer’s research findings demonstrate how military cultural values of group loyalty and dominant ideologies of being a tough soldier-body help create a culture of fear and

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<sup>362</sup> Katinka Hooyer, “Going AWOL: Alternative Responses to PTSD Stigma in the U.S. Military,” *Field Notes: A Journal of Collegiate Anthropology* 4 (1): 106-128. (May 2012), 108.

stigma for soldiers that seek help for the traumatic experiences of military training and combat. “While veterans *need* the PTSD diagnosis to claim benefits,” she writes, “the claiming of victimhood conflicts with values that the military intentionally fosters: values such as self-reliance, psychological toughness, collective responsibility and group loyalty.”<sup>363</sup> Hooyer’s emphasis on PTSD as a diagnosis that soldiers need in order to claim disability benefits is important. Indeed, to be diagnosed with PTSD as a U.S. soldier means that the military-medical community has validated one’s experience of suffering from the traumatic stresses of war. Just importantly, the diagnosis enables soldiers to claim disability benefits for PTSD, including access to mental health care at the VA.

However, soldiers are embedded within a military culture of masculinity and rugged individualism that punishes, rather than encourages, soldiers and veterans to seek mental health services for PTSD-related symptoms. As Sandra Whitworth puts it, “Most male soldiers, having been trained in the ideals of hyper-masculinity, learn there is little place in the military family for them to express emotions or reactions that do not accord with those ideals.”<sup>364</sup> Hence, many soldiers’ desires to receive mental health treatment become an impossible reality, producing “impossible subjects” that cannot escape from the discursive and material limits of these productive, useful contradictions.

Moreover, many soldiers resist seeing a mental health expert or physician for mental health issues since they expect to be issued a cocktail of prescription medications for their PTSD-related symptoms. Many soldiers are weary of physicians and mental health experts

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<sup>363</sup> Katinka Hooyer, “Going AWOL: Alternative Responses to PTSD Stigma in the U.S. Military,” *Field Notes: A Journal of Collegiate Anthropology* 4 (1): 106-128. (May 2012), 110.

<sup>364</sup> Whitworth in *Rethinking the Man Question*, 116.

who they may view as a “pill pushing, oblivious, uncaring lot to be avoided at all costs.”<sup>365</sup> Seeking help for the traumatic experiences of combat is risky. While soldiers and veterans do not have the power to insist that physicians change their approach to helping soldiers’ with traumatic stress, “doctors have the political power, through diagnoses, to stigmatize.”<sup>366</sup> In *Breaking Ranks: Iraq Veterans Speak Out Against The War*, Catherine Lutz and Mathew Guttman provide the stories of six veterans (women and men) and their emotional battles of war before, during, and after returning from Iraq. All of the veterans came back from Iraq and became activists in one capacity or another. One of the veterans, Tina Garnanez, shares that some soldiers are unwilling to seek mental health treatment for PTSD because they have friends or have heard of veterans who were diagnosed with a disorder other than PTSD by a medical professional. The soldiers would then be medically discharged without any medical benefits.

There are thus many risks involved when soldiers seek help from mental health professionals for their traumatic experiences of war. As Lutz and Guttman point out, “This is in fact a very real risk. To growing controversy, the military has been discharging troops with PTSD and other mental health issues by asserting that their symptoms are the result of a “preexisting condition,” that is, a condition that predates their recruitment. Such a discharge makes them ineligible for medical care for their combat injuries.”<sup>367</sup> Many soldiers have been diagnosed for instance with “Personality Disorders” by psychiatrists, a condition said to originate in one’s youth and that therefore precedes one’s military enlistment. In a recent

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<sup>365</sup> Katinka Hooyer, “Going AWOL: Alternative Responses to PTSD Stigma in the U.S. Military,” *Field Notes: A Journal of Collegiate Anthropology* 4 (1): 106-128. (May 2012), 110.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>367</sup> Matthew C. Gutmann and Catherine Lutz, *Breaking Ranks Iraq Veterans Speak Out Against the War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 159.

article in *The New York Times*, Captain Susan Carlson shares how she found documentation in her medical file that helps prove her Commander pushed her psychiatrist to diagnose her with a personality disorder rather than PTSD. Her story is one amongst many, since the military has discharged at least 31,000 service members because of a diagnosed personality disorder since 2001.<sup>368</sup>

These stories shed light on how the military attempts to become more “cost effective” within neoliberal regimes of value by creating new diagnoses that evade the temporal logic of “post” traumatic stress from combat experience. The diagnosis of PTSD as a disability category operates in this sense as a biopolitical container narrative that manages soldiers’ bodies and claims to injury. Rather than provide more federal funds for veterans with basic mental health treatment for veterans, the military attempts to manage the soldier patient—body through the biopolitical classification of psychiatric categories. The category of PTSD operates biopolitically by regulating which bodies become included as “visible” (qualified) traumatized bodies within the military-medical complex and which bodies become excluded as “invisible” (unqualified) bodies traumatized by war and violence in the military-medical complex. Arguably, the military-medical complex is less able to deny soldiers’ “visible” traumatic injuries of war (such as a missing limb) than they are able to deny soldiers’ “hidden” or invisible trauma of war. The invisible emotional battles that soldiers and veterans struggle with become the *horror of nothing to see* within these militarized networks of power. This is not to suggest that physicians, psychiatrists, and mental health experts in the military establishment are conspirators in manipulating soldier-trauma. Instead, the

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<sup>368</sup> James Dao, “A Military Diagnosis, ‘Personality Disorder,’ Is Challenged,” *The New York Times*, February 24, 2012, sec. U.S., <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/25/us/a-military-diagnosis-personality-disorder-is-challenged.html>.

biopolitical management of soldiers' trauma is indebted to a complex network of security apparatuses and the ordering of disorderly soldier-bodies within a military order of things.

### Post-Traumatic Stress Order

Recalling our discussion in Chapter Two of Matt Howard and Allison's Howell's problematization of what the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder constitutes from a political rather than official medical and psychiatric perspective, we might more aptly describe the traumatic stresses of the wars and their ordering effects as "Post-Traumatic Stress Order." Post-Traumatic Stress Order (PTSO) refers to the ways in which the ontological process of becoming a soldier-body is affectively and structurally conditioned by traumatic processes and traumatic events. The term "Post-Traumatic Stress Order" problematizes the notion that the traumatic affects and effects of soldiering should be diagnosed, measured, or evaluated within medical and psychiatric knowledges as so-called disorders. PTSD functions as a biopolitical container narrative that, along with the institutionalization and medicalization of trauma, attempts to contain soldiers' disorderly resistance to the dominant narratives and practices of militarization. Approaching the politics of trauma as a structural and ontological affect of militarization—as Post-Traumatic Stress Order—thus helps politicize the "ordering practices" of the medical gaze. The politics of "visibility" and "invisibility" and soldier-trauma is indebted to the dominant ideology that PTSD—as a medical and psychiatric diagnosis—is a disease that needs to be located and rendered visible to the male medical gaze.

Hooyer's insightful analysis on the multiple layers of stigma surrounding the diagnosis of PTSD for soldiers and veterans is instructive in this respect, because she sheds an important light on how military culture and the chain of command also affirms a culture of

fear and stigma surrounding the diagnosis of PTSD as a “disease.” The stigma attached to PTSD hovers around the ways in which soldiers are forced to “prove” the visibility of their trauma within the medical gaze. The ordering affects and effects of “Post-Traumatic Stress Order” thus also demands the ordering of bodies and performances within a militarized order of things:

The stereotype attached to PTSD itself is of a disease that wreaks havoc in one’s daily life and turns competent soldiers into completely disabled and unproductive persons. If that representation is not visible or does not occur, or the trauma was not publicly witnessed by others, the experience is “faked.” This stereotype of the “liar” who is trying to get out of duty and collect compensation adds yet another layer of stigmatization. First the soldier must overcome the stigma in seeking help and then the soldier must ‘prove’ the disorder exists beyond the diagnostic label, through publicly displaying radical behavior and the deleterious consequences of that behavior. If this performance succeeds, the soldier is interpreted as a coward or unfit by the leadership, if it fails, as a fake by his or her peers.<sup>369</sup>

Soldiers’ and veterans’ attempts to seek mental health treatment for PTSD are thus akin to a performance. The stigma of PTSD within dominant public imaginaries and medical-scientific discourses affirms an image of the soldier that is unproductive and disabled by traumatic stress. As a “disabled” and disorderly soldier, s/he is not only capable of claiming disability benefits but s/he is a “coward” or “unfit” according to the ranks of leadership in one’s unit. An unproductive, traumatized, and disabled soldier-body is problematic for a U.S. military that desperately needs to retain its Armed Forces for America’s lengthy war in Afghanistan,

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 120.

and until recently, Iraq. If the soldiers' traumatic injuries of war are not visible in this sense to the eye, then it is easier for military Commanders and mental health experts to manipulate the concept of "disability" and state that soldiers are "fine" or simply faking their PTSD-related trauma.

My thoughts here turn to McCord's description of himself in his house carrying around a knife, before his wife drives him to the hospital. Perhaps McCord, and other soldiers who were denied mental health services, begin to unconsciously perform these acts of hyper-aggression in order to render "visible" the *horror of nothing to see* to others that they were emotionally suffering. In addition, perhaps many soldiers' suicide attempts are signs (or performances) for asking for help for these "invisible" traumas of the wars.<sup>370</sup> To the benefit of military Commanders and higher military officials, many soldiers who experience traumatic stresses of war are not completely unproductive and the psychic traumas of war are not always visible. Instead, the traumatic stresses of war occur gradually over time. As Ethan McCord's story suggests, he was still deployed in Iraq for five months following the incident in Baghdad. Despite his attempt to receive mental health treatment in Iraq, he was still able to appear "normal" since he did not have any physical injuries. Within a military logic of able-bodied soldiers, he was a "productive" soldier who was not "disabled."

Moreover, whether the traumatic stresses of war "began" when McCord was in combat and helped the two young children is questionable. We could examine too how boot camp

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<sup>370</sup> If male soldiers are feminized and called cowards for rendering visible their traumatic affects of the wars, then how are women soldiers feminized for attempting to render visible their traumatic affects of the wars? What are the similarities between male and female soldiers' trauma and the "visibility" and "invisibility" of these traumatic affects and their performances? How are these differences gendered, sexualized, and racialized? I do not explore all of these questions in this chapter, but they are in my mind as I write about McCord's experience here.

training is also a traumatizing process. Hence, the military-medical complex affirms a very narrow conception of disability that places the burden on the U.S. soldier to prove her or his emotional battles of war as the victim. Worse still, the burden of “proof” falls on the soldier and this *visible* sign of proof often comes at a cost: domestic terror at home, drug addiction, alcoholism, suicide attempts, violence against civilians on the homefront and warfront, and more. De-militarization activists/scholars might therefore examine how processes of militarization and the visible burdens of proof surrounding the psychiatric category of PTSD have, structurally and ontologically, disabling affects. Simply put, to become “disabled” is not a fixed and rigid category that one can easily identify and it is not the subject that is necessarily disabled. Instead, the military-industrial complex and the bureaucratic and capitalist structures of the military-medical complex—along with the U.S. Administration—are waging an invisible war on soldiers and veterans as the *horror of nothing to see* that has disabling affects on soldiers’ bodies.

The U.S. is presently waging an even more brutal war on women, men, and children’s bodies in Iraq and Afghanistan that has multiple disabling affects. The historical and widespread current use of depleted uranium (DU) in Iraq and Afghanistan, years of United Nations (UN)-imposed sanctions, the contamination of Iraq and Afghanistan’s water supply from military waste, and years of colonial wars in the “Middle East” have all contributed to the ongoing suffering of the Iraqi and Afghan people.<sup>371</sup> As Omar Dewachi demonstrates, the people and environment of Iraq have been the “subject of a large-scale toxic warfare

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<sup>371</sup> See Omar Dewachi, “The Toxicity of Everyday Survival in Iraq,” accessed November 19, 2013, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/13537/the-toxicity-of-everyday-survival-in-iraq>.

experiment” for over two decades.<sup>372</sup> Dewachi argues that toxicity in Iraq goes beyond the effects of DU-laden weapons and biological warfare in the region. “Toxicity,” he writes, “has penetrated the quotidian realities of life in Iraq. It is what Iraqis have to endure and negotiate every day in the face of physical, political, social, and environmental degradation.”<sup>373</sup>

Dewachi calls this process whereby toxicity becomes entrenched in everyday life the “toxicity of everyday survival.”<sup>374</sup> He follows the stories of men and women who suffer serious physical wounds and who must travel outside of Iraq to receive adequate medical care. In many cases, those suffering from physical injuries also live in the fear of developing cancer due to exposure to American ammunition. Dewachi thus locates toxicity and disability as an effect of “the horrors of empire’s toxic experiment” in Iraq.<sup>375</sup>

While this chapter does not compare the “toxicity of everyday life” and the *horror of nothing to see* between U.S. soldiers and civilians in Iraq, it is worth noting that the disabilities that American veterans and civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan experience are structural rather than individual and/or accidental. These matrices of violence—of the destruction of bodies in war—structures war as a social and political practice. As Elaine Scarry famously put it, the whole point of war and new weapons technologies is to injure and destroy bodies. The structure of war, and of injury, is defined by relationships of the interior and exterior of war and the sum of its parts. For example, the exterior or “outside” verbal justifications of going to war (i.e., ideologies or freedom) come to justify the interior aspects

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

of war (i.e., casualties) “within” war.<sup>376</sup> In terms of the latter, there are two important aspects to the interiority of war for Scarry. First, the immediate activity of war is injuring and second, the immediate activity of war is a contest.<sup>377</sup> “In participating in war,” she writes, “one participates not simply in an act of injuring, but in the activity of reciprocal injuring where the goal is to out-injure the opponent.”<sup>378</sup>

It would be interesting, in the important sense of the term, to contrast the psychological stress of war between U.S. soldiers and civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cynthia Enloe begins to make these important juxtapositions in her study on the gendered effects of war trauma in her recent book *Nimo’s War, Emma’s War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War*.<sup>379</sup> My focus in this chapter however is on the *horror of nothing to see*, or the “hidden” or psychic injuries of war amongst (mostly) male soldiers and how they become increasingly “visible” as U.S. soldiers return to the homefront. Thus far I have focused specifically on how the stigmas attached to PTSD are located both on and off the soldier-body within broader gendered and militarized structures of war. The structural affects of stigmatization and PTSD are especially important when we take into account the feminization of trauma amongst many soldiers. As Dahr Jamail describes in an interview on the 2009 Fort Hood shootings, many (not all) U.S. soldiers are repeatedly called “PTSD Sissies” by higher-

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<sup>376</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 63.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>379</sup> See Cynthia H Enloe, *Nimo’s War, Emma’s War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

ranking officers when they attempt to seek professional help for traumatic experiences or when they discuss their hesitations and resistance to the U.S. war machine.<sup>380</sup>

These processes of feminizing soldiers, particularly male soldiers, are embedded within dominant ideas of masculinity and femininity and have violent affects on both soldiers and civilians on the homefront and warfront. Many soldiers who are denied access to speaking to a therapist or refused hospital treatment (i.e., detox from alcoholism or drug addictions) end up physically and emotionally injuring themselves, family members, and/or civilians upon returning home. This is what happened when one soldier, John Needham, tried to seek help for his traumatic experiences in the war. Let us turn to his story.

#### The Feminization of Soldier-Trauma: Stop Being a Pussy and a Kid!

In their *Salon* article, “You’re a Pussy and a Scared Little Kid,” Michael De Yoanna and Mark Benjamin share the story of John Wiley Needham who returned from Iraq with combat stress and who found himself on trial for murder. I paraphrase their story here because it is an important one for our focus on the feminization of trauma and on the multiple stigmas surrounding PTSD for many soldiers. Needham’s story also sheds light on how PTSD, as a biopolitical container narrative, demands the policing of gendered identities within masculine, militarized apparatuses of power and knowledge.

John Needham was called “Needhammer” by fellow soldiers in Iraq, because of his “toughness.”<sup>381</sup> Needham was sent to Iraq in 2006, and fought in several intense firefights with insurgents in a Sunni neighborhood in Southern Baghdad. Exposure to IED strikes was

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<sup>380</sup> See interview on *Democracy Now*, hosted by Amy Goodman, “When the War Comes Home: Iraq Veteran at Fort Hood Speaks Out About Last Week’s Mass Shooting,” available online at: [http://www.democracynow.org/2009/11/9/when\\_the\\_war\\_comes\\_homes\\_iraq](http://www.democracynow.org/2009/11/9/when_the_war_comes_homes_iraq).

<sup>381</sup> Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005).

a daily occurrence for many of the soldiers, and witnessing and causing the death of insurgents and civilians had become a daily part of everyday life during his deployment. Needham brought home photographs from his deployment, which he showed his family—“One picture showed a dead body, still dressed in traditional Iraqi clothing, with a rotting skull for a head. Another picture showed an Iraqi with the top part of his head blown off, covered in blood, eyes open, his body placed in a black bag alongside his brains.”<sup>382</sup> The detailed description of the dead bodies that Needham brought home to show his family, and these horrific images of dead civilian bodies, is similar to Ethan McCord’s description of the dead bodies he saw in Iraq. This story of the images that Needham showed his family also sheds light on a new generation of soldiers who are returning from the wars with digital photo albums of their war experiences. I wonder how the family members felt about viewing these images in contrast to Needham?

Needham struggled emotionally with the traumatic affects of the horror that he was partaking in and witnessing while in Baghdad. As mentioned earlier, many soldiers are prescribed pills from physicians and psychiatrists when they share that they are struggling emotionally with the horrors of war. Not surprisingly then, he went to see a medical doctor and was given Zoloft, an anti-depressant and anti-anxiety pill, and Ambien, a sleeping pill. Needham wrote a letter to his father saying that the pills were not working—in an email to his father, he stated that “the squad leader brushed me off and said suck it up.”<sup>383</sup> He began to self medicate with alcohol. On September 17, 2008 he put a loaded gun to his head in front of his roommate. Perhaps he was trying to render visible the *horror of nothing to see* of these

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<sup>382</sup> See Yoanna and Benjamin, “You’re a Pussy and a Scared Little Kid,” [http://www.salon.com/2009/02/12/coming\\_home\\_three/](http://www.salon.com/2009/02/12/coming_home_three/).

<sup>383</sup> Yoanna and Benjamin, “You’re a Pussy and a Scared Little Kid.”

emotional battles to his roommate in order to provide “proof” of his state of mind.

Needham’s roommate jumped at him and the bullet hit the wall. Instead of being sent for a psychiatric evaluation, he was locked up in a room for eighteen days in solitary confinement. He was told that he could face military charges for the illegal discharge of a weapon. Mike Needham, John’s father, realized that he was going to have to take an active role in helping his son since the military was punishing John rather than helping him. Yoanna and Benjamin provide a telling quote from Mike Needham that is worth quoting here:

Mike Needham reached Lt. Col. Stephen Michael, the 2-12’s top commander, via phone in Iraq. “After he tried to kill himself, they said he was a criminal. I couldn’t believe it. I called his commander to try to say that John might be suffering from combat stress. I offered him literature. [Lt. Col. Michael] told me John deserved to be in military prison. When I argued, he said, ‘Fuck off,’ and hung up the phone.”<sup>384</sup>

I can only imagine how enraged Mike Needham and his family must have been after receiving such feedback from Lt. Col. Stephen Michael. It must be horrific to feel so powerless over the life and well being of your child. It is a statement such as this one by the Lt. Col. that compels one to conceptualize the military chain of command as a perpetrator of violence and branch of state terrorism. It is this statement by the Lt. Col. that prompts me to wonder how he become so callous and desensitized himself. Perhaps those on the Left might advocate charging Lieutenants such as this one for war crimes against U.S. soldiers.

If Needham is considered a war criminal here within military codes that state soldiers cannot take their own lives—or because he illegally discharged a weapon—then perhaps demilitarization activists can push the frames for what constitutes a “war crime” in this case.

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

Indeed, soldiers break the Rules of Engagement all of the time and fire their weapons at and indiscriminately murder, brutally, civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, when soldiers attempt to take their own lives then suddenly they are committing a “crime.” In these terms, particular discursive notions of “crime” shift depending on how a life is valued within militarized apparatuses of power.

Mike Needham’s father battled the chain of command in what seems like a personal and private emotional and labor-intensive war that is rendered invisible as the *horror of nothing to see* in the dominant media. The burden of proof for claiming PTSD as a soldier does not stop with the soldier—her or his family is also likely to be affected and become involved with providing “proof” of their child’s mental state of being. Mike was able to convince the chain of command to send John to Landstuhl Army Regional Medical Center in Germany and then to Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland where John was, finally, diagnosed with PTSD.<sup>385</sup>

Upon returning home from Iraq, John continued to fall into a downward spiral. He was sent to Fort Carson in Colorado Springs. At the airport, he met his father and an investigator from the advocacy organization, Veterans for America, both of whom tried to advocate on John’s behalf for access to mental health treatment. For example, Mike Needham asked the nurse who commands Evans hospital at Fort Carson why his son was on twelve medications—“He was worried about the charges his son faced, although they never came to fruition. He just wanted assurances that his son would get the best care available.”<sup>386</sup> Yet, while John was at Evans hospital he was continually dehumanized by the higher chain of command:

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<sup>385</sup> I am paraphrasing the article by Benjamin and Yoanna here.

<sup>386</sup> Yoanna and Benjamin, ““You’re a Pussy and a Scared Little Kid.””

On Nov. 16, 2007, Needham, still wondering if he'd face charges stemming from his suicide attempt in Iraq, wrote in black pen that he felt drowsy and laid his head on a desk. According to Needham's notes, a staff sergeant found him there and yelled, "This is no time to sleep." The sergeant then threatened Needham, saying "I will break your fucking face." Needham told the sergeant to go ahead. The sergeant closed in, inches from Needham's face, and "called me a pussy and a scared little kid"...

The feminization of John Needham as a "pussy" and a child here by the sergeant is telling, especially since it is statements like these that military commanders, higher officials, and Drill Instructors use to dehumanize and degrade male and female soldiers in the military, beginning in boot camp training. Several weeks later, while visiting his family in California, Needham injured his back and was transferred from Fort Carson to the Navy Medical Center in San Diego. He was unable to meet the Army's standard of conduct while at the Navy Medical Center, and "to Mike Needham, it seemed like the Army, which had acknowledged that John had PTSD, was now punishing his son for displaying the symptoms."<sup>387</sup> On July 14, 2008 John was honorably discharged from the military. However, the nightmare continued since the military's disability ratings system gave John a 30 percent rating for his disability—10 percent for his PTSD and 20 percent for his injured back. He needed however at least a 50 percent disability rating to receive access to more intensive and personal rehabilitation services. In these examples, we see how PTSD as a biopolitical container narrative, which depends on the management of soldier-trauma through rating systems and scales of compensation, conditions the possibility for which bodies become worthy of mental health services and which bodies are rendered disposable bodies.

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

Without this 50 percent disability rating, he was unable to receive the intensive psychiatric care he so desperately needed. After a long emotional battle with the military–medical complex, he was finally diagnosed, as previously mentioned, with PTSD in Maryland. Yet, the bureaucratic rating system for disability claims led to John’s inability to receive special care for his mental health issues. As Yoanna and Benjamin put it, “If Needham had received a total score of 50 on the disability scale—which a PTSD diagnosis by itself should’ve guaranteed—he could have received personalized support for his day-to-day issues, whether psychological, physical, financial or career. He also would be guaranteed lifetime military health benefits. With 10 points for PTSD and only 30 overall, he didn’t get the one-on-one attention he needed to transition back to civilian life.”<sup>388</sup> As they note, it is now known that thousands of soldiers were discharged from the military with low disability ratings and that they were unable to receive adequate health care services. The costs of John’s inability to receive adequate and necessary mental health treatment for his PTSD-related symptoms were severe. His girlfriend would soon come to bear the burden of proof.

#### The Costs of War: Burdens of Proof

John Needham and his family bore the burden of proof for trying to convince military officials that John was suffering from PTSD. His military Commanders and higher officials also tried to biopolitically contain John’s grief and discipline his desire to seek mental health services by feminizing him and calling him a “pussy” and a child. His mother is missing however from the accounts of John Needham’s battle to receive a diagnosis for PTSD and mental health services. Yet, as Cynthia Enloe and other feminist scholars of gender and militarism have taught us, it is often women—as mothers, wives, and girlfriends—that are

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<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

expected to take care of wounded soldiers.<sup>389</sup> What was her role, if any, in trying to get John treatment? The journalists from *Salon* and journalist Dave Philipp's of *The Gazette*, who also followed the story of John's struggle, did not interview the women family members.<sup>390</sup>

Nevertheless, the feminization of trauma and of PTSD for male soldiers has very gendered affects. Just several weeks after being discharged from the military, John beat to death his 19-year girlfriend, Jacqwelyn Villagomez, in his San Clemente condo. On the night of her death, Jacqwelyn got into a fight with John's ex-girlfriend, Renee Stoner, in the residence.<sup>391</sup> Needham broke up the fight, where Jacqwelyn was supposedly the aggressor, and Renee left the residence and called 911 to report the incident. Jacqwelyn did not leave but instead stayed. All we learn from Yoanna and Benjamin's report is that she was beaten in the apartment, and that when the cops showed up at the condo they found Jacqwelyn barely alive and John drunk in his underwear. She later died at the hospital.

Journalists Paloma Esquivel and Christine Hanley from the *LA Times* however decided to pay more attention to the story of Jacqwelyn Villagomez.<sup>392</sup> Jacqwelyn was born in Central Valley in California and was raised by her grandmother since the age of six after her

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<sup>389</sup> See for example Cynthia Enloe, *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). Also see Ann Jones, *They Were Soldiers: How the Wounded Return from America's Wars--the Untold Story*, 2013.

<sup>390</sup> See David Philipps, *Lethal Warriors: When the New Band of Brothers Came Home* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>391</sup> See "Was PTSD to Blame? Mystery over Troubled Iraq Veteran Who Killed Girlfriend and Was Found Dead after Overdosing 18 Months Later," *Mail Online*, accessed November 11, 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2061425/Troubled-Iraq-veteran-John-Needham-killed-girlfriend-dead-18-months-later.html>.

<sup>392</sup> "'Mentally Unstable' Iraq Veteran Arrested in Death of Girlfriend, 19," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 2008, <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-beating3-2008sep03,0,6026971.story#axzz2kI3WNZJy>. David Philipps also examine the dynamics of Jacqwelyn's death, albeit in less detail than Esquivel and Hanley, in his book *Lethal Warriors: When the New Band of Brothers Came Home* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

mother died and her father moved to Guam. She was a good student and she loved acting; she was a performer in several high school plays. She wanted to be a model, and met John at a friend's birthday party. They started dating about a month before John's discharge from the military, and she later moved in with him. According to John's family members, John and she had several bad breakups weeks before her death. Jacquelyn left John and was staying at friends' houses while she was looking for a new apartment.

John's Myspace page was a site of investigation for some journalists who reported on the conversations between Jacquelyn and John during this time. In one entry, Jacquelyn wrote on John's Myspace page: "I'm the only one who cares enough to wipe your tears when other people laugh because they only think you are just a crazy mental case war vet!! your walking out on love and its obvious its a reflection of your self esteem and self love!! regret will take over your life until you are in so much pain that you take your own life! please dont cry to me when the pain doesnt go away."<sup>393</sup> I wonder if Jacquelyn, who had also experienced great loss in her life at a young age with the death of her mother and the loss of her father who moved to Guam, identified in some way with John Needham's own suffering. Perhaps within a gendered constellation of power relations, she saw herself as the one taking care of John who was also abandoned, but by the military community and society at large. At any rate, Jacquelyn's everyday life with John had become militarized. According to another article, Jacquelyn was struggling with drugs and was unable to secure a job.<sup>394</sup> Needham describes their relationship as one of mutual support. In a media interview following his arrest, he stated that "She had her issues and I had my issues. I just got back from Iraq and

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<sup>393</sup> "A Short, Turbulent Affair Ends in Death," *The Orange County Register*, accessed November 11, 2013, <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/needham-162983-inside-deputies.html>.

<sup>394</sup> "Was PTSD to Blame?"

we were both broken people. And we kind of mended well. We kind of helped each other.”<sup>395</sup>

Significantly, there were multiple warning signs of John’s violent tendencies. For example, Jacquelyn’s ex-boyfriend said that she called him one night and told him that John had choked her and that she had to use pepper spray to free herself from him. None of the friends and family members however expected the violence to escalate. Who could they have turned to? The police? A domestic violence shelter? John Needham was arrested for the murder of Jacquelyn and placed on one million dollar bail. Two years later he died in his mother’s home from unknown causes.<sup>396</sup> Some articles suggest he died due to a reaction to pain medication from his back surgery. Others suggest he died from an overdose of prescription medications.

While the dominant media does indeed focus on the many ways in which soldiers are returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with traumatic experiences and PTSD, there are hardly any news stories or images of women—and especially women of color—that are battered or killed when soldiers return from the warfront in the dominant media. Nor are there many dominant media accounts on the gendered dimensions of militarized violence and the domestic economy as soldiers return “home” from the wars. Instead, what the majority of the American public views in the dominant media are seemingly sudden and isolated outbursts of violence as soldiers return home from the wars and continue killing.

In their timely article “Domestic Terror” (2002), written in *The Nation* magazine nearly a year after the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, Catherine Lutz and Jon Elliston called

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Michael de Yoanna and Mark Benjamin, “Soldier in ‘Coming Home’ Series Dies after Surgery,” accessed November 11, 2013, <http://www.salon.com/2010/02/24/needham/>.

attention to militarized violence against women as soldiers return from Afghanistan and the silence surrounding the gendered politics of military base violence in the media.<sup>397</sup> They begin with a story of four soldiers who return to Fort Bragg, North Carolina from a tour in Afghanistan; the men kill their wives when they supposedly confuse them for enemies. Similar to the ways in which Jacquelyn was brutally murdered by John Needham, Marilyn Griffin was stabbed seventy times by a U.S. soldier and her trailer set on fire. Another two victims, Teresa Nieves and Andrea Floyd, were both shot in the head. Jennifer Wright's husband strangled her to death.

As Lutz and Elliston illustrate, the Fort Bragg murders garnered national attention to the relationships between training soldiers to be killers on the homefront/warfront, the traumatizing effects of the war on soldiers, and the possible role of the military in providing psychiatric and mental health treatment for soldiers. Even the controversy surrounding the possible side effects of the antimalarial drug that the Army requires all soldiers to take was pondered in the dominant media and other scientific-military-health professional journals as a possible "source" of the soldier's violent tendencies and trauma in the Fort Bragg murders. The Pentagon sent officials to Fort Bragg following the murders to test the effects of the anti-malarial drug since it was said that several of the soldiers who killed their wives were on the drug.<sup>398</sup>

However, Lutz and Elliston argue, "On the epidemic of violence against women throughout the United States and on the role of masculinity and misogyny in both military

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<sup>397</sup> Catherine Lutz and Jon Elliston, "Domestic Terror," *The Nation*, September 26, 2002, <http://www.thenation.com/article/domestic-terror#>.

<sup>398</sup> "Fort Bragg Killings Linked to Drug?," *ABC News*, January 6, 2006, <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=125833&page=1>.

and civilian domestic violence...there has been a deafening silence.”<sup>399</sup> As their analysis of the militarization of masculinities and domestic violence demonstrates, violence against women on the homefront from soldiers that suffer from the traumatic affects of war is not a series of apolitical and ahistorical isolated incidents or only of domestic violence. Instead, the politics of domestic terror and the deadly consequences of training soldiers to be killers, and refusing to provide adequate mental health services for soldiers with PTSD, is a systemic problem that has gendered effects.

Journalists Lizette Alvarez and Deborah Sontag of *The New York Times* have reported on the increase of soldiers who return from Iraq and Afghanistan and continue killing and/or who are perpetrators of domestic violence in their “War Torn” series. In one article, they describe how many soldiers use the “PTSD defense” to describe their state of mind during the time of the murders.<sup>400</sup> The creation of the psychiatric category of PTSD in 1980, originally for Vietnam veterans, enabled many Vietnam Veterans and their defense lawyers to also claim that the veterans’ violent offenses against civilians on the homefront was the result of trauma (specifically PTSD) from the warfront—they plead temporarily “insane” due to their experiences in Vietnam.<sup>401</sup> Over time, there was a growth of resistance to the “PTSD defense” for veterans that committed violent crimes. Today, however, the veterans of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan “raise their combat trauma during plea negotiations or in the sentencing phase of trials, hoping for reduced charges or a lesser sentence,” and “Occasionally,” Alvarez and Sontag state, “it works.” At the same time, many soldiers who

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<sup>399</sup> Lutz, “Domestic Terror,” 18.

<sup>400</sup> Deborah Sontag and Lizette Alvarez, “In More Cases, Combat Trauma Is Taking the Stand,” *The New York Times*, January 27, 2008, sec. US, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/us/27vets.html>.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

do return to the homefront and continue killing end up committing suicide following the murders.

David Phillips' investigation into the Fort Carson murders in the Colorado Springs area since 2006, along with Lizette Alvarez's and Dan Frosch's report on the murders in the *New York Times*, is worthy of attention in this respect. Both articles emphasize the accompanying rise of domestic violence and soldier suicides in relation to violence against civilians as soldiers return from the warfront. In his insightful and timely two-part investigative series titled "Part I: The Hell of War Comes Home"<sup>402</sup> and "Part II: Warning Signs" (2009),<sup>403</sup> published in the *Gazette News*, a Colorado Springs community newspaper, Phillips maps how violence travels on the homefront/warfront in the small Colorado Springs community surrounding the military base.

As of 2009, ten soldiers from the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Brigade Combat Team that have returned to Fort Carson from their multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan have been arrested and accused of murder, attempted murder or manslaughter. John Needham was a part of this unit. He is one amongst thirteen soldiers who returned from Iraq to Fort Carson and continued killing. He was part of an all male combat unit that called itself the "Lethal Warriors" in Iraq. Many of the soldiers came back with severe mental health issues and physical injuries. Phillips's widely read "The Casualties of War" article begins with a list of the murders by the soldiers from Needham's combat unit in Colorado Springs since 2006:

In August 2007, Louis Bressler, 24, robbed and shot a soldier he picked up on a street in Colorado Springs.

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<sup>402</sup> "Casualties of War, Part I: The Hell of War Comes Home," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, accessed October 15, 2013, <http://gazette.com/casualties-of-war-part-i-the-hell-of-war-comes-home/article/59065>.

<sup>403</sup> "Casualties of War, Part II: Warning Signs," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, accessed January 21, 2014, <http://gazette.com/casualties-of-war-part-ii-warning-signs/article/59091>.

In December 2007, Bressler and fellow soldiers Bruce Bastien Jr., 21, and Kenneth Eastridge, 24, left the bullet-riddled body of a soldier from their unit on a west-side street.

In May and June 2008, police say Rudolfo Torres-Gandarilla, 20, and Jomar Falu-Vives, 23, drove around with an assault rifle, randomly shooting people.

In September 2008, police say John Needham, 25, beat a former girlfriend to death.<sup>404</sup>

As these examples suggest, many soldiers return from the warfront and continue killing not only civilians but also fellow soldiers. As Alvarez and Fosch report, domestic violence has also increased around the military base as soldiers return from the wars. “In 2006, Fort Carson soldiers were charged in 57 cases of domestic violence, according to figures released by the base. As of mid-December, the number had grown to 145,” they write. They further: “Rape and sexual assault cases against soldiers have also increased, from 10 in 2006 to 38 as of mid-December, the highest tally since the war began. Both domestic violence and rape are crimes that are traditionally underreported.”<sup>405</sup> Additionally, many soldiers from this unit, like John Needham, have committed or attempted suicide.<sup>406</sup> In 2006, the soldiers returned from Iraq where they had served in some of the bloodiest firefight in the U.S.-led invasion. Many of the men had been involved in killings of civilians and torture of Iraqi prisoners of war during their first, second, third, and even fourth tours of duty, often including tours of duty in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the current U.S.-led wars, many soldiers are not only surviving injuries that would have proven fatal in previous wars (and hence an increase of soldiers returning with serious

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<sup>404</sup> “Casualties of War, Part I.”

<sup>405</sup> Lizette Alvarez and Dan Frosch, “A Focus on Violence by Returning G.I.’s,” *The New York Times*, January 2, 2009, sec. US, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/02/us/02veterans.html>.

<sup>406</sup> “Casualties of War, Part I.”

war-related injuries). Many soldiers are also continually redeployed to Afghanistan (and until recently, Iraq), serving up to as many as four or five tours of duty. Phillips' report details how many soldiers of the unit are trained to be killing machines before deployment and during deployment. He interviews many of the soldiers and traces their violent combat experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan on the homefront and warfront. As one soldier from the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Brigade Combat Battalion at Fort Carson put it—who later pleaded guilty to several murders—the Army trains soldiers to be killers and paradoxically expects them to return to civilian life without any difficulties:

The Army trains you to be this way. In bayonet training, the sergeant would yell, 'What makes the grass grow?' and we would yell, 'Blood! Blood! Blood!' as we stabbed the dummy. The Army pounds it into your head until it is instinct: Kill everybody, kill everybody. And you do. Then they just think you can just come home and turn it off.... If they don't figure out how to take care of the soldiers they trained to kill, this is just going to keep happening.<sup>407</sup>

The murders are part of a broader nexus of military base violence and *horror of nothing to see* in the wars, including violence against women and soldier suicides. As Phillips puts it, "The killings are only the headline-grabbing tip of a much broader pyramid of crime. Since 2005, the brigade's returning soldiers have been involved in brawls, beatings, rapes, DUI's, drug deals, domestic violence, shootings, stabbings, kidnapping and suicides."<sup>408</sup> Phillips details the ways in which the Fort Carson's Evans Army Community Hospital is poorly funded, understaffed, and ineffective in helping soldiers as they return from the wars with PTSD, drug addictions, and traumatic brain injuries.

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

For example, the soldiers at Fort Carson received mental health treatment services through a private counseling service in Colorado Springs with a staff that was not trained to work with patients who experienced combat-related trauma. With more than 600 soldiers diagnosed with PTSD-related symptoms at Fort Carson in 2006, the psychiatric ward of the hospital, Phillips notes, was overcrowded. Hence, there was little if no opportunity for soldiers to receive individual counseling, as group therapy sessions became a way to cushion the overwhelming influx of soldier-patients. The warning signs surrounding soldiers' suicides and violence are often dismissed by doctors and therapists at the VA who are overworked and underpaid in a highly bureaucratized system of military power.

### Giving Into Grief

This chapter has demonstrated how the psychiatric category of PTSD remains a significant stigma within the U.S. military. I have focused on the stories of soldiers and traced their everyday lives on the warfront and homefront in order to explore how PTSD is best understood as a storytelling practice. These stories shed an important light on how many male soldiers that are trained to contain their fears and emotions are told by their Commanding officers to stop acting like “pussies” and are feminized when they seek help for PTSD-related symptoms. The burden of providing visible proof of one's mental illness and of the *horror of nothing to see* of one's emotional and “hidden” war trauma is placed on the soldier. She or he must provide the evidence, or demonstrate through a performance, that she or he is suffering from a mental illness. Since the military desperately needs to retain soldiers for the continuation of America's endless wars abroad, especially with a smaller all-volunteer force, the chain of command manipulates the politics of “visibility” and “invisibility” surrounding the psychic traumatic affects of the wars for many U.S. soldiers.

A visible injury, such as a missing arm or a leg, clearly signals a “disability” that is visibly painful with a Western logic of pain, injury, and suffering. The emotional or psychic injuries of war however are not necessarily visible signs of pain within dominant frameworks of recognizing pain and suffering. Military Commanders, higher officials, and physicians in the military-medical complex are thus able to manipulate these dominant understandings of pain and injury and dismiss soldiers’ claims to PTSD-related symptoms such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, and paranoia. As a biopolitical container narrative, PTSD therefore operates as a de-politicizing category that manages the soldier’s wounded body and soldier-trauma within military and medical formations of power and knowledge.

This chapter has also demonstrated how the feminization of male soldiers involves equating men’s bodies to women’s bodies within patriarchal frameworks of recognition. Ethan McCord and John Needham *became women* insofar that they transgressed the dominant frames of recognition for what it means to “be a man” and an honorable, courageous soldier. By correlating McCord’s body with that of a woman’s sexual organs, McCord and male military subjects who resist militarized discourses of honor and bravery often (not always) become framed by military Commanders as feminized subjects that cannot contain, control and order their emotions. Simply put, they *become* framed, and sexualized, as women. As Sandra Whitworth puts it, “Male soldiers who experience PTSD discover they have not successfully obliterated the feminine other and indeed risk becoming ‘women.’<sup>409</sup> Indeed, the Commanding Officer’s statement “Get the sand out of your vagina, soldier,” and Ethan McCord’s expression of grief and outrage at the processes of militarization and violence in the Iraq war, illustrates how he has “given into grief” like a woman. By

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<sup>409</sup>Sandra Whitworth, “Militarized Masculinity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,” in Parpart and Zalewski, *Rethinking the Man Question*, 118.

questioning the death of innocent civilians and children in Iraq, he challenged the violence of militarism's effects on bodies and refused to affirm a binary distinction regarding the affective and bodily precariousness of what constitutes a life worth grieving.

Ethan McCord's emphasis on the emotional battles of war that are rendered invisible in the dominant media calls forth a reframing of how grief, as an embodied process, can become a source of political strength rather than a perceived weakness. As Judith Butler puts it, grief functions not as a disembodied process where one transcends the body through a higher or outer-body experience, as grief is understood within more male dominant and western-oriented philosophies of embodiment. Instead, one is rather "beside oneself with rage or grief" as a "bounded being" within a historical and feminist materialism that takes into account the embodied experiences of subjects and grief's corporeal dimensions.<sup>410</sup> These corporeal dimensions of grief are informed by differences and intersections of race, class, sex, colonialism, and sexuality, amongst others, in a particular place and time. For instance, Butler suggests that it is important to remain accountable to the "hierarchies of grief" surrounding those lives that are rendered human and those bodies that are rendered intelligible as inhuman within post-Cold War discourses and moral frameworks of the forces of "good" and "evil" in the so-called Global War on Terror.<sup>411</sup>

Ethan McCord's reframing of the violence and of the *horror of nothing to see* of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan thus challenges the hierarchies of grief in dominant U.S. military assemblages of power that attempt to screen the current wars as "clean wars" without significant U.S. soldier or civilian injuries and deaths. Put this way, the feminization of the masculine military subject who attempts to seek professional help for traumatic war

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<sup>410</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, 24.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

injuries—such as Ethan McCord’s and John Needham’s experiences described in this essay— is not simply an extreme example of one or several soldiers’ experiences. Instead, the feminization of trauma functions as a significant tool for attempting to contain and silence soldiers’ acts of dissent to the U.S. war machine and their attempts to express the war’s injurious effects on bodies, including civilian bodies.

De-militarization scholars/activists might therefore focus on how to affirm alternative understandings of masculinity that have less violent and disabling affects. Perhaps mental health professionals can help many male soldiers heal from the traumatic affects of the wars by talking about how dominant ideas of masculinity function as violent affects of power.<sup>412</sup> Such a process of reframing masculinity also involves reframing what it means to be a “woman” and dominant ideas about femininity. While there is a growing emphasis on providing equality for women soldiers and “homosexuals” in the U.S. military within more liberal discourses, perhaps the Left should focus more on debunking the myths of masculinities and normalizing effects of heteronormativity.<sup>413</sup> Mental health professionals might work with soldiers and veterans to talk about the intersecting modes of oppression of militarized masculinities across differences of race, class, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality. Such an approach to healing from trauma moves away from the medicalization of

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<sup>412</sup> I glean this insight from Kathy Ferguson who mentioned during a personal conversation on masculinity and war trauma that mental health professionals might interrogate what it means to be masculine when working with veterans and focusing on healing.

<sup>413</sup> See for instance Helen Benedict, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009). In her final chapter, which focuses on recommendations for ending sexual violence against female service members, Benedict does not suggest that masculinity and heteronormativity are problems to be dealt with in order to end sexual violence the U.S. military. Why not recommend a workshop for all soldiers on reframing masculinity and heteronormativity? That such a workshop would, arguably, be difficult to include in the list of recommendations for ending sexual violence against women and male soldiers sheds an important light on the normalization of militarized masculinities.

trauma and instead locates alternative modes of healing through processes of de-militarizing masculinities and unraveling the complex dynamics of the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars.

## Chapter 6

### **Beyond the Front: A Micropolitics of Grief on the Homefront/Warfront in Paul Haggis's *In The Valley of Elah*.**

#### Introduction: Beyond the Front

The public sphere is constituted in part by what cannot be said and what cannot be shown. The limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear, circumscribe the domain in which political speech operates and certain kinds of subjects appear as viable actors.

—Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*<sup>414</sup>

On November 26, 2008, *The Christian Science Monitor* published an article on the U.S. Army's recent suicide prevention program. The article details the increase in suicides amongst U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq and the development of the Army's new interactive video and computer game *Beyond the Front*, which encourages soldiers to seek help in order to cope with the stresses of war and PTSD-related symptoms. The interactive video is part of

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<sup>414</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, xvii.

the U.S. military's response to the increasing number of U.S. soldiers that commit suicide each year and has been called the centerpiece of the Army's suicide prevention campaign implemented army-wide in 2008.<sup>415</sup>

The number of suicides amongst U.S. soldiers has steadily risen since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, garnering national attention in December 2005 when twenty-two year old Joshua Omvig shot himself in front of his mother upon returning from an eleven-month deployment to Iraq. His parents had been pressing him to receive mental health treatment for PTSD, but Joshua was afraid that seeking professional help might jeopardize his career. Omvig's parents helped lobby for an army-wide suicide prevention program, and backed by Congress, passed the *Joshua Omvig Suicide Prevention Act*, which was signed into law during the first week of November 2007. The Omvig bill serves as a comprehensive suicide prevention plan, and demands more mental health training for VA professionals, a twenty-four hour suicide prevention hotline in order to provide soldiers access to more mental health experts, and the standardization of formal tracking devices for statistical reports.<sup>416</sup>

In addition to the bill, Joshua Omvig became a metaphorical figure for how politicians and healthcare advocates framed the struggle for increased federal support of mental health services for soldiers returning from the Global War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a timely event, Joshua's suicide occurred when the U.S.-led war in Iraq, led by George Bush and Tony Blair, was beginning to lose public support. In this sense, Joshua's suicide, put crudely, became a trope for different political groups and individuals to frame and reframe

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<sup>415</sup> See "Army uses video games in suicide prevention" by Gordon Lubold, *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 26, 2008. Available online at: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1126/p02s01-usmi.html>.

<sup>416</sup> See "Giving Vets Their Due" by Kay Steiger for *The American Prospect*, online news, Nov. 12, 2007, available online at: [http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=giving\\_vets\\_their\\_due](http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=giving_vets_their_due).

the war as a meaningful event and of what “war” actually constitutes for soldiers that took their own lives.<sup>417</sup>

The American public is becoming increasingly aware of soldiers’ suicide rates as they return from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan since the events of September 11, 2001. More U.S. soldiers are taking their own lives than are dying in combat. The most recent data from the VA reports and Suicide Prevention Program reveals that 22 veterans committed suicide a day during the year 2010, which is for the first time higher than the adjusted civilian suicide rate during the Vietnam War. These statistics represent veterans from not only the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also the First Gulf War and Vietnam War.<sup>418</sup> Many soldiers that commit suicide from the recent wars are heavily medicated. In fact, two out of five suicide victims have been found to be on antidepressants.<sup>419</sup> These VA studies emphasize that it is male veterans who are the dominant victims of suicide; suicide rates for men increase from 15 to 21 per 100,000 when they deploy to a war zone. However, recent studies also show how the suicide rate triples for women when they enter a combat zone; the rate of suicide increases from five per 100,000 soldiers to 15 per 100,000.<sup>420</sup> Recent studies also

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<sup>417</sup> According to the most recent *Army Suicide Event Report* released on March 1, 2008, which tracks suicide rates and trends amongst active-combat soldiers deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and in surrounding areas, 108 soldiers took their own lives during the year 2007. Twenty-nine of these 108 soldiers committed suicide during their deployment to Iraq and four soldiers committed suicide during their deployment to Afghanistan. Meanwhile, 166 soldiers *attempted* suicide during the year 2007.<sup>417</sup> Notably, young, lower-enlisted female soldiers were highly overrepresented within this group of attempted suicides.

<sup>418</sup> Suicide Data Report (2012) See <https://www.va.gov/opa/docs/Suicide-Data-Report-2012-final.pdf>.

<sup>419</sup> Mark Thompson, “America’s Medicated Army,” *Time*, June 5, 2008, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1812055,00.html>.

<sup>420</sup> “Suicide Rate Triples for Female Soldiers When They Get Sent to Iraq or Afghanistan,” *Mail Online*, accessed November 18, 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1367729/Suicide-rate-triples-female-soldiers-Iraq-Afghanistan.html>.

report that soldiers of “Asian descent have significantly higher suicide rates than other racial groups.”<sup>421</sup>

*Beyond the Front* was created within the context of an increase of U.S. soldiers taking their own lives in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Recalling our discussion on the “burden of proof” for providing visible evidence of one’s PTSD symptoms as a soldier in the previous chapter, the suicide prevention program places the burden on the soldier for asking for help. *Beyond the Front* introduces soldiers to fictional character Specialist Kyle Norton and Ben Hernandez who suffer from PTSD and depression following their series of multiple deployments to Iraq [See Figure 16]. Norton returns home to a broken relationship with his girlfriend and mourns the loss of his friend during combat while Hernandez suffers from violent nightmares and acute depression. Through several re-enactments and role playing scenarios, the interactive video brings viewers through Norton and Hernandez’s downward spirals while also providing data on depression, suicide, and soldiers’ options for helping fellow soldiers receive institutional care for depression and PTSD symptoms. Moreover, the video encourages soldiers to speak to their Chaplains and mental health experts, provides examples of how soldiers might offer emotional support to fellow soldiers reluctant to seek help, and illustrates how soldiers can remain alert to the signs of PTSD and depression.

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid.



Figure 16: The U.S. military's suicide prevention program *Beyond the Front*.

More importantly, *Beyond the Front* illustrates the military's efforts to manage soldiers' ways of making sense of, and experiencing, war and its traumatic effects. As a cinematic tool firmly rooted in military narratives of progress and cooperation, *Beyond the Front* offers limited frames of intelligibility for how soldiers might make sense of the complexities of war and violence. As a biopolitical container narrative, *Beyond the Front* attempts to contain and manage how soldiers will come to recognize their grief from the wars within a de-politicized context for understanding violence, militarization, and the traumatic effects of war. For instance, the video guides soldiers through a very particular way of managing grief. While the video opens with a brief re-enacted combat scene of a soldier killed in action, the

viewers' attention is quickly redirected to an anonymous, fictional Army commander on his knees over Norton and Hernandez's gravesites.

The commander's symbolic and political function in the video is twofold. First, by positioning the commander as an anonymous character, viewers are meant to understand that this could be *any* soldiers' commander. The commander functions here as a symbolic figure then for reaffirming positive images of military superiors identifying and sympathizing with lower-enlisted soldiers' emotional hardships. Secondly, vis-à-vis various cinematic shots, the Commander's narrative voiceover is an attempt to provide a coherent narrative for the complexities of the soldiers' disillusionments of war. For example, while the opening of the video begins with a violent combat scene, the commander's voiceover recodes the images by stating to viewers that these realities of combat deaths are difficult, but they are nonetheless necessary parts of the job of being an Army soldier. "Its never easy losing men in my command. In our line of work, well...it's going to happen," the commander tells viewers. "I don't like it," he continues, "In fact I hate it. But its part of what we do." In these terms, the commander's character helps normalize how military discourses affirm killing as inevitable aspects of Army life and what it means to be a soldier.

This mode of closure afforded by the commander narrative code is important. By rendering traumatic combat experience as simply an inevitable aspect of war, the possibilities for soldiers to question the very foundations of military norms and values are obscured as *the horror of nothing to see* at the very beginning of the video. According to the military narrative of *Beyond the Front*, for instance, the violent experiences of combat, increases in soldiers' multiple tours, feminization of trauma, and drug-induced military cultures are not possible contributing factors towards the increasing rate of suicides amongst U.S. soldiers

since the Global War on Terror began thirteen years ago. Nor does *Beyond the Front* consider recognizing the gendered ways in which traumatic experiences of war, such as rape and sexual harassment, are silenced as the *horror of nothing to see* amongst units, and which might consequently lead some soldiers, such as female service members, to experience suicidal thoughts.

Moreover, by emphasizing the inevitability of death and suffering during war, the video attempts to reframe the figure of the male warrior-hero as one who “always manages to overcome his pain and transform pain into power”—by seeking help from professionals and fellow soldiers.<sup>422</sup> However, as illustrated in Chapter Six of this dissertation on the assemblage of the soldier and injured soldier-body in control societies and technoscientific modes of experimentation, dominant images surrounding the U.S. soldier body circulate within more “virtuous war” assemblages, exemplified for instance by images of the technologically equipped cyborg soldier in media and Hollywood.

Within the same year as the release of *Beyond The Front*, for instance, the pop sequel to *Rambo* and *Iron Man* were both released. The films reaffirm popular images of a bionic U.S. soldier body capable of overcoming all grief and pain through high-tech weaponry and technologies. As James William Gibson puts it in *Warrior Dreams: Violence and Manhood in Post-Vietnam America*, the dominant media and Hollywood images of U.S. soldiers overcoming the physical injuries and psychic pains of contemporary wars are historically imagined not by talking reasonably to health professionals but by turning to one’s weapons as technologies of mastery for overcoming pain. Writing on the contradictions of the warrior-image in postmodern worlds, Gibson writes:

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<sup>422</sup> See James William Gibson, *Warrior Dreams*, 115.

The warrior's state-of-the-art weaponry, hard body, and battle scars radiate power. He is the embodiment of the masculine ideals of autonomy, integrity, physical courage, and competence. While ordinary men succumb to fear and watch from afar, he acts. He is not trapped by forces beyond his control, but instead meets and masters all challenges. His violence changes the world far more than the words and deeds of others do; his individual existence counts and he knows it. But at a second glance, a far different man appears in the hardened shell of the warrior's body. In fact, he is not really a man at all, but instead a little boy whose anger, fear, and desire are all totally beyond his control.<sup>423</sup>

Hence, *Beyond the Front* enacts a particular sign system that depoliticizes the broader structures of power surrounding soldiers' experiences of trauma and the *horror of nothing to see* upon returning from war, such as the contradictions between the image of the hero who transcends pain through technological mastery and the video's call for soldiers to discuss their fears and feelings with fellow soldiers and health professionals. Moreover, recalling the commander's message that losing men under his command is never easy but an inevitable aspect of "our line of work," the video depoliticizes a multiplicity of political implications for how U.S. soldiers are embedded within systems of military control and violence. Losing a friend in combat, for example, could prompt one to question the worth of fighting the war against terror and one's commitment to the U.S. military. Judith Butler emphasizes that there are both private *and* public dimensions to grief, just as there are both private and public dimensions of the body and its relation to others. By recognizing and affirming our interdependencies as bodies always vulnerable to violence, and as individuals always

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<sup>423</sup> *Warrior Dreams*, 116.

undergoing grief and its transformative dimensions with others, grief becomes not something to be cured or fixed but a relational affect that has the potential to foster political communities:

Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility. If my fate is not originally or finally separable from yours, then the “we” is traversed by a relationality that we cannot easily argue against; or, rather, we can argue against it, but we would be denying something very fundamental about the social conditions of our very foundation.<sup>424</sup>

However, these potential moments for reconsidering our ethical and political interdependences with others during onsets of grief are always susceptible to the militarization of these affective experiences, such as the traumatic affects of losing friends in war. On September 21, 2001, former President Bush announced that “...*now* it is time for resolute action to take the place of grief.”<sup>425</sup> Rather than approach the events of 9/11 as a moment for many Americans to reconsider the historical and imperial implications of America’s presence in the international world order, the Bush administration attempted to order and close the possibilities for “us” to consider these relational ties with others in order to take “action.” It is within this masculinized and patriotic framework of ordering the disorder of traumatic events that grief is rendered intelligible as a particularly feminizing process. The undoing of the self through processes of grief becomes a disruptive and

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<sup>424</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, 22-23.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, 29, original emphasis.

transformative affect that must be controlled, overcome, and mastered by taking “action” and revenge on the forces of “evil” in the Global War on Terror.

However, to grieve is itself a slow “act” and a political process of transformation that can be a resource for more ethical and non-violent becomings. “To grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction,” Butler argues, “but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself. The disorientation of grief—“Who have I become?” or, indeed, “What is left of me?...posits the “I” in the mode of unknowingness.”<sup>426</sup> In these terms, suicide prevention training videos, such as *Beyond the Front*, illustrate a particular militarized “prohibition” and ordering of political affect on modes of public grieving. Writing on the events after 9/11, “The public,” Butler writes, “will be created on the condition that certain images do not appear in the media, certain losses are not avowed as losses, and violence is derealized and diffused. Such prohibitions not only shore up a nationalism based on its military aims and practices, but they also suppress any internal dissent that would expose the concrete, human effects of its violence.”<sup>427</sup>

Suicide prevention programs such as *Beyond the Front* thus have productive returns. Rather than focus on narratives of loss surrounding soldier-trauma, it is best to instead ask how various state practices attempt to biopolitically contain soldiers’ and the publics’ grief and processes of mourning. For Butler, we are all implicated in the “task of mourning” in the face of “national melancholia” and a “disavowed mourning” of those killed by the US war machine.<sup>428</sup> Those killed by the U.S. war machine include not only soldiers that take their

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>427</sup> See Butler, *Precarious Life*, 37-38.

<sup>428</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, 34.

own lives, nor soldiers who come home and take the lives of others, but civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan whose lives are not counted as lives worthy of mourning. We need only turn to obituaries as an act of nation–building and “our” complicity. In Butler’s more eloquent words:

National melancholia, understood as a disavowed mourning, follows upon the erasure from public representation of the names, images, and narratives of those the US has killed. On the other hand, the US’s own losses are consecrated in public obituaries that constitute what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human: what counts as a livable and grievable death?<sup>429</sup>

Similar to the affects of policing images of wounded and dead soldiers in the dominant media, *Beyond the Front* functions as a significant tool for suppressing dissent within the U.S. military machine by providing a very particular, national narrative on how U.S. soldiers are able to process grief and traumatic affects related to combat experiences. As already demonstrated in previous chapters, this process of militarizing grief—and in this case U.S. soldiers’ traumatic experiences and processes of facilitating grief—is intricately embedded within the militarization of masculinities. In contrast to the particular narratives surrounding U.S. soldiers’ abilities to reach out to their fellow soldiers and the military professional health industry in *Beyond The Front*, U.S. soldiers remain deeply embedded within “militarized masculinities” that treat any attempts to discuss or problematize soldiers’ experiences of war as signs of masculine weakness. Higher-ranking officers repeatedly call soldiers “PTSD Pussies” when they attempt to seek professional help for traumatic

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid., xv.

experiences and when they discuss their hesitations and resistance to the U.S. military machine and the ordering practices of disorderly soldier-bodies.

This chapter provides an alternative economy of meaning for approaching how U.S. soldiers (male soldiers in particular) grapple with the traumatic affects of war on the one hand, and the militarization of grief and everyday life on the other. In juxtaposition to the dominant image of the wounded warrior hero that informs the semiotic strategy of the military's recent suicide prevention program, this chapter turns to Paul Haggis' film *In The Valley of Elah* (2006) as an important aesthetic text that renders visible the more micro- and macropolitical "milieu" (See Foucault) of grief surrounding the temporal presence of the soldier's wounded body. A micropolitical analysis is especially important for disrupting more macropolitical public policy and reform agendas that demand a variety of more health services for wounded veterans, such as the Army's suicide prevention program, without politicizing the biopoliticization of wounded soldier bodies in military formations of power.

The micropolitical dimensions surrounding the temporal presence of the soldier's wounded body in the current Global War on Terror directs us to the militarization of grief and trauma through a nexus of social relationships and affective encounters in everyday life. As William Connolly puts it, "micropolitics saturates cultural life, helping to set the stage for macropolitical action."<sup>430</sup> The micropolitical dimensions of grief and soldiering in the current wars take place in the politics of everyday life in the home, at school and around the dinner table, at the local town hall meeting and the military base, and in one's daily bodily encounters with others. Micropolitically, film functions as an important tool that renders visible these dimensions of everyday life on the homefront/warfront.

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<sup>430</sup> William E. Connolly, "Film Technique and Micropolitics," *Theory & Event* 6, no. 1 (2002).

If one de-centers more psychoanalytic film criticisms (such as the operation of the gaze within a Lacanian sensibility of vision and subjectivity or by asking how a particular film represents traumatic memory) than one can appreciate instead the particular “filmic techniques” that a film’s montage employs in order to think the political.<sup>431</sup> While psychoanalytic film theories tend to focus specifically on the narrative dimensions and representational practices of films, it is more interesting to explore how particular films force viewers to think vis-à-vis a series of moving images and encountered signs that disrupt daily habits of perception. In order to move beyond the question of “What does the image *show*?” one needs to ask instead “how [are] images are linked” in modern cinema.<sup>432</sup> By turning to the more affective dimensions of a film’s montage, this chapter illustrates how Paul Haggis’ film *In the Valley of Elah* (2006) engages viewers to think about the *micropolitics of grief* and the *horror of nothing to see* in the current wars in more un/common ways. In juxtaposition to the cinematic narratives of heroism and the talking cure that inform the semiotic strategies of *Beyond the Front*, and more macropolitical public policy agendas for securitizing the health of the soldier’s wounded body, Haggis’s film renders visible the micropolitics of grief surrounding the soldier’s wounded body.

While *Beyond The Front* affirms the dominant narrative that soldiers are capable of putting the traumatic experiences of the warfront behind them by seeking therapeutic cures, *Elah* problematizes these narratives of the soldier’s wounded body as one that needs to be “treated” as a psychiatric subject of war trauma. Importantly, it provides an anti-hero counternarrative to national assemblages of the fallen warrior as a symbol of American sacrifice in the ongoing Global War on Terror. The analysis that follows highlight the ways

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 42, original emphasis.

in which Haggis' film, which takes place on a military base in a rural area following soldiers' return from Iraq, rearranges the sign-assemblage of soldiers' traumatic experiences of war, and by extension, the signs of grief of the wars on the homefront/warfront.

### In the Valley of Elah

Before providing an analysis of Paul Haggis' film *In the Valley of Elah*, it is helpful to first provide a brief narrative of the film. In *Elah*, Vietnam War veteran and former military policeman Hank Deerfield (Tommy Lee Jones), a white male, searches for the truth surrounding his son's disappearance after he returns from Iraq. When Mike is reported AWOL, Hank doubts the military's classification of his son's disappearance. As Hank puts it, his son is a "military boy" and from a proud military family. Hank, like the men in the family before him, encouraged his sons to join the service, and he and wife Joan (Susan Sarandon) already lost their only other son during his service in Bosnia with the Army. Leaving their small middle-class neighborhood in the Midwest, Hank travels to Mike's military base in Fort Ruid, New Mexico in order to conduct his own investigation. He runs into a series of bureaucratic obstacles from both the military and local police, and none of the soldiers are aware of "Doc's" disappearance, a name given to Mike during his tour in Iraq.

However, Hank does manage to find one significant piece of evidence surrounding Mike's disappearance when he steals Mike's cell phone from his bedroom quarters on the base. Hank brings the cell phone to a computer technician who informs him that the phone contains not only photographs but also video footage. While the footage is damaged, the technician is able to decode the material and emails Hank three sets of footage over the course of the film's narrative. The footage reveals the *horror of nothing to see* of the wars that do not make the official news. In one set of footage, Mike tortures an Iraqi prisoner of

war by sticking his hands into his wounds. In another, he runs over a child that is in the middle of the road. And in the final video, he raids a building in Baghdad and places a skateboard logo sticker on the skull of a corpse. After Hank receives and views the first video, Mike's body is found in a nearby field off the side of a highway. Brutally murdered, he was stabbed forty-two times with one knife before his body was cut into multiple pieces, burnt and left charred in the field. Detective Emily Sanders (Charlize Theron) helps Hank in the investigation of the murder and becomes an apprentice to Hank's ability to decipher the signs of the crime scenes.

Emily, a young white woman, is herself embedded within a war as she attempts to navigate the red tape of the military and work in a masculine and sexist police force. She and Hank suspect that the military is engaging in a cover-up of the murder. Captain Fitzgerald, who is in charge of the military investigation, claims that Mike was most likely killed by a local Mexican gang. Several soldiers were recently arrested for trying to smuggle heroin from Afghanistan, and Fitzgerald brings forth a pipe that he claims was found under Mike's bed. Meanwhile, Hank does his own detective work by visiting venues around the base, including a strip club, and eventually stumbles into a bouncer that recognizes a picture of Mike. Though Emily is enraged when she learns that Hank is leading his own "unofficial" investigation, the lead does reveal that Mike and several other soldiers were kicked out of the bar on the night of his murder. The bouncer identifies three men from a set of photographs who were with Mike that night at the club, all of whom Hank met when he first arrived at the base.

Emily eventually interviews the three men, who all state that they found a prostitute upon leaving the bar, and then left Mike in the nearby field surrounding the base when he

wanted to buy drugs rather than return to the base. Following the interviews and after receiving statements from all the men in Mike's unit, Hank notices that there is one statement missing, which turns out to be another soldier who is reported AWOL, Private Robert Ortiz (Victor Woolf), a young Latino man. After his police file reports that he was formerly convicted of drug smuggling before entering the military, connecting him to the military's insistence that Mike was an addict and killed in drug-related violence, they pin Ortiz as the likely murderer. Hank follows Emily and the unit as they chase Ortiz from a house he is hiding in. Hank, driving in his truck, follows Ortiz and slams him with the side of his car door, and proceeds to beat him. When Emily tries to pull Hank off of Ortiz, Hank hits her in the face as she falls to the ground. Upon returning to the station, Ortiz is released. Despite the fact that they searched his house and found no evidence connecting him to the murder, Hank calls him a "wetback" as Ortiz exits the station, insistent that he is still the culprit.

The final clues to the truth surrounding the murder are revealed when Emily discovers that it was not Mike's signature on the fast food bill on the night he was murdered, but instead Corporal Steve Penning's (Wes Chatham), a soldier with whom Hank had become acquainted with during his investigation. During Penning's confession, he casually admits that he killed Mike while Specialist Penning Long (Mehcad Brooks) and Specialist Gordan Bonner (Jake McLaughlin) watched (though Bonner committed suicide by hanging himself on base several scenes earlier). Penning coldly recounts the events surrounding Mike's death. The men had been arguing in the car, and Bonner pulled over and the men got out, "And then," recounts Penning, "I looked down, and I was stabbing him." Hank inquires into the footage of Mike and what looked like him torturing an Iraqi prisoner. Penning smiles and describes the ways in which Mike used to place his hands in the wounds of prisoners,

because it was funny and “a way to cope”—hence, the nickname “Doc.” This scene renders visible the *horror of nothing to see* when soldiers become numb from their continual attempts to contain all signs of grief.

Following the confession, Hank visits Ortiz and apologizes and they have a drink together. Hank asks Ortiz about the photograph he found of a young kid on the side of a road and the video footage of him in the Bradley Vehicle with Mike. Reluctantly, Ortiz informs him that they had run over a young child that day during patrol. Because of the military’s no-stop policy when one is on patrol in a moving vehicle, since a stopped vehicle becomes a target for Iraqi insurgents and air grenades, Mike was encouraged to speed up the Bradley Vehicle and run over the child. Upon returning home, Hank opens up a package that Mike sent to him and Joan while he was in Iraq. Inside the package is a photograph of him and the men in their unit, and a battered American flag, the one that waved on their Bradley Vehicle. In the final scene of the film, Hank returns to the flag post in their small town and raises the flag upside down as an international distress signal.

However, more important than the narrative dimension of the film are the ways in which Hank functions as what Siegfried Kracauer calls a “cinematic subject” that renders visible certain things normally unseen within daily habits of perception.<sup>433</sup> As a cinematic subject, Hank’s search for the “truth” surrounding his son’s death brings the viewer through a competing series of images of the war and the violent effects of U.S. militarism on bodies in a particular time and place. Particularly, Hank’s body, as a cinematic body, illuminates the ongoing processes of militarization of everyday life and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars, rendered visible to the viewer through his bodily comportments and movements. His

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<sup>433</sup> Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 41.

gestures and everyday habits emit signs of what I call a “military sensibility” of time and space. I use the term military sensibility to define a structural intelligibility and logics of readability that operate within the order of military space and time. A military sensibility necessitates a particular logic, habit of reasoning, and military way of thinking and “being military,” in which persons come to make sense of their location and surroundings in a militarized order of things. “Being military” includes, in part, knowledge of skills and specializations for the calculation of time, space, speed, and landscape, amongst others.

Militarization here is understood as an ongoing process and system of beliefs that function both macropolitically and micropolitically in everyday life. As Cynthia Enloe describes, “To become militarized is to adopt militaristic values (e.g., a belief in hierarchy, obedience, and the use of force) and priorities as one’s own, to see military solutions as particularly effective, to see the world as a dangerous place best approached with militaristic attitudes.”<sup>434</sup> In these terms, one does not need to be a soldier in order to become militarized. Instead, militarization functions as an ongoing process through the militarization of borders, civilians, international intelligence, corporations, schools, media, the family, national security and ideas about masculinity and femininity.<sup>435</sup>

“Besides Oneself”<sup>436</sup>: Militarization of Grief on the Homefront/Warfront

Hank’s military sensibility of time and place, including his affirmation of patriotic codes of honor and nationalism, is best illuminated by how he disciplines his body and his attempt to gain control and mastery over the self within a military sensibility of order and time. Before

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<sup>434</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 4.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> I take this phrase “besides oneself” from Judith Butler’s use of the phrase in *Precarious Life*. I provide a more detailed discussion on Butler’s use of this concept in this section of the chapter.

entering Fort Rudd, for instance, Hank visits a rest stop just outside the base in order to change into a long white-sleeved shirt and shave his face. Micropolitically, Hank's disciplined movements and desire to maintain a strong hygiene routine also illustrate to the viewer how he copes with the increasing signs of distress and grief surrounding his son's disappearance. For instance, in several key scenes that take place in his motel room, the camera provides several affective close-up shots of Hank as he diligently folds the blanket corners around his bed tightly, shines his shoes before placing them neatly at his bedside, and hangs his clothes up for the next morning.

However, these signs of a military sense of order and disciplining the body become increasingly disorderly as Hank's search for the truth surrounding Mike's death continues. By extension, Hank's body becomes a cinematic body that renders visible the corporeal dimensions of grief as a disruption to the notion of the self as an autonomous and orderly individual. As Judith Butler suggests, processes of grief have the capacity to affect the subject's understanding of the self as one who is control of her or his body. While "we" like to think that we are in control of our bodies, "the body has its invariably public dimension."<sup>437</sup> As Butler puts it, "What grief displays...is the thrall in which our relations with others hold us, in ways that we cannot always recount or explain, in ways that often interrupt the self-conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide, in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control."<sup>438</sup> As described earlier, Butler argues that by recognizing and affirming our interdependencies as bodies always vulnerable to violence, and as individuals always undergoing grief and its

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<sup>437</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, 26.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

transformative dimensions with others, grief becomes not something to be cured or fixed but a relational affect that has the potential to foster political communities.

Grief thus functions as a transformative process that has the potential to disrupt notions of a self-sufficient subject in American discourses of individualism and imagined communities. As a transformative process that is socially conditioned and relationally-bound to our dependencies and “common human vulnerability” to violence, grief “thralls” us into recognizing our fundamental dependencies upon others. We are “undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re missing something,” Butler suggests.<sup>439</sup> While militarized networks of power attempt to biopolitically manage the disorderly effects and affects of grieving bodies, Haggis’s film illuminates the slow process of becoming undone by grief’s transformative effects.

Butler does not approach grief as a disembodied process where one transcends the body through a higher or outer-body experience, as grief is understood within more male dominant and western-oriented philosophies of embodiment. Instead, one is rather “beside oneself with rage or grief” as a “bounded being” within a historical and feminist materialism that takes into account the embodied experiences of subjects and grief’s corporeal dimensions.<sup>440</sup> Moreover, these corporeal dimensions of grief are informed by differences and intersections of race, class, sex, colonialism, and sexuality, amongst others, in a particular place and time. For instance, Butler suggests that it is important to remain accountable to the “hierarchies of grief”<sup>441</sup> surrounding those lives that are rendered human and those bodies that are rendered

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 32.

intelligible as *inhuman* within post-Cold War discourses and moral frameworks of the forces of “good” and “evil” in the so-called war against terror.

Haggis’ film renders visible these corporeal and political dimensions of grief as a process of transformation, or “undoing” of the self as an autonomous subject, through several close-up shots that differ strikingly from the previous shots of Hank’s body. In the first shot, Hank nicks his neck while shaving. In the following shot, a drop of blood that falls on the white paper placemat at the diner as he sits down for breakfast. When Hank returns to his motel room, a messenger from the Army approaches him. Before informing him of his son’s death, Hank visits the restroom to place a single piece of tissue on the cut. As he looks into the mirror, he attempts to hide his emotions since he knows the messenger’s visit means that Mike is most likely dead. Upon hearing of his son’s death, Hank’s body and facial expressions drastically change. Until this point in the film, Hank’s facial expressions are solemn. Yet, when the Army messenger informs him that his son’s body is not available for viewing, Hank yells angrily at the soldier, “I want to see my son now!” while he throws his hands in the air and then authoritatively points his finger to the ground.

Moreover, as the search for his son’s murderer continues, Hank’s motel room and his outward appearance become increasingly disorderly, and he continues to awake from violent nightmares from the video footage of Mike in Iraq. In several scenes, Haggis provides flashback sequences to the images of Mike and the men in the unit in Iraq. In these scenes, the viewer and Hank become more attuned to the “hierarchies of grief” surrounding the soldier, civilian, and “terrorist” body on the homefront/warfront.<sup>442</sup> In the first scene, Hank wakes up panting from a nightmare early in the morning and immediately begins making his

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<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

bed in a military sensibility of order and repetition. In the second scene, after awaking from nightmares of replaying Mike's video of the dead insurgents in Iraq, Hank awakes again to a messy room and stumbles to the curtains, opening them up to find that it is daylight, before he closes them shut again. In these scenes, the viewer is encouraged to consider the "disorientation of grief" and the process by which grief "thralls" one into the question of "Who have I become?"<sup>443</sup>

The video footage functions here as a way in which both Hank and the viewer become more familiar with the signs of grief and "forces of trauma" surrounding the soldier body on the warfront in Iraq, which differ strikingly from the dominant media accounts of the war that play in the background in multiple scenes.<sup>444</sup> For example, in several scenes at the diner that Hank visits, the television news on the Global War on Terror plays in the background. In one clip, former President Bush addresses the nation while another news clip provides information on a recent insurgency attack on American soldiers in Baghdad. Haggis' juxtaposition of the "unofficial" video footage of the war's violence from Mike's cell phone camera with the "official" media coverage of the so-called war against terror functions as a subtle but rhythmic force throughout the film. In contrast to the ways in which suffering bodies are rendered invisible as the *horror of nothing to see* in the media, including images of U.S. soldiers' wounded and fatally wounded bodies, Paul Haggis' film *In the Valley of Elah* renders visible the signs of distress surrounding the war not from the official viewpoint and narrative of the authorized speakers of the war in Iraq, but from the viewpoint of the

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>444</sup> Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford University Press, 2005).

soldiers' video footage of the war, spliced into different fragments and durations over the course of the film.

Each set of footage provides a different clue surrounding the “truth” of Mike’s disappearance and (as the viewer also soon learns) his murder. The footage is an archive of visible evidence of the *horror of nothing to see* of the wars in the dominant media and the *horror of nothing to see* from Hank’s perspective of the war on the homefront. Hank collects this visible evidence of the war’s violent effects and it is through this process that he slowly becomes “undone” by grief’s transformative effects. The first email consists of footage of Mike in Iraq with several other soldiers in their Bradley Vehicle. As the scene unfolds, the men begin to panic as something blocks the road (which the viewer later learns is a child). One of the men yells, “Don’t stop, Mike! Don’t fucking stop!” which is when the vehicle undergoes a violent thump. In the next video, Mike and his unit engage in firefight with Iraqi insurgents before entering a blown-out building. Inside, the cell phone camera gazes on the bodies and faces of the dead charred bodies of (one assumes) Iraqi insurgents, though the corpses could very well be civilians. In this set of footage, Mike places a red skateboard logo sticker on the skull of a corpse.

In the third set of footage, Mike and the men are again in their Bradley Vehicle, but this time Mike places his fingers in the wounds of an Iraqi prisoner, “Does that hurt?” he asks as he places his hands in the man’s wound. “Yes!” the prisoner screams. Mike continues, “What about here? And here? Here?” In another email, Hank receives a set of photographs taken from Mike’s cell phone. In one photo, a child lies alongside an abandoned vehicle on a dirt road. As the story unfolds, the viewer realizes the photograph is of the dead child that Mike and the men killed that day in the Bradley Vehicle (in the first set of video footage). In

juxtaposition to this photograph surrounding the death of the child, another photo from the collection is of the men in the company, standing patriotically on their Bradley Vehicle, an American flag waving in the background.

If we take heed here to Jill Bennett's emphasis on an artwork's capacity to create new modes of "empathic vision" that affect the viewer by provoking new thought, then the video footage in the film is significant because it renders visible images of violence and suffering bodies in the sanitized wars.<sup>445</sup> The imagery of the video footage, and Haggis' juxtaposition between competing images of violence in the wars, also encourages modes of "empathic vision" that affect the viewer by generating sensation "so as to produce an encounter in the present."<sup>446</sup> One of the principles of Bennett's approach to the politics of traumatization and memory is that memory operates as a "primary memory of affect," where both memory and affect find their origins not in a single subject or individual, but rather in a multiplicity of locations.<sup>447</sup> While psychoanalytic approaches to trauma focus on the interiorization of pain in the subject, or the unrepresentability of trauma, particular artworks have the capacity to force the viewer to undergo a "shock to thought," which as Brian Massumi puts it, enables a "a jolt that does not so much *reveal* truth as thrust us involuntarily into a mode of critical inquiry."<sup>448</sup> In these terms, "trauma...is conceptualized as to have a presence, a *force*."<sup>449</sup> Film has the capacity to render visible these invisible forces of trauma and the *horror of*

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<sup>445</sup> Bennett turns to thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, Veena Das, and Charlotte Delbo in order to reframe current theoretical perspectives within trauma studies, which often remain embedded within psychoanalytic frames of knowledge.

<sup>446</sup> Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, 28.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, original emphasis, 11.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, original emphasis.

*nothing to see in the wars* by multiplying the spatialities and temporalities of lived bodily experiences in the realm of the social.

In contrast to nation-state frameworks of time and space that attempt to contain traumatic memories within historical trajectories of national times, as illustrated by the cinematic narrative of the military's suicide prevention video *Beyond the Front*, memory here operates as an affective register of experience that cannot be confined to an individual subject or to a "a people." Temporally, memory expands then beyond its origins in time into a "deeper, more extended conception of memory-one that is not confined to a single point in time but that extends temporally and spatially to engage lived forms of experience."<sup>450</sup> Recalling Pierre Nora's use of the term, there are multiple ways in which these *sites of memory* are spatially and temporally multiplied in the film.

Specifically, cinema has the potential to render visible these multiple "forces of trauma" and modes of empathic vision by multiplying the temporalities and spatialities of lived experience through various cinematic techniques. For example, *Elah* multiples the lived spatialities and temporalities of not only the soldier's wounded body, but also the civilian's fatally wounded body, both on the homefront and the warfront in the Global War on Terror. As Hank's search for the "truth" surrounding his son's death progresses, viewers are encouraged to think about the complexities and paradoxes surrounding the "truth" or "origins" of violence surrounding Mike's death. In contrast to the dominant figure of the soldier hero within the dominant media and military formations of power and representation, Mike's murder and the death of the child in Iraq concern lives not worth grieving within U.S. military and security networks of power/knowledge.

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 11.

Recalling Butler's emphasis on "hierarchies of grief" and obituaries as nation-building practices, Haggis's film forces viewers to think about how some lives are rendered worthy of grieving in the dominant media while other lives, such as those of everyday peoples in Iraq and Afghanistan, are hidden from the "public" as lives that were ever "human" at all. Writing shortly after the events of September 11, 2001, Butler states:

A hierarchy of grief could no doubt be enumerated. We have seen it already, in the genre of the obituary, where lives are quickly tidied up and summarized, humanized, usually married, or on the way to be, heterosexual, monogamous, happy. But this is just a sign of another differential relation to life, since we seldom, if ever, hear the names of the thousands of Palestinians who have died by the Israeli military with United States support, or any number of Afghan people, children and adults.

Butler goes on to ask:

To what extent have Arab peoples, predominantly practitioners of Islam, fallen outside the "human" as it has been naturalized in its "Western" mould by the contemporary workings of humanism? What are the cultural contours of the human here? How do our cultural frames for thinking the human set limits on the kinds of losses we can avow as loss? After all, if someone is lost, and that person is not someone, then what and where is the loss, and how does mourning take place?<sup>451</sup>

Following these provocations to thought, Haggis' film enables viewers to consider such questions surrounding the "human," such as the frames of intelligibility for how the loss of "a life" is rendered intelligible as a "grievable life" within western humanist rhetoric and the Global War on Terror. The juxtaposition between the military's photographs of Mike's dead

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<sup>451</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, 32.

body and Mike's photographs of the child's fatally wounded body in Iraq serves as a powerful referential montage image in this respect. Because of the artwork's capacity to disrupt habitual viewing practices by provoking a "shock to thought," Haggis' film encourages more empathic modes of vision by forcing viewers to think about the "forces of trauma" surrounding not only Mike's violent death, but also the grief and the *horror of nothing to see* when one loses a loved one in the wars. In juxtaposition to the "humanizing" effects of the obituary or western humanist frameworks, Haggis' film provides viewers with an alternative way of perceiving the more ambiguous and complex ways in which Mike and the soldiers are, as Friedrich Nietzsche might put it, "human, all too human."<sup>452</sup>

As Kelly Wilz demonstrates in her keen analysis of the film, *Elah* provides an alternative narrative for reframing more dominant cultural myths surrounding the warrior hero by humanizing Mike's experiences as a U.S. soldier in Iraq. The warrior-hero myth is historically rooted within national imaginaries surrounding the male soldier hero fighting a war between the forces of "good" and "evil." Dominant warrior myths depict an image of the male soldier as a superhuman fighting a monstrous and abstract "other," such as in the mythical story of David and Goliath. I explore the historical context of the hero-figure in a future chapter. However, *Elah* provides a counter-narrative to these mythical and national narratives by foregrounding the micropolitical dimensions and everyday ways that soldiers grapple with the traumatic affects of the wars. Instead of the image of the comic superhuman soldier body fighting the Global War on Terror, Mike's character directs attention to how soldiers are embedded within a complex assemblage of military power, violence, and processes of dehumanizing the soldier, civilian, and terrorist-other body. Wilz writes:

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<sup>452</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

By depicting the warrior hero as something other than a caricatured icon, *Elah* asks its audience to view this “other” *not* as an abstract object, but as an individual human character. By viewing differently, *Elah* also attempts to persuade viewers to *believe* differently in terms of how they understand simple representations of good and evil. In *Elah*, not only is the icon of the warrior hero disrupted, but also the myth of American innocence by implication (since the soldier ultimately stands in for the role of defending the innocent nation against its evil counterparts, and functions as its national symbol of good over evil). Therefore, by humanizing the film’s main character, we begin to see America’s innocence unravel and a new narrative about soldiers and war emerging.<sup>453</sup>

Wilz thus suggests that *Elah* circulates as an important filmic text that “re-humanizes” the soldier’s body by engaging viewers to consider, amongst other things, the complex lifeworld of a U.S. soldier returning from the Iraq war. Rather than provide viewers with battle scenes and more typical war footage, *Elah* focuses on the more hidden aspects of psychic trauma that is nevertheless visible as soldiers return from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the invisible trauma and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars that many soldiers experience in Iraq and Afghanistan become increasingly visible when they return home—in the force of domestic terror, suicide, drug use, and killings. In addition, the cost of these wars affects soldiers and their families, friends, and civilians living near military bases.

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<sup>453</sup> Kelly Wilz, “Richard’s Story: The Present Referent in ‘In the Valley of Elah,’” *Global Media Journal* 8, no. 15 (2009), 5. This is an online journal, and as such I have provided the correct page for this quote based on my printed version of the essay. See: <http://lass.purduecal.edu/cca/gmj/fa09/graduate/gmj-fa09-grad-wilz.html>.

The sign-system of the American flag in the film also becomes an important affective image that challenges dominant notions of American patriotism or the apolitical mantra of “supporting the troops.” At the beginning of the film, Hank insists that the grounds keeper, a Salvadorian immigrant man, raise the flag correctly. At the end of the film, however, Hank takes the flag down and raises it upside down, signaling an international sign of distress. Hank’s search for the culprit of his son’s death thus leads him to become, gradually, more de-militarized. At the same time, the film re-affirms a sense of American patriotism and racism by strategically placing a male immigrant who is not attune to the “proper” display of the flag and its cultural meanings in these key scenes from the film. The immigrant’s perspective of the war’s violent effects is rendered invisible and Hank becomes the dominant white male referent that callously instructs the grounds keeper to raise the flag according to his own wishes and without any questions.

The film also encourages viewers to consider the life of the child in Iraq that Mike kills that day in the Bradley Vehicle, and the micropolitics of grief that the child’s family might experience upon learning of their son’s violent death, also by a U.S. soldier. As mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the soldiers from the *Operation Homecoming* film expressed the grief of the Iraqi father whose son was killed by the U.S. soldier’s Humvee in the middle of the night. The killing of children on the road-spaces of Iraq and Afghanistan is common since soldiers are ordered to keep driving even if a child or civilian is in the middle of the road. Part of the military’s justification for this “no-stop” road policy is that children are used as decoys for ambushes. The death of civilians on the road-space in Iraq and Afghanistan and these vehicular sites of trauma also structure the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars.

Haggis' film thus locates the micropolitics of grief surrounding trauma and the *horror of nothing to see* in the Global War on Terror within a nexus of social relationships, hierarchies of grief, and militarized systems of power. The film reframes dominant frameworks of the human by rendering visible how "our" conception of the human is contingent on existing norms of recognition. Indeed, one could argue that the "culprit" of Mike's death turns out not to be simply the soldier that confesses to the murder. Rather, the film forces viewers to consider the systemic modes of militarized violence that create some lives worthy of grieving (such as the soldier-hero) and some lives unworthy of grieving (such as the soldier's fatally wounded body and civilian body on the homefront/warfront).

#### Gendered/Racialized Violence on the Homefront/Warfront

As this chapter has demonstrated thus far, *Elah* investigates the micropolitical forces of trauma that occur as soldiers return from the wars, and the "hidden" ways in which psychic trauma is rendered visible when soldiers continue killing. Indeed, the "forces of trauma" surrounding the soldier's wounded body in Haggis' film extend to violence against women's bodies and Latino immigrant male bodies on the homefront as soldiers return from Iraq. Hank's racist attitudes and militarized beliefs become more visible as the film progresses, especially when Hank stammers at Emily and insists that she take Mike's case since his son had served in Iraq to "bring democracy to a shithole." His insistence too that Ortiz is the culprit despite the lack of evidence tying him to the murder, including his violent aggression toward Ortiz both physically and verbally, forces viewers to consider the violent effects of racist imaginaries of Latino men and people of color in post-9/11 security discourses in the Global War on Terror on the homefront.

On the other hand, Haggis' film is exemplary for its political treatment of the gendered modes of violence on the homefront in the current wars. For example, Emily too is embedded within a war as she attempts to further her detective career in a sexist and masculine police force while providing for her son as a single mother. These gendered formations of power are illuminated in several key scenes that take place in the detective's office, where Emily is constantly interrupted and sexually harassed by the men in the unit. While she wears a uniform and sleeks her hair back, her social presence as a white woman is bound and culturally conditioned by her everyday encounters with her boss, colleagues, Hank, Captain Fitzgerald and the militarized landscape that surrounds her. She attempts to discipline her emotions and become integrated into the masculine and military order of things. However, she becomes increasingly unable to order and contain her emotions as the film progresses.

In a key scene, a young woman comes to see Emily because her husband who has just returned from Iraq drowned their dog in the bathtub. Meanwhile, the men in the unit bark at both the women from their desk. Emily takes on the masculine role of the detective, and refuses to help the young woman and suggests that her husband seek counseling at the Veterans' Administration (VA). The young woman responds angrily, "You think we haven't already tried that already? He won't go there, they won't help him. He's gonna hurt somebody, I know he is!" However, several scenes later, Emily learns the young woman is murdered. When she arrives at the woman's house, she finds her dead in the bathtub where her husband strangled her, just like the dog. The dehumanization of the soldier-body and the "other" on the warfront also involves the dehumanization of women on the homefront. In this scene, Emily finally becomes "undone" and begins to grieve for the young girl. These filmic sequences are important because they locate gendered modes of violence and the

militarization of bodies on the homefront in a complex web of gendered power relations. In this sense, the film renders visible the circuits of militarized violence that are forcefully felt on women's bodies as many male soldiers return to the homefront. The metaphor of equating civilian's bodies and women's bodies to animals is a significant theme in the film. As Ortiz tells Hank in the final scene of the film, soldiers often refer to dead children and civilians as dogs in order to cope with the grief of killing another.

As discussed in Chapter Two, there has been a general silence in the dominant media surrounding these processes of militarization and gendered violence as more soldiers return from Iraq and Afghanistan with serious combat-related injuries and trauma. The warning signs of violence against women by male soldiers when they return home from war are rendered visible in the film several times. Haggis's film thus illuminates how warning signs surrounding soldiers' suicides and violence are often dismissed by doctors and therapists at the VA who are overworked and underpaid in a highly bureaucratized and sexist system of military power.

The militarization and dehumanization of the soldier body is also experienced differently across racial and gendered relations of power. For example, Haggis' film *Elah* is based on the true story of the murder of specialist Richard Davis. Richard was brutally killed by several of the men of the Baker Company, a prestigious section of the US Army, who served with him in Iraq during the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Baghdad. The soldiers in Baker Company experienced intense violence during their deployment to Iraq, as described in detail in journalist Mark Boal's interviews with the men in the unit. On April 11, 2003 for instance, Davis, Burgyone, and the others in the unit engaged in firefight in their Bradley Fighting Vehicles killing over 100 insurgents, whose bodies were piled onto the streets, a scene of

violence that the Baker Company soldiers later called “The Midtown Massacre.”<sup>454</sup>

According to soldiers in the unit, Davis also earned the name “Doc” during his tour in Iraq because of his tendency to torture wounded Iraqi Prisoners of War by placing his fingers in the prisoners’ open wounds, as illustrated in the film. When the men of Baker Company were flown to Kuwait following their killing spree in Baghdad, in order to “get out of God mode, where we could kill anyone,” as one soldier of Baker Company told journalist Mark Boal, the fighting continued, this time between the men of the unit.

One soldier stated Richard had been the subject of racist violence amongst men in the unit, especially Burgyone, who also was known as a bully. According to one soldier in the Baker Company, Richard, whose mother is Filipina–American and whose father is part Latino, was also picked on by some of the men because of his “Asian features.”<sup>455</sup> Richard’s father describes how his son experienced racism growing up in the American Midwest. As he puts it, ““They are backward, uneducated people back there [in the American Midwest], however you want to say it...they try to impress people by picking on things that they think are different.”<sup>456</sup> Moreover, Richards’ parents firmly believe their son was the subject of racist violence on the night of his murder. Thus, the story of Richard’s death illustrates the complex ways in which the soldier-body becomes both the aggressor and victim of military violence and torture within racist formations of power as the *horror of nothing to see* in both the dominant media and in Haggis’s film.

However, these racist dimensions surrounding Richard’s experience as a Latino and Filipino male in the U.S. military are rendered invisible in Haggis’ filmic version of

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<sup>454</sup> See Boal’s article, <<http://memoriesofrichard.tripod.com/id6.html>>

<sup>455</sup> Quoted in Boal’s article <<http://memoriesofrichard.tripod.com/id6.html>>

<sup>456</sup> Quoted in Boal’s article.

Richard's life and death. In juxtaposition to Specialist Richard Davis and his family, whose father is part Latino and mother Filipina, *Elah* reaffirms the dominant Hollywood image and narrative of the white American family and military war drama. The whitewashing of Richard Davis's story brings our attention to the racist and masculine hierarchies of the Hollywood film industry. Even though the film was not popular amongst the American public, and despite its low budget, the film was still cast to portray an American story of re-humanizing the white male soldier and white family. In the following chapter, I turn to a brief genealogy of the warrior-hero and whiteness by focusing on the prosthetic assemblage of the U.S. soldier able-body.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Reframing the Horror of Nothing to See: Prosthetic Assemblages, War Machines & Disability**

What place is given to life, death, and the human body (in particular the wounded or slain body)? How are they inscribed in the order of power?

—Achille Mbembe<sup>457</sup>

In a photo op with President George W. Bush on the South Lawn of the White House in April 2004, Iraq War veteran Staff Sergeant Michael McNaughton performed a ceremonial jog with President George W. Bush [See Figure 17]. McNaughton, a member of the Louisiana National Guard, was wounded by a landmine in Afghanistan during July 2003, and first met the President at Walter Reed Medical Hospital following his injury. As illustrated by this image, the injured soldier body circulates in the media and in national imaginaries as an important site of social desire for affirming an image of the injured soldier body capable of becoming an athletic, socially respectable, and re-masculinized figure, at least in part, through the use of prosthetic devices.

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<sup>457</sup> J.-A. Mbembé and Libby Meintjes, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003), 12.



Figure 17: Former President George Bush jogging with Iraq War veteran Staff Sergeant Michael McNaughton at the White House in April 2004.

The photo-op of McNaughton with the former President is one amongst many other photographs in the media of wounded veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that feature images of injured veterans as optically white, heteronormative, and “able-bodied” soldiers. These images circulate within imperial formations of whiteness and American masculinity. As David Serlin illustrates in his analysis on the socially engineering of the American postwar disabled body, the male amputee body is historically embedded within a matrix of rehabilitation discourses. Since the first and second world wars, prosthetics functioned as technologies for transforming the disabled soldier body from an emasculated dis/abled body into a patriotic heteronormative masculine able/body. “For

doctors and patients,” writes Serlin, “prosthetics were powerful anthropomorphic tools that reflected contemporary fantasies about ability and employment, heterosexual masculinity, and American citizenship.”<sup>458</sup>

Serlin’s analysis on prosthetics and postwar culture illustrates how the development of the Dreyfuss arm in the 1950s was viewed as a technological image of modernity and precision for refashioning the working class male amputee body from a dis/abled body (unable to circuit itself into capitalist modes of production) to a productive (arguably white) capitalist body. “The uneasy relationship between the working man and his body,” he writes, “remained the premier site where American masculinity continued to be re-fashioned throughout the postwar culture.”<sup>459</sup> Serlin does not refer to these medicalization discourses surrounding the alignment of the male amputee body to normative ideals of heterosexual citizenship through technologies as distinctly racialized processes of power and knowledge. However, clearly the implications for thinking about discourses of whiteness are implicit within his analysis. For instance, as Emily Grabham demonstrates, dominant images of U.S. amputee veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan since the events of 9-11, including the image of McNaughton and former President Bush, are embedded within a nexus of racializing techniques whereby bodies become racially marked as national bodies through surgeries and modes of “flagging” the skin. Grabham illustrates the ways in bodies become national bodies within images of whiteness and American patriotism through modes of corporeal “flagging.”

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<sup>458</sup> David Serlin, *Replaceable You: Engineering the Body in Postwar America* (University Of Chicago Press, 2004), 27.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

Extending on Michael Billig's notion that the flag functions as a productive force of meaning-making within national imaginaries, Grabham illustrates how "the flag has symbolic and productive force, reinforcing nationalism within everyday encounters: the consistent use of clichés in political speeches; repeated use of the words 'us', 'we', 'the people', 'society'; arguments about the nation's destiny which do not question the nation's parameters or existence; and the perpetuation of national stereotypes."<sup>460</sup> For instance, images of soldiers wearing flashy prosthetic devices function as one way that the soldier's body is enfolded as a national body within patriotic imaginaries of the wounded warrior-hero returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

While immigrants and people of color, particularly Arab Americans, are targeted as threatening bodies within U.S. post-9/11 security discourses and patriotic nationalisms, subject daily to surveillance technologies, racism, violence, and deportation, Grabham argues that U.S. veteran bodies are rendered visible in the media as technologically superior bodies within national imaginaries of a "white homeland."<sup>461</sup> Grabham's insight on the relationships between embodiment, the flag, and whiteness is particularly interesting given our discussion in the previous chapter of the symbolic role of the flag and national grieving in Paul Haggis's film *In The Valley of Elah*. Similar to how the flag is more than a mere object in Haggis's film, since it operates as a sign-system for both patriotic displays of honor and international distress, the flags on veterans' prosthetic limbs also function as sign-systems of meaning-making and value:

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<sup>460</sup> Emily Grabham, "'Flagging' the Skin: Corporeal Nationalism and the Properties of Belonging," *Body & Society* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2009), 64.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

U.S. media coverage of veterans with amputations in this way ‘flags’ the veterans’ prosthetic limbs as emblems that imbue veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the nation, with added strength. In this way, bodies with prostheses become emblems of the U.S. nation: they come to ‘belong’ in nationalistic terms through a possessive relationship of connection.<sup>462</sup>

In order to extend on Serlin and Grabham’s insightful analyses on the gendered and racialized media representations surrounding amputee veterans and prosthetic technologies in the dominant media, we might turn to Achille Mbembe’s provocation on the biopolitics of life and death that opens this chapter. As described in more detail in Chapter Three of this dissertation, Mbembe directs our attention to the conditions of possibilities for how some human lives come to matter more than other lives within biopolitical and necropolitical relations of power. Mbembe is just as interested in how some bodies come to be recognizable within dominant regimes of recognition and processes of normalization as he is about how some bodies come to be unrecognizable within these dominant power relations.

More specifically, Mbembe challenges me to ask how it is that the soldier’s injured body becomes valued as a life worth saving, grieving, and reassembling into capitalist modes of production in juxtaposition to the wounded bodies of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. This juxtaposition brings our attention to the differential relations of power and violence surrounding the wounded body of the Global War on Terror. Which wounded bodies become lives that are worthy of curing and providing care for in contrast to those bodies that becomes expendable lives within dominant systems of power, violence, and sovereignty? This chapter maps the political significance of contemporary prosthetic technologies and prosthetic

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

research developed for wounded veterans like Michael McNaughton returning from Iraq and Afghanistan since September 11, 2001. It follows the “money trail” surrounding the development of new technologies such as prosthetic arms and legs that are being developed for U.S. soldiers returning from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, I demonstrate how the U.S. military increasingly turns to the advancement of new artificial limbs as ways to encourage amputee soldiers to return to full-time duty as soldiers within contemporary U.S. war machines.

In addition, I map the money trail surrounding the war profiteering and privatization of the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan, and until recently Iraq, within neoliberal regimes that benefit government officials and corporate interests. By extension, I map money trails surrounding veterans’ health and disability benefits as they return from these wars. Despite expensive research and development programs, such as those for high-tech prosthetic technologies and the circulation of image of soldiers such as McNaughton, this chapter illustrates the ways in which the significant budget cuts to veterans health services since 2001, amongst other things, have rendered the VA incapable of providing some of the most basic mental health services to soldiers returning from the wars with PTSD.

My analysis also demonstrates how the development of new prosthetic technologies for the U.S. soldier injured-body also circulates as the “horror of everything to see” within MIME NET assemblages of power and knowledge. In addition, the chapter turns to Bahman Ghobadi’s film *Turtles Can Fly* (2004), Danfung Dennis’s film *Hell and Back Again* (2011), and Martha Rosler’s recent photomontages of wounded soldiers and analyzes how each text disrupts dominant images of the heteronormative, white-male, able-bodied soldier equipped with high-tech prosthetic technologies. It examines how these aesthetic texts render visible

the *horror of nothing to see* and the micropolitics of everyday life for Iraqi children living in militarized landscapes and for wounded soldiers who return to the homefront.

### Engineering the Wounded Soldier Body

DARPA had the money...DARPA had the minimal bureaucracy, DARPA had the right attitude, DARPA had the stated mission of pushing back the frontiers of science. I came back really invigorated to do this. I really, really, really wanted to come to DARPA.

—Colonel Jeffrey Ling, DARPA program manager of  
Revolutionizing Prosthetics<sup>463</sup>

On April 12, 2009 the television news show *60 Minutes* aired a segment titled “The DEKA Arm,” which reported on the development of a new robotic arm by the Defense Advanced Research Agency (DARPA), the research and development arm of the Department of Defense. The DEKA arm was invented by Dean Kamen, infamous inventor of the Segway (the one George W. Bush couldn’t seem to manage), who holds over 440 U.S. patents and founded the The DEKA Research & Development Corporation in 1976. Kamen founded the company in order to “develop internally generated inventions as well as to provide R&D for major corporate clients,” such as the U.S. Defense industry.<sup>464</sup> The DEKA arm is a “neurally-controlled prosthetic arm” that is able to detect the bodies’ neural pathways and conduct them to move the prosthetic arm.<sup>465</sup> The Deka Arm has become increasingly popular within

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<sup>463</sup> See *NPR* website for “Excerpt: The Department of Mad Scientists,” by Michael Belfiore, at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120271945>.

<sup>464</sup> See his website and brief biography at: <http://www.dekaresearch.com/founder.shtml>

<sup>465</sup> See *Iee Spectrum: Inside Technology* feature story titled “Winner: The Revolution will be Prosthetized” at: <http://spectrum.ieee.org/robotics/medical-robots/winner-the-revolution-will-be-prosthetized>.

American media as an aesthetic image of futurity and of a more post-human body. The television news program *60 Minutes* provided a segment on the development of the DEKA arm [See Figure 18] and Dean Kamen donned the Deka Arm on John Stewart's *The Daily Show* [See Figure 19].

The development of more bionic, high-tech artificial arms for wounded veterans is part of the Revolutionizing Prosthetics Program funded by DARPA, which collaborates with the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, and with over thirty American universities and research departments. DARPA's mission statement is to "maintain the technological superiority of the U.S. military and prevent technological surprise from threatening our national security."<sup>466</sup> DARPA's emphasis on technological superiority and security reflects the U.S. military's attempt to master technology and science for military ends. In this discursive nexus, state security is affected by the belief that the state can, and indeed must, control and master the increasingly destructive, global forces of weapons technology by better equipping its military with these technologically advanced weapon systems.

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<sup>466</sup> See DARPA website at: <http://www.darpa.mil/#learn>.

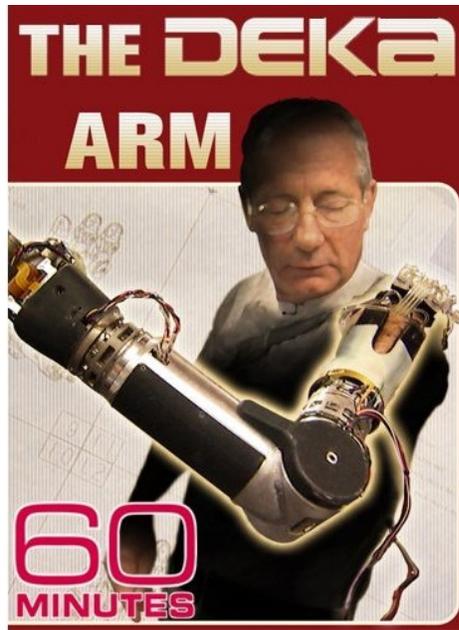


Figure 18: The Deka Arm is featured on *60 Minutes*.

DARPA also functions as the prosthetic-machine of the U.S. imperial war machine. As Manuel De Landa illustrates, military commanders have historically dreamt of a battlefield without soldiers, where robots and drones take the place of the human soldier body. DARPA was created for instance in 1958 in response to the Russian launch of Sputnik and attending paranoia surrounding Japan's massive global software enterprise that challenged U.S. dominance within Cold War security discourses.<sup>467</sup> Within this imaginary of technological control and a concomitant discourse of fear, DARPA was envisioned by the Pentagon as an institutional assemblage that would produce "the new machines...[that] will be endowed with lethal capabilities and terminal homing instincts, thus becoming the first machines capable of viewing humans as their prey."<sup>468</sup> Within this vision of a more bionic soldier citizenry, the military-medical complex produces the illusion that soldiers are able to

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<sup>467</sup> Manuel De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (Zone Books, 1991), 169-170.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

seamlessly reintegrate back into the military-industrial complex and demonstrates the “horror to everything to see” in the dominant media.



Figure 19: Dean Kamen is a guest on John Stewart’s *The Daily Show* and wears the DeKa Arm.

Soldiers’ bodies become integrated into this system and ethos of technology and control in multiple ways. DARPA’s new robotic arm, for instance, is one amongst many military-state funded projects geared towards transmorphing the soldier amputee body from one unable to perform everyday functions—walking, running, handling objects—to a body that is able to perform these functions with increasingly less difficulty. Significantly, the demand for prosthetic devices for U.S. amputee veterans has increased since the U.S.-led Global War on Terror. Due to technological advancements in military gear and postmodern military assemblages of power, U.S. soldiers are now able to sustain injuries that would have proved

fatal in previous wars. “Fifteen out of every sixteen seriously wounded service members survive injuries that in previous wars would have been fatal,” writes Aaron Glantz in his book *The War Comes Home: Washington’s Battle Against America’s Veterans*.<sup>469</sup> New technologies in soldier-combat gear, a shifting urban battle space, a more technologically “efficient” U.S. military, and soldiers multiple deployments have led to an increase of wounded soldiers returning from war in contrast to the number of wounded soldiers returning from the first two World Wars and the Vietnam War.<sup>470</sup> Advanced technologies in soldier-combat gear, in particular, such as the military’s sixteen-pound Interceptor body armor, increasingly enable soldiers to survive the shocks and firepower of postmodern war.

### Prosthetic Industries and War Machines

The prosthetics industry and contemporary war machines have a compelling genealogy if we turn to the historical wartime origins of today’s leading prosthetic manufacturers. As David Dishneau writes in an insightful article from *USA Today*, one of the largest prosthetic manufacturers in the North American industry<sup>471</sup>—the Bethesda-based Hanger Orthopedics Group, Inc.<sup>472</sup>—was created by James E. Hanger, a Civil War amputee. Hanger, who founded the company during the Civil War, originally “fashioned an improved artificial leg

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<sup>469</sup> See Glantz, *The War Comes Home*, University of California Press, 2009, 35.

<sup>470</sup> See Bilmes, L. (2007) “Soldiers Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan: The Long-Term Costs of Providing Veterans Medical Care and Disability Benefits,” Faculty Research Working Paper Series, John. F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Available online at: [http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP07001/\\$File/rwp\\_07\\_001\\_bilmes.pdf](http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP07001/$File/rwp_07_001_bilmes.pdf).

<sup>471</sup> The North American division of Iceland-based Ossur is the world's second-largest prosthetics manufacturer. See Fran Hassencahl and Edited by Debbie Olson and Andrew Scahill, “Experiencing Hüzün/Pooch Through The Loss of Life, Limb, and Loves in Turtles Can Fly,” in *Lost and Othered Children in Contemporary Cinema* (Lexington Books, 2012), 308. Available online at: [http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/health/2007-07-15-prosthetics\\_N.html](http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/health/2007-07-15-prosthetics_N.html).

<sup>472</sup> See Hanger’s website at: <http://www.hanger.com/Pages/default.aspx>.

out of whittled barrel staves, rubber, wood, and metal components and started selling them to other Confederate veterans.”<sup>473</sup> Hanger now owns and operates over 668 patient care centers in over forty-five states and has over five distribution centers scattered across the country. According to Hanger’s 2008 Annual Report, eerily titled “Disciplined Diversification,” the company currently accounts for approximately twenty-seven percent of the \$2.6 billion dollar Orthopedics and Prosthetics patient-care market in the United States.<sup>474</sup> The world’s largest prosthetics manufacturer, Dishneau continues, Otto Bock health care, located in Germany, also has a genealogical roots in war. Dishneau writes:

The company's founder and namesake "was considered a little bit like the Henry Ford of the prosthetic industry" for mass-producing devices for World War I veterans, said Brad Ruhl, vice president of sales at the company's North American headquarters in Minneapolis. The privately held firm now has annual sales of about \$500 million, but Ruhl wouldn't reveal detailed financial data.<sup>475</sup>

He continues:

Otto Bock is also the commercial partner in the \$30.4 million project at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore to develop a thought-controlled arm by 2009. The project is funded by the Defense Department through its Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Dishneau, “War Fuels Prosthetic Research Blitz.”

<sup>474</sup> See Hanger Orthopedic Group Inc., 2008 Annual Shareholder’s Report, available as a pdf on their website at the “Investor Relations” site at: <http://www.hanger.com/aboutus/investor/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>475</sup> Dishneau, “War Fuels Prosthetic Research Blitz.”

<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

The prosthetics industry, however, is not fuelled by providing prosthetic technologies to war amputees. “War amputees represent less than 1 percent of Americans who have suffered limb loss, and diabetics increasingly dictate the market’s trajectory. Wars might refine the industry, but they don’t sustain it,” writes journalist Susanne LaBarre.<sup>477</sup> Nonetheless, the prosthetic industry functions as an increasingly significant institutional assemblage for providing an increasing number of U.S. soldier amputees with artificial limbs. According to the Amputee Coalition of America, for instance, the Department of Veteran Affairs spent nearly fifty million dollars on prosthetic arms and legs for 8,400 veterans in need of them during 2008.<sup>478</sup> The majority of U.S. veteran amputees who receive artificial limbs, however, do not receive and cannot afford the flashy high-tech robotic arms and legs, like the Deka Arm, which has an estimated cost of \$100,000 dollars. Instead, most servicemen and women receive Otto Bock’s C-leg, which costs around \$46,000 per leg (fitting and additional features can add up to \$70,000 per leg). Most soldiers with missing arms receive the myoelectric Utah 3 arm, which costs around \$33,000. The prosthetic leg that McNaughton is wearing is mostly likely an Otto Bock C–leg [See Figure 20]<sup>479</sup>.

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<sup>477</sup> Suzanne LeBarre, “A Call to Arms,” *Metropolis*, March 2009, <http://www.metropolismag.com/March-2009/A-Call-to-Arms/>.

<sup>478</sup> Kristin Harty, “Other News: Young Amputees Put Prosthetics to Work,” *The Wilmington Delaware News Journal*, June 30, 2008, <http://www.amputee-coalition.org/absolutenm/anmviewer.asp?a=851&print=yes>.

<sup>479</sup> Note that the diagram for Otto Bock C-leg at Brown University boasts that 15 of the legs are in use in Hawai‘i, a highly militarized site for perhaps “featuring” the future of prosthetic technologies for soldiers with missing limbs.

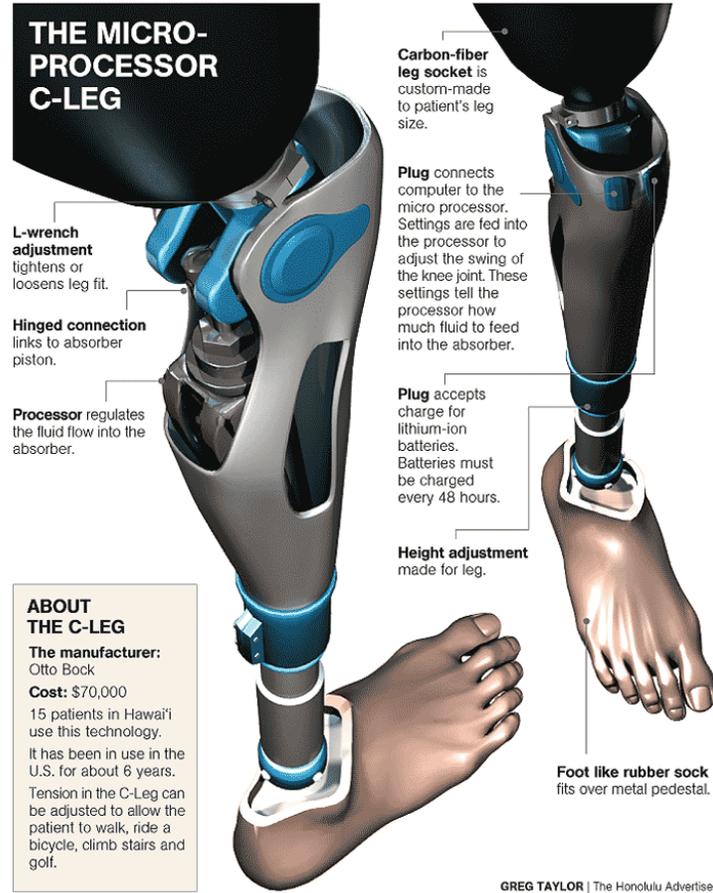


Figure 20: The majority of American soldiers return from the wars and are fitted with the Otto Bock's C-leg, which costs around \$70,000 per leg. Source: <http://biomed.brown.edu/Courses/BI108/2006-108websites/group07HighTechProsthetics/pages/cleg.html>.

In a related vein, the U.S. military increasingly turns to the advancement in new artificial limbs as ways to encourage amputee soldiers to return to full-time duty as U.S. soldiers. As the Amputee Coalition of America reports, quoting a 1995 research study, a little over two percent of U.S. amputee soldiers returned to duty during the 1980's, with amputation levels that included partial-foot, partial-hand and transtibial (below-knee) injuries. However,

servicemen and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11, the report furthers, experience:

Higher levels of amputations, including transfemoral (above-knee) and transradial (below elbow) levels of amputation and have remained on active duty and continue to serve successfully. Additional conditions associated with the traumatic event (commonly a blast injury) can make healing and realistic decision-making about returning to duty more complex.<sup>480</sup>

The burgeoning prosthetic industry, and the flashy high-tech prosthetic gear currently created specifically for U.S. servicemen and women, circulates within MIME NET networks of power and media imaginaries as technologies capable of transforming the “problem” (within a U.S. military sensibility) of maimed and wounded U.S. soldier bodies returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed, within this MIME NET assemblage and fantasy of total control and virtual rehabilitation, U.S. soldiers who return from postmodern wars with amputated limbs receive newer, better ones. As the above quote signals, the U.S. military increasingly encourages amputated soldiers to return to active duty. In June 2007, for instance, Walter Reed Medical Hospital held a workshop that showcased these new advancements in prosthetic technologies to U.S. soldiers [See Figure 21]. Major General Eric Schoomaker’s remarks on the present-future of the prosthetics industry for U.S. soldiers is significant when he stated at the event that “Amputee rehabilitation programs have returned 20 percent of amputees to active service...We have Soldiers fighting today in Afghanistan and elsewhere who are wearing prostheses that were fitted and that they were trained to use

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<sup>480</sup> See *Military In-Step*, a publication by the Amputee Coalition, titled “The Process of Returning to Duty or Not After Limb Loss,” available online at: <http://www.amputee-coalition.org/military-instep/returning-to-duty.html>.

here...*Ultimately, the Defense Department medical community hopes to move beyond injured service members and benefit the U.S. population at large and even the global community.*”<sup>481</sup>



Figure 21: Walter Reed Medical Hospital holds a Military Amputees Skills Training Workshop. Source: This photograph is from a photo essay accompanying the article and can be located at: “Walter Reed Workshop Showcases Prosthetic Technology | Article | The United States Army,” accessed January 11, 2013, <http://www.army.mil/article/3441/>.

### Hierarchies of Grief: *You Don’t Matter*

The notion of the Defense Department medical community as a humanitarian and civilian-minded “community” of professionals, in General Schoomaker’s remarks, renders invisible the complex relations of power that render some individuals worthy of costly prosthetic

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<sup>481</sup> “Walter Reed Workshop Showcases Prosthetic Technology | Article | The United States Army,” accessed January 11, 2013, <http://www.army.mil/article/3441/>, emphasis mine.

devices (i.e., U.S. soldiers) and other individuals unworthy of any prosthetic devices at all (i.e., Iraqi or Afghan civilians after 9/11). For example, in contrast to the high-tech prosthetic limbs developed for U.S. soldiers in contemporary war machines, civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan injured by roadside bombs and “friendly fire” receive prosthetic limbs that might be up to thirty years old, if any at all. Media and documentary film images of children in Iraq often figure children as objects of U.S. soldiers’ compassion and humanitarian aid (i.e., by handing out candy in photo-ops). Yet children in Iraq whose bodies are maimed by the U.S. war machine remain invisible, non-grievable bodies as the *horror of nothing to see* of the wars within this policing of images. As one journalist Afif Sarhan reports, local aid agencies and health Ministry officials report that at least 4,000 children (between ages of one to ten) have been disabled or handicapped since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.<sup>482</sup>

Sarhan shares the story of ten-year old Mohammad Mukhaled who was shot in the leg when caught in a crossfire between resistance fighters and U.S. forces in Fallujah in 2004. He was helping his sister in the middle of the crossfire when he was shot; his sister ran away from home and was caught in the middle of the firefight and Mohammad ran into the street and tried to rescue her. In an interview, he tells Sarhan, “More than three years I have been without a leg. I’m forced to go to school by my parents. I don’t like it. *I’m ashamed.*”<sup>483</sup> Like many other children, men, and women in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mohammad was unable to go to the hospital following his injury, and because he comes from a poor family, he is unable to obtain a prosthetic leg.<sup>484</sup> His parents have tried to find him physiotherapy treatment without

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<sup>482</sup> “Iraqi Kids Dream of Artificial Limbs,” accessed February 7, 2014, <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/3340/425490.html>.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid., emphasis mine.

<sup>484</sup> At the same time, I have begun to recognize a pattern in stories and images of children in Iraq and Afghanistan who are missing limbs. They are almost always young boys. In the

any success, and are unable to receive a prosthetic leg from any international aid agencies due to the extremely high demand for prosthetic limbs in the region.<sup>485</sup> The message that he has received in the world, from the U.S. and the broader international political community, is: *you don't matter*. As the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars, I imagine many children in Iraq and Afghanistan begin to internalize these feelings of shame, further perpetuating inter-generational cycles of depression, trauma, resentment, and a sense of despair.<sup>486</sup>

In contrast to the U.S. war machine and its relationship to the prosthetic industry for the production of artificial limbs for the U.S. soldier who are able to sustain the firepower of postmodern war assemblages, the distribution of artificial limbs for civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan is provided more by relief agencies and international non-profit organizations. For example, the international relief agency CHF International (which partnered with three other international relief agencies and UNICEF) has provided fifteen million dollars in funds for projects “assisting civilians and communities who suffered loss of life, limb, property and economic livelihoods as a result taken by US and coalition forces” since 2006.<sup>487</sup> Following

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future, I need to examine these gendered dimensions of war imagery and children with missing limbs. Is it mainly young boys who are missing limbs, or is it that the image of a girl with missing limbs does not evoke as much sympathy? Or, is it that boys are more likely to lose their limbs?

<sup>485</sup> “Iraqi Kids Dream of Artificial Limbs.”

<sup>486</sup> When I presented my chapter on Annie Proulx’s short story at the International Studies Association (ISA) conference in 2011, our panel discussant, Dr. Ritu Vij asked me a great question about my project. After my presentation on “women’s time” in Proulx’s short story, she asked, “What about the other side?” I did not have an answer then, but I have tried to focus more on the wounded body of war from the perspective of Iraqi and Afghan children in this chapter and the final chapter. While my project still remains U.S.–centric and directed mainly toward an American audience, I recognize now the importance of a more comparative approach to examining the hierarchies of grief in the current wars. I would also like to thank Dr. Sankaran Krishna for also encouraging me to look for the stories of Iraqi and Afghan civilians and to take their experiences seriously when writing this dissertation.

<sup>487</sup> See CHF International Testimony: “Hearing on Assistance for Civilian Victims of the War,” State and Foreign Operations Committee, United States Senate, April 1, 2009.

the money trail for prosthetic devices for civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan directs us not to prosthetic giants like Hanger but to non-profit contributions and campaigns; signaling a growing NGO-ization of providing prosthetic limbs for civilians affected by the U.S. war machine.

Iraq also has one of the worst levels of contamination from landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (EWR) in the world.<sup>488</sup> EWR's are unexploded weapons and include mortars, grenades, artillery shells, and rockets and bombs that remain after an armed conflict.<sup>489</sup> Around 300 persons are injured in Iraq from landmines/EWRs each year. The landmines are located mostly in the Northern part of the country and EWRs are found mainly in the South. Iraq has been contaminated with landmines and EWRs due to years of conflict, including the invasion of the country by U.S. and Russian military forces from the 1980's onward. Iraq is also one of the countries that used an extraordinary amount of landmines in the past, and it produced landmines and exported them as well for many years.<sup>490</sup>

The Mine Ban Treaty (1997) is one step in the right direction for ending the use of landmines and removing landmines and EWRs from Iraq and other countries. "Ordinary citizens," along with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and the Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC) campaign network have all worked to implement the adoption of the treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions.<sup>491</sup> When countries sign The Mine Ban Treaty they must work to clear their territory of landmines/EWRs but they are also

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<sup>488</sup> Information taken from the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) website: <http://www.icbl.org/index.php/Library/News/Universal/Iraq-accession>

<sup>489</sup> Suzanne LeBarre, "A Call to Arms," *Metropolis*, March 2009, <http://www.metropolismag.com/March-2009/A-Call-to-Arms/>.

<sup>490</sup> Information from The International Campaign to Ban Landmines website at: <http://www.icbl.org/index.php/Library/News/Universal/Iraq-accession>.

<sup>491</sup> Paraphrased from the ICBL website at: <http://www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/Treaty>.

mandated “to never use antipersonnel mines, nor to ‘develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer’ them.”<sup>492</sup> There are 161 states that have joined the treaty and 36 states that refuse to sign the treaty. The United States and the Russian Federation are amongst those states that refuse to sign the treaty. On August 15, 2007 Iraq acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty and has committed to destroy stockpile landmines in four years and to clear minefields in ten years.<sup>493</sup>

One of the best films for approaching the politics of everyday life and disability amongst children due to the use of landmines in Iraq, and histories of war and conflict in the country, is Bahman Ghobadi's film *Turtles Can Fly* (2006). It is filmed through the micropolitical lens of refugee children in the Kurdish region of Iraq before the U.S.-led 2003 invasion, and it is exemplary for its treatment of the violent effects of U.S. militarism on bodies in a particular time and place. It provides a more political take on the “ordinary citizens” that dig up landmines in the region and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars. In the film, the viewer is forced to think about what contemporary “wars of sound and of images” (Virilio) look like from the perspective of Kurdish children living in a refugee camp. The children spend their days digging up old U.S. and Soviet landmines to sell for the United Nations and arms weapons dealers at an international market. Many of the children are missing limbs from the militarization of the landscape through landmines.

My analysis of Ghobadi's film is inspired by the director's approach to the filmmaking process on the one hand and the ways in which the film treats the violent effects of U.S. militarism on civilian bodies in Iraq at a particular time and place on the other. After

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<sup>492</sup> Quotes from the ICBL website, “Treaty Basics” link, at: <http://www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/Treaty/MBT/Treaty-Basics>.

<sup>493</sup> See ICBL website at: <http://www.icbl.org/index.php/Library/News/Universal/Iraq-accession>.

spending three months with child refugees near the Iraq-Turkish border before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the filmmaker selected the actors from the group of children, and they play themselves in the film. Ghobadi's use of the close-up shot and the long-take throughout the film force the viewer to think critically about the relationship between the micropolitics of militarization, media, violence, and the multiple forces of trauma that the children experience before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

Bahman Ghobadi was raised in Baneh, a city near the Iran-Iraq border in the province of Kurdistan, Iran. At the age of twelve, due to civil disputes in the area, he migrated with his family to Sanandaj, which is located at the center of Kurdistan province in Iran. He is the eldest of his seven siblings, and after graduating from high school in Sanandaj, he moved to Tehran in 1992. He attended the Iranian Broadcasting College, but dropped out in order to take a more hands-on approach making short documentary films using 8-mm film.<sup>494</sup> He is the acclaimed director of many films, including *Life in a Fog* (1999), *A Time for Drunken Horses* (2000), *Marooned in Iraq* (2002), *Half Moon* (2004), *Turtles Can Fly* (2006), *No One Knows About Persian Cats* (2009), and *Rhino Season* (2012).

*Turtles Can Fly* takes place in a Kurdish refugee camp on the Turkey-Iraq border. Like many of Ghobadi's other films, the film follows the everyday lives of the Kurdish people through the eyes of children. Kurdistan ('the land of the Kurds') is a region that spans the convergence of several states, including Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria and it is the home to around 30 million Kurdish peoples.<sup>495</sup> The Kurdish peoples constitute the largest stateless

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<sup>494</sup> See Bahman Ghobadi's website at: <http://www.mijfilm.com/bahman-ghobadi>.

<sup>495</sup> Karen Culcasi, "Cartographically Constructing Kurdistan within Geopolitical and Orientalist Discourses," *Political Geography* 25, no. 6 (August 2006), 682.

population in the world, followed by the Palestinians.<sup>496</sup> The region of Kurdistan used to be a part of the Ottoman Empire, but British and French conquests during the First World War divided the region. The formation of national boundaries in the region created four parts to Kurdistan—Turkish, Persian, Iraqi, and Syrian Kurdistan—and created new borders between tribal territories.<sup>497</sup> These geopolitical divisions of Kurdistan after the First World War, and the different political and economic regimes that govern each region, have made it difficult for the Kurdish people to embrace a sense of cultural and political unity.<sup>498</sup> Kurdish nationalism, a response to these historical processes of colonialism and nation-state building that have denied the people a state or sense of national belonging, has led to a vibrant but fragmented national identity of the Kurdish “other.”<sup>499</sup>

Many of the regions of Kurdistan, particularly Iraqi Kurdistan, are rich in oil reserves (which historically benefited the British). Given the geostrategic location of Kurdistan, if any state was to give the Kurds their autonomy then they could lose important resources and have to reconfigure their own borders.<sup>500</sup> The colonial configuration of borders and identities within these geopolitical configurations of power recalls Sankaran Krishna’s emphasis on a “cartographic anxiety” that is “one of the many symptoms of a postcolonial condition.”<sup>501</sup> As he puts it, “This preoccupation with a national space and with borders can only approximate

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<sup>496</sup> Abbas Vali, “The Kurds and Their ‘Others’: Fragmented Identity and Fragmented Politics,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 18, no. 2 (September 21, 1998), 82.

<sup>497</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London; Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Zed Books, 1992), 13.

<sup>498</sup> Vali, “The Kurds and Their ‘Others,’” 82.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>500</sup> Culcasi, “Cartographically Constructing Kurdistan within Geopolitical and Orientalist Discourses,” 685.

<sup>501</sup> Sankaran Krishna, “Cartographic Anxiety: Mapping the Body Politic in India,” in *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities*, Edited by Michael J. Shapiro and Hayward R. Alker, *Borderlines*, vol. 2, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 209.

a historical original that never existed except as the telos of the narrative of modernity: a pure, unambiguous community called the homeland.”<sup>502</sup> The idea of a Kurdish homeland has not only shifted in terms of the identities and geopolitical configuration of borders, but the value-function of the landscape itself has ironically shifted due to new western forms of imperial air war. Kurdistan is a mountainous terrain and is formed by the Taurus and Zagros mountains. The mountains once provided protection for the Kurdish people, since it was difficult to invade the region with such a rugged terrain. However, the advent of air wars has diminished the protective power of the mountains for the Kurdish people, causing great anxiety for many people who no longer have protection from invading armies.<sup>503</sup>

The landscape of the region plays an important role in the film, and in many ways, it is a character in the film. Ghobadi provides long-takes of not only the mountainous terrain but also the surrounding landscape of militarization. These long-takes include shots of the landmine fields that the children work in and bombed military equipment that the children run and play around. In her analysis of the film, Fran Hassencahl introduces the Turkish term “hüzün” to describe the sense of loss and sadness that many of the characters embody in their daily routines. The term hüzün signifies the “sadness, and feeling of powerlessness and isolation that occur after debilitating injuries and/or losses of family members, income, and social status that often result during a war or in the period of post-war transition.”<sup>504</sup> In the opening scene, Agrin, a young girl of perhaps thirteen, who has travelled to the refugee camp with her brother, Hengov, stands on the edge of a mountain and looks down below her at the

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<sup>502</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>503</sup> Fran Hassencahl and Edited by Debbie Olson and Andrew Scahill, “Experiencing Hüzün/Pooch Through The Loss of Life, Limb, and Loves in Turtles Can Fly,” in *Lost and Othered Children in Contemporary Cinema* (Lexington Books, 2012), 13.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., 308.

seemingly bottomless drop of the cliff. Ghobadi provides a landscape shot of Agrin on the edge of the cliff, before she slips off her shoes and jumps [See Figure 22]. The viewer will return to this image at the end of the film, after she learns of the complexities of Agrin's life and why she chose to end it at such a young age.



Figure 22: Opening scene to *Turtles Can Fly*: Agrin before she jumps.

Agrin's brother, Hengov is missing both of his arms, but he is resilient and uses his feet to work as a child laborer digging up mines in the refugee camp. They have both traveled to the refugee camp with a blind toddler, Risa, who they pretend is their younger brother. Ghobadi provides a flashback scene midway through the film of Agrin and Hengov's escape from soldiers who invaded their village before they arrive at the refugee camp. In this scene, Agrin is held down and raped by a gang of Iraqi soldiers, as Hengov desperately crawls to help her; the loss of his arms to reach out to her is another sign of desperation during this scene. Since many women and girls could be killed for bearing a "bastard" child, such as through "honor killings" by men in the villages, it is not surprising that they try to hide the truth that Riga is

Agrin's son.<sup>505</sup> Nor do they share what has happened to them with the other kids in the refugee camp once they arrive.

The children learn the U.S. is invading the region, and they run around the bombed out military equipment trying to organize themselves as a child-soldier-army for the invasion. They wear khaki clothes and take orders from Satellite. The U.S. planes drop pamphlets on the top of the mountain, warning them of the upcoming attack and reassuring them that the U.S. is coming to liberate them. Despite the impending fear and anticipation of the U.S.-led invasion, the children and surrounding villagers (mostly older men) go about their everyday lives digging up the landmines. Satellite exchanges a bag full of landmines at the local international market—which includes weapon dealers and vendors—to purchase a satellite for the village so they can watch the news about the oncoming U.S.-led invasion. The villagers watch the news as President Bush delivers his speech about freeing the people of Iraq from years of tyranny, but none of them are able to translate the news. Ghobadi thus brings the viewers' attention to the different ways that the U.S.-led invasion was televised. While Americans watched the "official" announcement of the U.S.-led invasion from the homefront, the male village elders and Satellite try to decipher what is happening through satellite technology that was purchased at the cost of children's missing limbs.

Thirteen-year-old Satellite, the leader of the village of children, develops a crush on Agrin once they arrive at the village. He pursues her by trying to impress her with his bike that is decorated with colorful flags, and he uses the bike to carry water for her to her home that she and Hengov have made in the mountains. Satellite's bike is a significant sign of mobility since many of the children are missing limbs, and are left to using sticks and

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<sup>505</sup> Hassencahl makes this point in, "Experiencing Hüzün/Pooh Through The Loss of Life, Limb, and Loves in *Turtles Can Fly*."

crutches for moving around the village. In a striking scene, one of the children with a missing leg raises his other leg and pretends it is a machine gun used to shoot at a Turkish soldier [See Figure 23]. The soldier stands guard in a watchtower, on the other side of the barbed wire fences that surround the camp. Before he raises his leg, he yells to the Turkish guard: “Hey mister! How are you? Do you want us to start a war?” The juxtaposition between the child’s gestures and the forces of militarized violence that surround him and the others reminds the viewer that it is the U.S. that will be invading the country in a few weeks. The children will be unequipped despite their resemblance to a small “army” of wounded children.



Figure 23: A child uses his one leg and pretends it’s a machine gun, aimed at a Turkish soldier beyond the barbed wire fencing that surrounds the refugee camp.

The sense of oncoming dread haunts each scene of the film. Hengov, viewers soon learn, is said to be a clairvoyant and he predicts dark futures for the children. Hengov and Satellite

argue during their first few encounters, but Satellite eventually pushes their differences aside. Agrin, who attempts to kill herself during the film, pushes Satellite away, and viewers slowly come to see the deep sadness, or experience of *hüzün*, that surrounds her. In one scene, she takes gasoline and pours it over herself, but she does not light the match that she holds in her hand. She pleads with Hengov to leave the refugee camp at once, leaving Risa with the other children. Hengov however refuses, and he is obviously more intimately attached, or at least reluctant to let go of, the toddler. It is clear that for Agrin, the child is an ongoing reminder of her rape by the soldiers and of the traumatizing events of the murder of her family and other men, women, and children in the village. While Agrin attempts to rid herself of Risa for these very reasons, Hengov attempts to hold onto both Risa and Agrin as much as possible.

Agrin takes Risa several times to a nearby lake, and it seems that she is contemplating drowning the child. Eventually, she takes the child to the top of a cliff and ties him up with rope and leaves him there, with a deep sadness in her eyes as she walks away from the crying toddler. Hengov hears the child and brings him back, much to Agrin's anger and disappointment. At the end of the film, Agrin ties a rock to the toddler's foot and kills him by sending him to the bottom of the lake. She then kills herself by jumping off the cliff that viewers are introduced to in the opening scene, and the director provides a close-up shot of her blue shoes. Hengov and the others find her shoes on the cliff at the end of the film, after finding Risa in the bottom of the lake.

Hengov's visions of darkness had come true. Satellite eventually loses his leg in the minefields when trying to rescue Risa, who had blindly walked into the fields. In this scene, Risa walks blindly into the minefields—as the *horror of nothing to see*—unaware of the invisible borders of danger that surround him [See Figure 24]. In a striking set of images,

Ghobadi juxtaposes the image of Satellite, standing just on the other side of the minefield marked by a skull and crossbones sign that Risa could not see [Insert Figure 25]. Satellite, who wears a khaki hat, yells at Risa to not move, or he will be killed, while his best friend stands next to him pleading him not to enter the minefield.<sup>506</sup> When Satellite walks into the minefield, a scene of utter desperateness and terror for the viewer, he steps on a landmine and it blows off his leg. The children scream and cry as they carry Satellite to the center of the village, where all of the old military equipment stands, like a ghost town. Two of the nearby adult villagers are called upon to help Satellite [See Figure 26].



Figure 24: Risa walks into the minefield.

In the end, Hengov has lost his only family, and in the final shots of the film, Satellite and his friend, who is missing a leg and hobbles next to Satellite on his bike, watch as U.S. marines and tanks enter the refugee camp. The soldiers run next to the tanks, effortlessly, as Satellite

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<sup>506</sup> Many children are injured or killed by landmines because they think they are shiny toys.

and his friend stand on the side of the road, with looks of despair. So many times, from an American perspective, one sees faceless and nameless children watching American soldiers passing through villages, commenting on the children's lives. By the end of the film, for an American viewer such as myself, one comes to see an entirely different story from the children's perspective. The image of the soldiers running, and their ability to be mobile in a country that is not theirs, provides a striking juxtaposition of two different, but enmeshed, life worlds of ability and disability.



Figure 25: Satellite before he enters the minefield to rescue Risa.

Yet, the children are not mere victims in Ghobadi's film, not only because of the way in which the director situates the complexities of their lives within broader formations of militarized power and violence, but because he demonstrates how the children are agents of their daily lives despite their circumstances. In one of the most remarkable scenes from the film, Satellite, who quotes popular Hollywood films and who is eager to see the Americans

once they come (despite the fear of the invasion), turns his back away from the soldiers as they drive and run through the camp [See Figure 26]. “Look!” his friend says, “Didn’t you want to see the Americans?” Satellite doesn’t reply, and walks away, followed by his friend. The *horror of nothing to see* in the wars involves the soldiers, who do not see either of children nor do they stop to look at them. After watching many war films of the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, this is one of the only films that provides the perspective of a child watching the American soldiers come through their village, after providing such a complex and intimate narrative of the children’s everyday lives before the U.S.-led invasion.



Figure 26: Satellite after he is wounded from the landmine.

As this chapter has demonstrated, U.S. soldiers too lose their arms and legs in the current wars. McNaughton, whose story I begin with in this chapter, also lost his leg to a landmine while he served in Afghanistan. However, the “hierarchies of grief” between the soldier’s maimed body and the children’s maimed bodies is striking. While the soldiers will be fitted

with high-tech prosthetic devices when they return from the wars with missing arms and legs, the children in Ghobadi's film demonstrates to the viewer that these children's lives are not worthy of grieving, or rehabilitating, within the American public's eye nor from the perspective of the international community at large.



Figure 27: Satellite, accompanied by his best friend, turns his back on the American soldiers as they drive and run through the refugee camp.

While many soldiers are diagnosed and treated for PTSD, or denied a PTSD diagnosis and mental health services, Ghobadi's film renders visible the multiple ways in which the children living in the refugee camp are not provided with any mental health treatment options for the multiple traumatic events they have endured in the past and which they continue to experience in the present. The traumatic events of children that are raped, and the suicides of girls like Agrin, do not become worthy sites of national reflection amongst the American public when considering the "human costs" of the Global War on Terror. While the U.S.

military has created suicide prevention programs for soldiers returning from the wars, the suicide attempts of children like Agrin, who survived a massacre of her village and of her family, only to await a U.S.-led invasion of the country, do not make it into the “official” accounts of the “wartime experience” in the dominant media. Ghobadi’s film thus provides viewers, and especially the American viewer; a political and affective filmic meditation on the multiple costs of militarization and how it affects children’s everyday lives in Kurdistan.

### The Shock Effect: Global Capitalism, U.S. Imperialism, and Disability

The “hierarchies of grief” between the maiming of U.S. soldier bodies and children’s bodies in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the hierarchies of medical rehabilitation technologies for soldiers and civilians—whose everyday lives are ontologically structured by militarization—are also evident amongst U.S. soldiers. Indeed, discursive structures surrounding the U.S. injured soldier-body as one capable of “moving beyond” the physical and emotional injuries of war through high-tech prosthetic devices, in order to continue America’s endless wars abroad, illuminate the biopolitical assemblages of contemporary warfare. Despite the development of new prosthetic technologies, U.S. soldiers’ lives are also precarious. At the same time, the ethical and political dimensions surrounding the prosthetic-making industry for U.S. soldiers do not lie simply in the actual use of prosthetic devices.<sup>507</sup> Put simply, my emphasis here is not that new technologies and prosthetic devices, such as artificial arms and legs, are inherently bad. As feminist theorist Donna Haraway puts it, “Nobody is self-made, least of all man.” “That is the spiritual and political meaning of poststructuralism and

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<sup>507</sup> My juxtaposition of the lack of high-tech artificial limbs for civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan mentioned previously in this essay helps illuminate this distinction.

postmodernism for me,” she writes.<sup>508</sup> In other words, the notion of a more cyborg body and world is not necessarily threatening.

Depending on how one situates a politics of embodiment within postmodern vision machines, the cyborg affirms the multiplicity of the subject and more spiral-like, rather than hierarchical, structures of participation. For example, Haraway, in her well-known essay “Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s,” suggested a cyborg feminist politics that affirmed partial perspectives and the possibilities for affirming the multiplicities of identities and human-machine assemblages. Haraway’s approach to affirming the relationships between humans and machines differs significantly from the military industrial complex’s vision of a more cyborg-like bionic U.S. soldier —such as the spectacularization of McNaughton’s high-tech prosthetic gear and speedy recovery from a landmine in Afghanistan, which renders invisible the everyday, banal aspects of living life with a prosthetic limb. Haraway’s remark on the possibilities for re-defining a “cyborg world” for a material feminist politics in contemporary war machines is helpful to recall here:

From one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet, about the final abstraction embodied in a Star War apocalypse waged in the name of defense, about the final appropriation of women’s bodies in a masculinist orgy of war.

Yet “from another perspective,” she continues:

A cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from

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<sup>508</sup> See Donna Haraway, “Ecce Homo, Ain’t (Ar’n’t) I a Woman, and Innappropriated/d Others,” from *The Haraway Reader*, 49.

both perspectives at once because each reveals both domination and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage points. Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters.<sup>509</sup>

Underlining the differences between a more feminist-rooted politics that emphasizes the irony or double-edge sword of technology and the U.S. military's vision of a bionic U.S. soldier body capable of regenerating from the shock effects of violence in contemporary war machines is an important distinction. It helps us situate the ironies surrounding new technologies, such as prosthetic devices that help U.S. soldiers return to daily activities in everyday life on the one hand, and the militarization of these technologies by the U.S. Defense Department on the other. Moreover, Haraway's reference to the apocalyptic aspects of postmodern war resonates today with the current Global War on Terror if we turn to what Naomi Klein calls "disaster capitalism" in neoliberalism. In a compelling section from her book *The Shock Doctrine*, Klein tells the story of how Donald Rumsfeld drew together the Pentagon staff on September 11, 2001 in order to discuss what Rumsfeld called the new adversary of the United States—bureaucracy. Klein captures Rumsfeld's speech that he gave to the Pentagon staffers that day, which ends with the last few lines: "Perhaps this adversary sounds like the former Soviet Union, but that enemy is gone: our foes are more subtle and implacable today....The adversary's closer to home. It's the Pentagon bureaucracy."<sup>510</sup> Hence, for Rumsfeld and the Bush administration, the U.S.-led Global War on Terror would be fought without the interruptions of procedures, delays, and/or bureaucratic setbacks (such as International law). Humorously, Klein remarks, "He'd done it: the defense secretary had

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<sup>509</sup> See Donna Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*, (Routledge Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>510</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2007), 361.

not only described the Pentagon as a grave threat to America but declared war against the institution where he worked.”<sup>511</sup>

Rumsfeld himself is an exemplary figure of the benefactor of the military-industrial complex. As chairman on the boards of multiple weapons manufacturers, such as Gilead Sciences, Rumsfeld accepted his post as defense secretary with an estimated personal fortune of over \$250 million at sixty-eight years old.<sup>512</sup> His goal, most minimally, was to downsize U.S. military troops and civilian administrators and outsource these additional roles and jobs to corporations, in effect, resulting in enormous profits for invading, occupying, and restructuring Iraq (a la Cheney’s Halliburton, for example). “When Rumsfeld joined the cabinet of George W. Bush in 2001,” Klein writes, “it was with a personal mission to reinvent warfare for the twenty-first century—turning it into something more psychological than physical, more spectacle than struggle, and far more profitable than it had ever been before.”<sup>513</sup> As Klein illustrates, Rumsfeld, moreover, fired over fifty-five thousand employees in the Department of Defense and the Department of Veteran Affairs in 2003 during the invasion of Iraq. Walter Reed Medical hospital, as illustrated by the 2004 “scandal” of a poorly funded, rat-infested hospital, remained without necessary funds for soldiers returning from the wars (though U.S. military hospitals have never been sites that the U.S. government has properly funded; best illustrated by the hospital scenes in the films *Born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July* and *Coming Home*).

While war profiteering and privatization of the U.S. war machine within neoliberal and imperial regimes has benefited government officials and corporate interests, such as Donald

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<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid., 365-366.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid., 358.

Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, the national cost of the ongoing war against terror, Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz estimate, is currently around three trillion dollars. As described in Chapter One, it is estimated that it will realistically cost around \$717 billion dollars to provide veterans with basic medical, disability, and social security services upon their return from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>514</sup> The ability for veterans to receive these funds is limited, insofar as it has become increasingly difficult for U.S. veterans to receive basic health and disability benefits within the neoliberal practices of contemporary war machines. As journalist Aaron Glantz illustrates, the Bush administration repeatedly refused to provide funds for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and actively stripped veterans' benefits during the 2003 escalation of the war in Iraq. In 2003, Aaron Glantz writes, "The VA announced that as a cost-cutting move it would start turning away middle-income veterans who applied for medical benefits. Consequently, the number of uninsured veterans skyrocketed by more than 290,000."<sup>515</sup>

In addition to veterans fighting for disability benefits, the increasingly bureaucratic aspects of the Department of Veterans Affairs often delays veterans' requests for disability care for up to four months or more.<sup>516</sup> These delays for receiving care for disability services include delays in receiving mental health services for veterans. The increasing number of U.S. veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001, and the significant budget cuts to veterans health services, has rendered the VA incapable of providing mental health services to soldiers returning from the wars with trauma and physical injuries.

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<sup>514</sup> Bilmes and Stiglitz, *The Three Trillion Dollar War*.

<sup>515</sup> Glantz, *The War Comes Home*, 111.

<sup>516</sup> This point connects with my discussion of Annie Proulx's short story, when Dakotah and her husband are unable to communicate because of the bureaucracy at Walter Reed Medical Hospital.

Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz provide a useful mapping of the money trail surrounding VA requests for funding. “In the fiscal year 2006, the VA had to request \$2 billion in emergency funding, which included \$677 million to cover an unexpected 2 percent increase in the number of patients (half of whom were Iraq and Afghanistan veterans); \$600 million to correct its inaccurate estimate of long-term care costs; and \$400 million to cover an unexpected 1.2 percent increase in the costs per patient due to medical inflation.”<sup>517</sup> In addition, “For FY 2008, the Congress is demanding an additional \$3 billion in emergency funding (above the President’s request) for the VA health care system to cope with the rising demand [of medical care for veterans].”<sup>518</sup> Recently, for FY 2010, the House Committee passed the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Related Agencies Appropriation Bill that provides \$53 billion dollars in discretionary funding for the VA and \$56.5 billion dollars for mandatory VA programs.<sup>519</sup>

The money trails surrounding the injured soldier-body returning from Iraq and Afghanistan therefore direct us to a hierarchical system of inequalities, the Department of Defense’s collaboration with the burgeoning prosthetic industry, and the privatization of disability benefits and medical care for U.S. soldiers. Mapping this money trail demands attention to war profiteering and privatization of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan within neoliberal regimes that benefit government officials and corporate interests. We might therefore begin to situate the biopolitical health of the injured soldier-body as a body that mobilizes expensive research and development programs for prosthetic technologies on the

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<sup>517</sup> See “The True Cost of Caring For Our Veterans” in *The Three Trillion Dollar War*, 85.

<sup>518</sup> See *The Three Trillion Dollar War*, 85.

<sup>519</sup> See “Summary: FY 2010 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs And Related Agencies,” December 8, 2009, Committees on Appropriations, VA summary report, available online at: [http://appropriations.house.gov/Subcommittees/sub\\_mivet.shtml](http://appropriations.house.gov/Subcommittees/sub_mivet.shtml).

one hand, and one that remains embedded within the more banal, everyday bureaucracies of the U.S. military war machine and healthcare system on the other. As Ghobadi's film also illustrates, the banality of everyday life and disability, and the lack of prosthetic technologies for wounded civilians, also sheds light on the "hierarchies of grief" and global dimensions of what constitutes a precarious life.

Clashing Worlds: The Banality and Gendered Politics of Griefwork

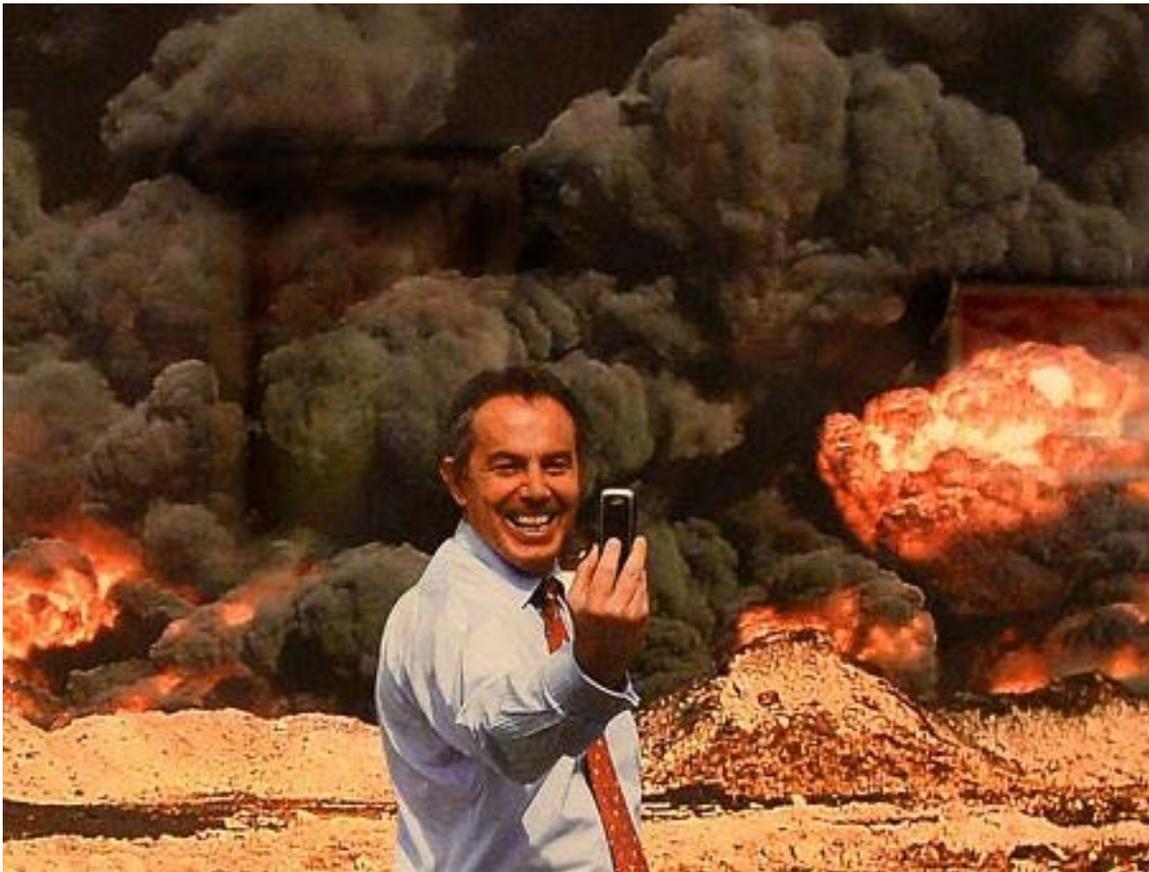


Figure 28: A mash-up of Tony Blair taking a selfie behind a war torn landscape.

Martha Rosler's recent photomontages, titled "House Beautiful, Bringing the War Home, New Series" (2004-2008), provides a striking collection of images of soldiers' wounded bodies on the homefront and warfront. Rosler splices dominant media images that she finds

online and in magazines to images that are less visible in the dominant media. She enacts a “clashing of images” through the photomontage genre to bring together seemingly disparate life worlds. As I described in Chapter Three during my analysis of Stanley Kubrick’s film *Full Metal Jacket*, a “clashing of images” or a “dialectical montage” as an artistic practice functions as a political process. As Jacques Rancière puts it, a “dialectical montage”<sup>520</sup> of images involves “organizing a clash, presenting the strangeness of the familiar, in order to reveal a different order of measurement that is only uncovered by the violence of the conflict.”<sup>521</sup> A dialectics, or clashing of images, involves “revealing one world behind another” such as “the far-off conflict behind home comforts...”<sup>522</sup> Social media activists also use media “mash-ups” to politicize the visible and invisible worlds of war on the homefront and warfront.

For instance, the below mash-up of Tony Blair taking a “selfie” and an explosive background circulated widely on the Internet following the 2003 U.S. and British-led invasion of Iraq (See Figure 28). More recently, social media activists have circulated images of actress Scarlett Johansson drinking SodaStream beverages against a backdrop of Palestinians behind barbed wire. Photo mash-ups are particularly interesting because those who are privileged and have access to a Photoshop application and a computer can make one and circulate it widely on the Internet in order to redistribute the “distribution of the sensible” surrounding the dominant media images of war and publicity.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, 56.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>523</sup> Rancière and Rockhill, *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Mash-ups are also great teaching tools and students can make their own mash-ups through photography and video.

In her photomontage, titled, “Amputee (Election II) 2004,” Rosler juxtaposes the national media attention given to former President George W. Bush during the 2004 election to the invisibility of soldiers returning with missing limbs [See Figure 29]. She does so by providing a clashing of images between the national “spotlight” given to the endless media attention of the candidates to the actual spotlight that shines on the floor of one soldier’s home. The private-space of the home could actually be a hotel, given the pattern of the carpet and extremely large living space and television. The soldier walks away from the spotlight, and he wears a prosthetic limb and walks methodically away from the television screen. In the background of the living room, visible through the window, is a war torn landscape with U.S. soldiers. In this image, there are multiple “other” worlds that all exist simultaneously. The image is even more striking when we juxtapose it to the photo-op image of McNaughton jogging with President Bush around the same time. In juxtaposition to the majority of photo-ops of white male soldiers with prosthetic limbs doing sports and jogging with the President at the White House, Rosler chooses to provide images of wounded soldiers occupying modern and stale private spaces, alone and without any media spotlight.



Figure 29: “Amputee (Election II) 2004,” by Martha Rosler.

In another photomontage, simply titled “Walker” (2004), Rosler again juxtaposes the “other” worlds of the warfront that lie beyond the window and the “other” words of a wounded soldier who wears a prosthetic leg and uses a walker for support [See Figure 30]. Next to the soldier are two young, white men in black workout uniforms who lift weights, clearly a sign of the able-bodied American and western culture, marketed to American youth at a very young age. In juxtaposition to the able and fit men, a young man is about to fall to the ground outside the window, as if he has just been shot. The postmodern living room, which could be marketed to wealthy consumers in various catalogs, becomes a stage of able-bodies, disabled bodies, and bodies in motion. The juxtaposition of the bodies brings the viewer’s awareness to the temporality of bodily movements and dis/ability, also suggested by the triangulation of their bodies in motion; they are all connected.



Figure 30: "Walker," 2004, by Martha Rosler.

Yet, many soldiers with missing legs, arms, and other serious physical injuries are not alone in the home-space. Their mothers, grandmothers, girlfriends, and wives take care of them everyday and often at extraordinary costs to their own emotional health and career opportunities. It is mostly the women that take care of the war wounded, including both male and female wounded soldiers. The women provide the gendered care labor so that the U.S. Administration can continue its lengthy wars abroad without adequately funding the V.A. or provide home-nurses for wounded veterans. Danfung Dennis's film *Hell and Back Again* (2011) provides a striking cinematic example of the banality of returning to the homefront with a physical injury and the gendered care labor of attending to the war's wounded. In many ways, the film provides a mash-up of clashing images of how one soldier spends his everyday life on the warfront and the gendered temporality of trauma once he returns home.

Specifically, *Hell and Back Again* provides a provocative and competing series of images, narratives, and “frames of intelligibility” surrounding the “visible” and “hidden” dimensions of soldier-trauma and gendered relations in the war in Afghanistan. The film maps these macropolitical and micropolitical cartographies of trauma, grief, gendered violence, and the *horror of noting to see* in the wars by cutting back and forth between US Marine Sergeant Nathan Harris’s everyday life with his Infantry Unit on the warfront in Afghanistan and on the homefront with his wife, Ashley, in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

Harris, a twenty-seven year old white male, was a champion wrestler in high school and his father encouraged him to be a fighter from a young age. His narrative of joining the U.S. military recalls the portrayal of Ron Kovic’s desire to join the Army after high school to go fight in the Vietnam War in Oliver Stone’s well-known film *Born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July*. After marrying Ashley, his high school sweetheart and a young white female, Harris was deployed—as part of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines—three times to Iraq and Afghanistan. Ashley and Nathan appear to come from low socio-economic backgrounds and their everyday lives are thoroughly gendered and militarized. During Nathan’s last tour, he was shot in the hip and is now in the Wounded Warrior Regiment at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.<sup>524</sup>

At a Community Cinema event and screening of Danfung Dennis’s docudrama *Hell and Back Again*, held in Honolulu during the Spring of 2012, an Iraq War veteran on a panel discussion shared how he has coped with—to borrow the term from Ethan McCord that I

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<sup>524</sup> Danfung Dennis is well known for his still photographs of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and for his video footage of the war in Afghanistan that was used for the controversial PBS Frontline edition “Obama’s War.” Fiona Otway, the Editor of the film, is also exemplary for her ability to utilize competing sets of images that create a dissonant cinematic narrative, best exemplified perhaps by her work as an Editor for the film *Iraq in Fragments* (2006), directed by James Longley.

described in a previous chapter—the “emotional battles” of serving in Iraq and his everyday life upon returning to the home front. As he described it, he joined the military to further his career and expand on a promising future as a successful college athlete and student. He excelled in school and athletics, and his peers and colleagues all agreed he had a bright future ahead of him. With a Bachelor’s degree in Biology, he enlisted in the Army as a Specialist and expected to gain new skills that would prepare him for his future field of study and professional interests.

The veteran on the panel identified with the central character of Dennis’ film, Sergeant Nathan Harris, who too returned from the wars with PTSD and wrestles with ongoing struggles to “fit” back into “normal” everyday life on the homefront. Upon returning home, both soldiers continued to drink heavily and felt they no longer were the persons they were before they enlisted. Both suffered from PTSD and found everyday routines and encounters, such as getting in a car with their family and going to a shopping mall, extremely unfamiliar. These seemingly banal acts were accompanied by heightened anxiety. He identified with a particular scene from the film when Harris, who suffers extreme pain and discomfort from a broken hipbone, enters a Walmart in a motorized shopping cart. Harris panics over the everydayness of the act of going shopping on his way to the store with his wife as he enters the bright white lights of Walmart.

When Harris enters Walmart he meets an older woman who too sits in a motorized shopping cart.<sup>525</sup> Harris, wearing an “Affliction” t-shirt, describes to her how he was shot when serving in Afghanistan. With seemingly little difficulty or hesitancy, Harris describes

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<sup>525</sup> Whether she uses the motorized cart as a prosthetic support for a physical injury, or a limited ability to stand for a long period of time, or any other sign of difference, is not revealed to the viewer in this scene (though she seems to be a Walmart “greeter”).

how a bullet shattered his hipbone in Afghanistan, paralyzing him from the waist down. He describes to her how there is a metal rod in his leg that she cannot see. However, he assures her, the injury can be visibly seen by looking at the scar that runs up to his hipbone. He slightly lowers the top of his pants to show her the scar and says, almost pleadingly, as if in an attempt to validate his sign of pain and injury to her, and by extension the film viewer, “Do you see?” “It’s right here. This is where it is” [See Figure 31]. What is so remarkable about this scene is how strikingly visible these physical injuries are to both Harris, the woman, and the viewer. Importantly, the physical scar of Harris’s war injury is recognized as a sign of injury and pain within a dominant regime of visibility. On the one hand, Harris’s scar and his limited bodily mobility is understood by the woman, and perhaps by viewers, as a sign of the pain that others can identify as an injury.



Figure 31: Nathaniel Harris shows his visible injury to a Walmart Greeter in *Hell and Back Again*.

Just as importantly, the render visible the gendered care labor that Ashley provides for Harris as a military wife. In these terms, she is the most significant provider of emotional and physical care for Harris's recovery. As a more "hidden" sign of how military wives' physical and emotional care labor becomes militarized as soldiers return home from the wars, Ashley's gendered care labor is framed within the film as an ongoing, conflicting, and rhythmic everyday way of life. In these scenes, the domestic and "private" space of the home is a significantly militarized and gendered space. The camera provides a close-up of Ashley's everyday routines as she dresses Harris in the morning, schedules and helps him with his physical rehabilitation therapy at home, helps him get both into and out of the car, and drives him on multiple errands [See Figure 32]. She does so without complaint, and at times she seems to hide her own conflicting position as a military wife whose husband is no longer able to navigate his everyday life without some sort of physical and emotional assistance.



Figure 32: Ashley helps Nathan get dressed for a funeral service for thirteen fatally wounded soldiers at the nearby base.

Yet unlike Harris, the veteran at the Community Cinema event did not return from the war with a visible injury. As he described it, his injuries are not “visible” to others. Instead, his injuries and the traumatic effects of the war and trauma are more “hidden” and difficult to identify and render intelligible to others. Harris too wrestles with these less recognizable injuries and signs of trauma—or *the horror of nothing to see*—which becomes clearer to the viewer as the film progresses. His ongoing addictions for viewing and playing video games, his social anxieties that occur when he is immersed in everyday and ordinary spaces and encounters with others, his daily rehabilitation practices for his hip injury, his addiction to pain medication and anti-depressants, and his attachment and addiction to his gun are all less visible signs of trauma and emotional conflict.

The one moment in the film when viewers are led to consider the *horror of nothing to see* surrounding soldiers' ongoing grief is during a funeral service held at the nearby base for thirteen fatally wounded male soldiers. The Army Chaplain delivers a sermon and is unable at first to finish it without sobbing for brief moments of time. He describes how many of the soldiers and family members attending the funerary service may have lost a friend, a brother, a nephew, or a husband. "We cannot undo what has been done," he says. "But move on we must." Dennis provides close-up shots of many of the soldiers' faces, some of which are solemn while others express a deep sadness. Several of the soldiers begin to cry and comfort each other before the Chaplain finally finishes his talk [See Figure 33].

Despite the masculine culture of "sucking it up like a man" in the military, the soldiers and the Chaplain are able to do what Jonathan Shay calls the "*griefwork*" of war.<sup>526</sup> Shay famously demonstrated how the soldiers in Homer's *Iliad* communalized grief in funerary rituals at Troy, and through various other "rituals of mourning, cremation, and burial."<sup>527</sup> He points out the differences between the masculine culture of the current U.S. military and the Homeric warriors. "The "macho" ethic of the American military," he writes, "Obstructed whole-hearted grieving for dead friends, even away from combat. Many [Vietnam] veterans speak of the death of a special friend as the turning point, making the onset of what may have been a disassociated state, manifested variously as 'numbness' as going berserk, and of seeing themselves as already dead, too."<sup>528</sup> In *Hell and Back Again*, many of the soldiers become unraveled or "undone" by grief in these scenes at the funerary service. While they are unable to "undo what has been done," as the Chaplain puts it, these scenes demonstrate

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<sup>526</sup> Jonathan Shay, "Learning about Combat Stress from Homer's *Iliad*," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 4, no. 4 (1991), 567, emphasis mine.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.

how the process of grieving is itself a process of becoming undone, of being “beside oneself with grief.”<sup>529</sup> Many of the soldiers seem more able to cry and receive emotional support from their fellow soldiers only within this ceremonial and closed environment.



Figure 33: Soldiers comfort each other at a funerary service for thirteen fatally wounded male soldiers in *Hell and Back Again*.

### Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the “hierarchies of grief” surrounding the wounded body of the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars are structured by multiple gendered and colonial inequalities. While the prosthetics industry profits off of the loss of soldiers’ limbs, many civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan are left without any medical care for both their physical and emotional war injuries. In addition, the

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<sup>529</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*.

militarization of children's everyday lives through landmines, and the gendered dynamics of war trauma for many girls in Iraq, is often rendered invisible in the dominant media and on dominant discourses about the "human costs" of the wars. Even Hengov, Agrin's brother, expects her to take care of Risa, her daughter, despite her desire to leave the child behind and leave the refugee camp. Yet, while many Americans are, arguably, becoming more sympathetic to the struggles of American war veterans and of women family members who are taking care of wounded veterans, many Americans do not consider the gendered politics of caring for civilian wounded bodies on the warfront.

As the next chapter demonstrates, the main character of Annie Proulx's short story "Tits-Up In a Ditch" is also expected to provide the gendered care labor for her husband when he returns from the war with serious physical injuries. Proulx's short story also sheds light on how the female protagonist, Dakotah, is expected take care of her husband Sash, who returns from the war with missing limbs, and whose daily needs are comparable to that of a child's. I open the chapter by focusing on another "missing image" of the war's wounded—*as the horror of nothing to see*—and how the image of the U.S. soldier fatally wounded-body becomes a contested site of visibility and invisibly within dominant media networks and official national moralist discourses. While images such as McNaughton and former President Bush circulate in the media as popular war images, other images becomes problematic because they disrupt the image of a so-called "clean war" operating on both the warfront and homefront.

## Chapter 8

### Coming Home: “Women’s Time” and “Rural Time” in Annie Proulx’s “Tits-Up in a Ditch”

#### Introduction: The Distribution of the Sensible and the Soldier Wounded-Body

It is not true that the masters of the world deceive us or blind us by showing us too many images. Their power is exercised firstly by the fact of taking them away.<sup>530</sup>

—Jacques Rancière

One must clearly feel that everything perceived is only evident when surrounded by a familiar and poorly known horizon, that each certitude is only sure because of the support offered by unexplored ground. The most fragile instant has roots.

—Michel Foucault<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> See Jacques Rancière in (2007) “Theater of Images,” essay in Alfredo Jaar—La Politique des Images Exhibition catalogue, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne. Zurich: jrp/ringier, 71-80.

<sup>531</sup> Karen Culcasi, “Cartographically Constructing Kurdistan within Geopolitical and Orientalist Discourses,” *Political Geography* 25, no. 6 (August 2006): 670-706., 144.



Figure 34: A photograph of Lance Cpl. Joshua Bernard struck by a rocket-propelled grenade in southern Afghanistan on 14 August 2009 taken by Associated Press photographer Julie Jascobson.

Let's begin with a photograph of twenty-one year old Lance Cpl. Joshua Bernard struck by a rocket-propelled grenade in southern Afghanistan on 14 August 2009 [See Figure 34]. It is one amongst many other missing images in the dominant media of fatally wounded U.S. soldiers fighting the U.S.-led Global War on Terror.<sup>532</sup> In the slightly blurred image taken by Associated Press (AP) journalist and war photographer Julie Jacobson, two Marines help Bernard who lies fallen on his side in a narrow ditch, both his legs blown off from the blast. Taken during one of the deadliest months for U.S. soldiers and civilians in Afghanistan since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion, the photograph of

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<sup>532</sup> The Associated Press (AP) is unwilling to redistribute the image by denying access to licensing permissions. The photograph has also been removed from the "official archive" on the AP website.

Bernard's fatal injury became a problematic image when the AP announced that it would be releasing the image to the public despite the contrary wishes of Bernard's parents.<sup>533</sup> The AP ultimately decided "after a period of reflection to make public an image that conveys the grimness of war and the sacrifice of young men and women fighting it."<sup>534</sup> Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates responded to the AP decision to publish the image by writing a letter to Thomas Curley, President and CEO of AP, condemning him for publishing the photograph. "Your lack of compassion and common sense in choosing to put this image of their maimed and stricken child on the front page of multiple American newspapers is appalling," Gates wrote Curley. "The issue here is not law, policy or constitutional right—but judgment and common decency" he concluded.<sup>535</sup> An excerpt from Gates' letter to the AP reads:

The American people understand that death is an awful and inescapable part of war—a fact driven home to me in a very personal way each time I write a condolence letter. Those of us who have not lost loved ones in war can never know what it feels like. All we can do is pay little tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and respect the wishes of their families. Publication of this image will do neither and will mark an unconscionable departure from the constraint that most journalists and publications have shown covering the military since September 11<sup>th</sup>.<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> See *American Forces Press Service* (2009) "Gates Objects to News Photo of Dying Marine," Available online at: <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=55732>.

<sup>534</sup> *Secretary of Defense*. (2009) Letter to the Associated Press by U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, available online as a pdf file at: [militarytimes.com/static/projects/.../090409\\_secdef\\_curley\\_letter.pdf](http://militarytimes.com/static/projects/.../090409_secdef_curley_letter.pdf).

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

The framing of the “problem” surrounding the image of Bernard’s maimed body by his family, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and AP President Thomas Curley directs our attention to how problems emerge as discursive struggles over “the limits and of forms of the *sayable*” in politics.<sup>537</sup> Particularly, Gates’ appeal to a common decency, or his attempt to frame the issue of the AP decision within discourses of moral certainty, constitutes a particular moral policing of the soldier’s wounded body in U.S. security discourses and of the *horror of nothing to see* in dominant media. As Kelly Oliver might put it, “The “security” at stake here is the illusion that Americans are not vulnerable or culpable” in the so-called war against terror in Iraq.<sup>538</sup> Similar to the policing of images of dead soldiers returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in coffins, or to governmental attempts to withhold a majority of the Abu Ghraib photographs from the viewing public, images of soldiers fatally injured in the wars become threatening images within U.S. security apparatuses of power.<sup>539</sup> “By not showing Americans dying and dead,” Oliver writes, “or Americans engaging in abuse, they [the news media] perpetuate the fantasy of wholeness and innocence that denies the real casualties of war.”<sup>540</sup> Jacques Rancière’s understanding of the “distribution of the sensible”

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<sup>537</sup> Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 1991), 59, original emphasis.

<sup>538</sup> Kelly Oliver, *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 93.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, 93. Moreover, while the Obama Administration has lifted the ban on photographs of soldiers’ caskets as they return from the wars, the ban on images of wounded and killed U.S. soldiers remain firmly intact within security control mechanisms. In May 2007, for example, as violence in Iraq intensified during an increasingly unpopular war, a new policy by the U.S. military banned embedded media from releasing any image depicting a dead soldier. The new policy also restricted embedded journalists and photographers from releasing any image of a wounded soldier without the soldier’s prior consent. The regulations require that “embedded photographers and reporters obtain “prior written consent” to include “[n]ames, video, identifiable written/oral descriptions or identifiable photographs” of wounded soldiers in their reports” [<http://www.silha.umn.edu/news/summer2007.php?entry=199053>].

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

surrounding the image-space of a democratic politics is instructive in this respect. A distribution of the sensible refers to the particular order of intelligibility surrounding what is rendered visible as a “common world” within politics.<sup>541</sup> The creation of this common world illustrates how politics proper takes form through consensus on whom and what is deemed sensible, understandable, visible, and audible in the distribution of the sensible. For Rancière:

Politics is first of all the configuration of space as political, the framing of a specific sphere of experience, the setting of objects posed as “common” and of subjects to whom the capacity is recognized to designate these objects and discuss them. Politics first is the conflict about the very existence of that sphere of experience, the reality of those common objects and the capacity of those subjects.<sup>542</sup>

By setting into motion “scenes of dissensus” over who has the capacity to recognize and designate the photograph of Bernard’s maimed body as an object of value and who has the capacity to render visible the image to the U.S. public, the photograph of Bernard’s fatally wounded body circulated in the media as a significant political event space.<sup>543</sup> Following Rancière’s political topography on the “distribution of the sensible” in politics, the circulation of the photograph in the media restored visibility (if only temporarily) to the invisibility of the U.S. soldier’s wounded body in the dominant media. Indeed, recalling Rancière’s quote at the beginning of this essay, it is not that there are “too many images” of maimed and suffering bodies in contemporary news and media.<sup>544</sup> Instead, there are too

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<sup>541</sup> Rancière and Rockhill, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 42.

<sup>542</sup> See Jacques Rancière (2004: b) “Jacques Rancière: The Politics of Aesthetics,” *Klein Theater* website, submitted by Bojuna Cvejic on Aug. 9., 2.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>544</sup> This is a simplified reference to Rancière’s much more sophisticated discussion on the politics of the image in his essay, “Theater of Images,” in Alfredo Jaar—*La Politique des Images* Exhibition catalogue, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne. However, it is

many “missing images” of suffering bodies in the current U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In contrast to the Vietnam War, when the circulation of photographs and televisual images depicting the violence of U.S. militarism’s effects on civilian and U.S. soldier bodies significantly informed public perceptions of the war, today’s U.S.-led wars are carefully constructed to deliver images of a bloodless or “clean war.”<sup>545</sup> As Jean Baudrillard famously argued, the First Gulf War was not a war in the traditional sense of the term. Instead, it was a war of images, information, simulations, and excess. “Unlike earlier wars,” Baudrillard writes, “in which there were political aims either of conquest or domination, what is at stake in this one is war itself: its status, its meaning, its future. It is beholden not to have an objective but to prove its very existence.”<sup>546</sup> Put another way, the First Gulf War did not take place insofar that the war’s intelligibility as an event-space rendered invisible U.S. militarism’s violent effects on land and bodies in a particular time and place. Similar to the simulacrum of violence that conditioned the possibilities for the First Gulf War to function as an intelligible event-space, the current so-called war against terror is rendered intelligible to the viewing public as a war without civilian deaths or destruction of land.<sup>547</sup> Minimally, the

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worth noting here that for Rancière the “problem” is not that “we” are becoming desensitized to violence by viewing “too many images” of violence and suffering in the media. Instead, what “we” mainly see are the faces and images of those “that ‘make’ the news” (73). They are the images and words of the “official” and “authorized speakers,” whose words and images have forceful effects in the world as “specialists” of debate and explanation (73).

<sup>545</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Indiana University Press, 1995), 43.

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>547</sup> It is important to underline how the current U.S.-led Global War on Terror has been rendered visible to the U.S. public, especially in relation to the events at Abu Ghraib and the circulation of the photographs in the media. While this dissertation does not contrast feminist responses to the U.S.-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan since the events of 9/11 and the First Gulf War due mainly to time and space constraints, there is a vast literature emerging

photograph of Bernard's fatal injury circulated in the media then as an *untimely* image when juxtaposed to the invisibility of civilian deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This chapter offers a competing framework for thinking about the politics of trauma and wounded soldiers. It uses Annie Proulx's short story "Tits-Up in a Ditch" (2008) as counter-narrative to more hegemonic global narratives of the "war against terror" and to images of a so-called clean war in Afghanistan and now U.S.-occupied Iraq. As counter-narrative to U.S. military truth-practices and dominant media assemblages that render invisible U.S. militarism's violent effects in the world, Proulx's short story maps how trauma operates as a contested site of intelligibility in a particular time and place. Specifically, "Tits-Up in a Ditch" is anchored by a rural sensibility of time and space that locates U.S. soldiers' traumatic war experiences across a plane of consistency that is both macro - and micropolitically informed. A micropolitical analysis is especially important for disrupting more dominant public policy and reform agendas that demand a range of more health services for wounded veterans without politicizing the biopoliticization of the soldier's wounded body in military formations of power. As Michael J. Shapiro puts it, "a micropolitical analysis if it is elaborated and deployed on the many different kinds of bodies affected by macropolitics reveals a level of political interaction that operates below the level of policy making bodies."<sup>548</sup> The following analysis explores how "Tits-Up in A Ditch"

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on these comparisons, such as Susie Kilshaw's *Impotent Warriors: Perspectives on Gulf War Syndrome, Vulnerability, and Masculinity* (Berghahn books, 2010); Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Duke University Press, 2007); Véronique Pin-Fat and Maria Stern's essay "The Scripting of Private Jessica Lynch: Biopolitics, Gender, and the "Feminization of the U.S. Military" in *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 30, 2005, and Kelly Oliver's *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media*, (Columbia University Press, 2007).

<sup>548</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, *For Moral Ambiguity: National Culture and the Politics of the Family* (U of Minnesota Press, 2001), 6.

maps the macropolitics of U.S. military technologies of knowledge and power to the more micropolitical assemblages of how the U.S. injured “soldier-body” is geopolitically bound by gendered and heteronormative norms of recognition, amongst others, within nation-state models of time and space.

As already described throughout this dissertation, I borrow the term injured “soldier-body” here from Craig Willse and Greg Goldberg, who use this term to locate the U.S. soldier body as an “assemblage of capacities” within military networks of biopolitical power.<sup>549</sup> Importantly, Goldberg and Willse turn to Foucault’s articulations on governmentality and the soldier-body in order to explore the biopolitical dimensions of trauma. From a Foucauldian perspective, the U.S. injured soldier-body—as an assemblage of capacities—directs attention to the biopolitical management of the soldier’s physical and mental “health” within productive relations of power/knowledge. Rather than think in terms of psychic or physical loss in order to explore the politics of trauma surrounding injured soldiers, a Foucauldian perspective prompts us to approach the injured soldier-body as one that is governed by global apparatuses of institutional power, disciplinary techniques of control, capital, and militarized technocultures.<sup>550</sup> Such an approach to the politics of trauma and the soldier-body enables another, perhaps less familiar, violent cartography of the Global War on Terror to emerge—one that maps how the soldier-body is governed by militarized networks of global inequalities and U.S. imperial power. Indeed, the militarization and mobilization of the injured soldier-body as a site of knowledge in advanced technoscience

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<sup>549</sup> See Goldberg, G. and Craig Willse, “Losses and Returns: The Soldier in Trauma,” in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 266.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

participates within broader U.S. imperialist efforts to create and sustain a military force of soldier bodies capable of fighting America's endless imperialist wars abroad.

The Bush Administration's framing of the Global War on Terror as a war against the "forces of evil" between a so-called civilized world and "terrorist other" in Iraq and Afghanistan after 9/11 extends Cold War discourses of the forces of good and evil and emergence of a dangerous "other" into the colonial present.<sup>551</sup> In order to map the violent cartographies of the colonial present in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine, Derek Gregory evokes Edward Said's concept of "imaginative geographies" as those "constructions that fold distance into difference through a series of spatializations" within Orientalist discursive formations of power.<sup>552</sup> The colonial present, he argues, is informed just as much by the banality of everyday life and U.S. complicities in the so-called war against terror as it is by foreign policy, presidential authority, and militarized corporate media. Put this way, the distribution of the sensible in contemporary geopolitics surrounding the Global War on Terror demands policing the intelligibility of bodies within colonialist neo-imperialist narratives on the homefront/warfront and in everyday life.

Mapping these productive relations of power demands turning attention to the global movement of the injured soldier-body within disciplinary societies, U.S. military control mechanisms, and complex structures of desire. Proulx's short story restores visibility to the invisibility of U.S. militarism's violent effects on soldiers' bodies in the dominant media, because it multiplies the image-spaces surrounding the movement of female protagonist

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<sup>551</sup> Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan. Palestine. Iraq* (Wiley, 2004), 11.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Dakotah Lister from rural Wyoming to the cityscapes of Baghdad.<sup>553</sup> By turning to the subtle maneuverings of power illustrated by Proulx's aesthetic text and by taking heed to the more haptic visualities it offers, this chapter "re-configure[s] the map of the sensible" surrounding the wounded soldier as a subject of contemporary war trauma and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars since the events of 9/11.<sup>554</sup>

### A Poetic Sensibility of the Soldier's Wounded Body

Moouo....

—Dakotah Lister in "Tits-Up In a Ditch."

Annie Proulx's approach to writing and thinking about the politics of war and trauma through the short story genre recalls Walt Whitman's particular poetic sensibility for framing the Civil War as an intelligible event. As already mentioned in Chapter Two, Whitman writes

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<sup>553</sup> I would like to thank Didier Bigio and his critique of my focus on the use of this short story to explore the gendered dynamics of war trauma at the International Political Sociology (IPS) Doctoral Workshop in London, October 5-7, 2011. Bigio's question was: "What about the rest of the soldiers?" Indeed, Annie Proulx's short story does not follow the stories of all U.S. soldiers in the military. It only follows the story of a few characters, mainly Dakotah and her husband Sash. However, literature has the capacity of enriching our understanding of soldiers' lives because it brings us to the micropolitics of everyday life. One could provide a sample of ethnographic research on the movement of multiple soldiers' bodies on the homefront and warfront. Yet, that does not necessarily mean that the macropolitical and micropolitical dimensions of "a" soldier's life, like Dakotah's, is insignificant and less valuable as a narrative for studying the relationships between war and trauma. Further, Proulx sheds light on the multiple temporalities of Dakotah's life within gendered formations of power. While her analysis should not be generalized and extended to represent all women's experiences in the military, clearly, there must be some resonance between Dakotah's life as a woman in the military and other women's experiences of war trauma? After all, as I describe in this chapter, many recruits are from the Midwest and Western part of the U.S. and women comprise over 18% of the military. Finally, the last section of the chapter focuses on how the U.S. military organizes "women" (across differences of race, class, ethnicity, and more) into Lioness Teams.

<sup>554</sup> Rancière and Rockhill, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 39.

that the Civil War had been “the most distinguishing event” of his time.<sup>555</sup> However, his approach to capturing this event-space remained informed by an aesthetic sensibility of time and space. He had “become accustomed to think of the whole of the Secession War in its emotional, artistic and literary relations.”<sup>556</sup> Whitman’s Civil War is not the sum of its events, selected and arranged by the author in a chronological, sensible order. In contrast to historical narratives that demand a chronological order to things and, minimally, an overarching narrative structure of coherence, Whitman’s war—as the sum of its emotional, artistic and literary relations—fosters an appreciation for more partial, limited accounts for framing what knowledge of the Civil War constitutes. Importantly, his emphasis on the affective and aesthetic dimensions of the war open the wartime experience to ongoing modes of interpretation and aesthetic encounters, in effect, resisting any sense of narrative closure for summarizing the war in time and place.

Proulx’s short story affirms more partial truths on how the Global War on Terror might be understood as an event-space by locating how individuals understand the war and its violent affects in a particular time and place. Indeed, the novel and the short story provide a critical aesthetic sensibility for approaching the Global War on Terror as an event-space and for locating how U.S. soldiers experience war’s traumatic effects from competing viewpoints. As M. M. Bakhtin puts it, the “heteroglossia” or multiple “languages” of a novel and short story offer us “specific points of view of the world” that are geopolitically bound by time and space.<sup>557</sup> By illuminating the ways in which embodied experience and political

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<sup>555</sup> Lowenfels, *Walt Whitman’s Civil War; Compiled & Edited From Published & Unpublished Sources*, 3.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>557</sup> Michail Michajlovic Bakhtin and Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 2011).

life are always geopolitically bound, art and literature for Bakhtin disrupt “abstract thought” and affirm instead a “living artistic expression” that binds the truth of the subject to multiple time-space continuums rather than homogenizing nation-state frameworks.<sup>558</sup> The novel therefore invites dialogic (reflective) modes of thinking about political life in contrast to national unifying narratives and ontological truth-practices that, recalling the passage from Whitman above, attempt to provide a coherent statement on what the historical “origins” of war constitute.

Proulx’s short story “Tits-Up In a Ditch” locates the contingent truths of U.S. militarism’s violent effects in the world by following how protagonist Dakotah Lister, the granddaughter of a struggling Wyoming rancher family, inhabits both the “uncertain communities”<sup>559</sup> of rural life in Wyoming on the one hand, and life as a U.S. soldier deployed to Iraq on the other<sup>560</sup> Affirming uncertain communities resists nation-state frameworks that seek to impose a community of coherence on a particular people. As Michael J. Shapiro succinctly puts it, national frameworks of time and space demand ideas of a nation that “embodies a coherent culture, united on the basis of shared descent or, at least, incorporating a ‘people’ with a historically stable coherence.”<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>559</sup> I evoke Jacques Rancière’s term “uncertain communities” here as useful political concept for approaching how Proulx’s short story illuminates particular subject-positions that “contribute to the formation of enunciative collectives that call into question the distribution of roles, territories, and languages” (Rancière, 2006: 40). Importantly, “uncertain communities” emerge then when certain speech acts (or “quasi-bodies”) challenge the “sensory perception of what is common to the community” and thereby create the possibilities for new political subjectivities to emerge as visible, speaking subjects (40). These disruptive circulations of speech thus function politically by creating new political collectives that “challenge the given distribution of the sensible,” such as the U.S. injured soldier--body as an “assemblage of capacities” in the U.S. war machine (40).

<sup>560</sup> Rancière and Rockhill, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 40.

<sup>561</sup> Shapiro, *For Moral Ambiguity*, 118.

Significantly, these “national times” render invisible the more fragile, disjunctive ways that individuals exceed and challenge dominant narrative scripts.<sup>562</sup> In contrast to these more dominant modes of policing the individual within national understandings of time and space, Annie Proulx’s short story directs our attention to those “other modalities of writing” or “other times” that render visible the multiple temporal structures and rhythms that inform everyday life.<sup>563</sup> Importantly, these National Times and Other Times are located within a particular rural sensibility of time, space, and gendered modes of embodiment.

For instance, the title of the short story itself suggests a certain form of movement particular to the rural landscape and political lifeworld of Wyoming. Within a rural Wyoming sensibility, the phrase “tits-up in a ditch” refers to a cow that has fallen upside down in the mud. As a narrative, Proulx introduces readers to the many political dimensions of this phrase by first providing a genealogy of Dakotah Lister’s family and the financial, physical, and emotional hardships they endure over the years as struggling farmers. Particularly, Proulx maps the ways in which the Lister family is affected by the push since the 1980’s to outsource local farming jobs to rich oil companies. The beginning of the energy boom at the time functioned as a forceful political shift that had “sucked up Wyoming boys, offering high wages that no rancher, not even Wyatt Match, the country’s richest cattleman, could pay.”<sup>564</sup> Dakotah’s mother Shaina too fled from the rural farming town the day after Dakotah was born, leaving Shaina’s parents Verl and Bonita “stuck with the baby.”<sup>565</sup> The demanding hard labor that ranching involves, including the Lister family’s strong attachment to the

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>564</sup> Annie Proulx, *Fine Just the Way It Is: Wyoming Stories 3* (New York: Scribner, 2009), 181.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid., 180.

patriarchal (heteronormative) family and gendered division of labor, significantly affect how Dakotah is valued as an individual in the family. “If it had been a boy,” Verl says referring to Dakotah, “he could have helped with the chores when he got to size.”<sup>566</sup> The narrator’s voice chimes in at this point with sarcastic wit: “And inherited the ranch, was the implied finished sentence.”<sup>567</sup>

As the story continues, Proulx maps the competing National Times and Other Times surrounding Dakotah’s lifeworld and the spatial and temporal rhythms of everyday life. These multiple temporalities that inform Dakotah’s everyday life include, for instance, “pioneer time,” “oil time,” “neoliberal time,” “colonial time,” “rural time,” “war time,” “women’s time,” “queer time,” “military time,” “grieving time,” “lost time,” “industrial time,” “family time,” and Wyoming’s nineteenth century “golden time,” amongst others. In a poignant quote, for instance, Proulx maps the colonial genealogy of the Lister family from “pioneer time” to its present and signals the ways in which the signs of modern industrialization and its political effects on the small western town and its inhabitants remain ambiguous and uncertain:

Since that pioneer time the country had become trammeled and gnawed, stripped with cattle, coal mines, oil wells and gas rigs, striated with pipelines. The road to the ranch had been named Sixteen Mile, though no one was sure what that distance signified.<sup>568</sup>

The uncertain distance that marks these “other times” surrounding the road to the Lister ranch is rendered strikingly visible to the reader by the juxtapositions between the signs of poverty that populate the Lister ranch and the dense “landscape of signs” of wealth that

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid., 180.

emanate from Wyatt Match's ranch. I use the term "landscape of signs" here in Rancière's sense of the term.<sup>569</sup> As described earlier, the aesthetic regime of arts involves a "new way of telling stories, which is first of all a way of assigning meaning to the 'empirical' world of lowly actions and commonplace objects."<sup>570</sup> In the aesthetic revolution of arts and of literature, the "fictionality" specific to the text involves not regimes of representation (i.e., self-referential codes) but rather an "arrangement of signs" that multiplies rather than unifies the meaning-units of value or "truth" of the text.<sup>571</sup> Thus, mapping the landscape of signs of an aesthetic text directs our attention to the multiple temporal and spatial assemblages of a literary work of art. In Rancière's words, this particular sign-assemblage specific to the aesthetic revolution is, amongst other things:

[The] association between, on the one hand, accelerations or decelerations of language, its *shuffling of images* or sudden changes of tone, all its differences of potential between the insignificant and the overly significant or overly meaningful, and on the other hand, the modalities of a trip through the landscape of significant traits deposited in the topography of spaces, the physiology of social circles, the silent expression of bodies.<sup>572</sup>

Rancière's emphasis on the *shuffling of images* and competing modalities of time, space and modes of embodiment in the aesthetic regime of arts illuminates the political significance of thinking in images that Proulx's text demands. For instance, Wyatt Match describes Verl as a "trash rancher"<sup>573</sup> not only because his land is overgrazed, but also because of the dense

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<sup>569</sup> Rancière and Rockhill, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 36.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, 37, emphasis mine.

<sup>573</sup> Proulx, *Fine Just the Way It Is*, 181.

landscape of signs surrounding the public/exterior space of the Lister ranch, and its more private/domestic interior.<sup>574</sup> In the following quote for example, the signs of poverty that mark the public/private spatial and temporal landscape of signs of the ranch are rendered visible vis-à-vis a shuffling of images of “still time” and “lost time” surrounding “industrial time.” These multiple temporalities that populate the Lister ranch are rendered visible to the reader by the motionless images of the ranch’s rusting farming equipment, empty kitchen table after “supper time,” and defunct electrical stove resting on the front porch. Indeed, the sweeping “geopolitical time” of neoliberal reform agendas from the 1980’s onward and their uncertain effects on the community of ranchers over the years is rendered visible by the haunting still-images of the Lister’s industrial farming equipment, falling fences, and “roaming time” of the farm’s suffering cows:

[T]here were fences down and gates hanging by one hinge, binder twine everywhere and rusting machinery in the pastures. There was an old sedan with the hood up in

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<sup>574</sup> See Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz, *White Trash: Race and Class in America* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Clearly, the phrase “trash rancher” signals the phrase “white trash,” especially since the Lister family is rendered visible in the story as a family of poor whites living in rural America. As Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz put it in their introduction to their edited book collection *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, the term “white trash” brings our attention to the racial formation of whiteness within dominant discursive formations of power. Drawing on a vast literature that interrogates the unmarked presence of whiteness as an unproblematic norm within dominant racial formations of power, the authors illustrate how “whiteness is an oppressive ideological construct that promotes and maintains social inequalities, causing great material and psychological harm to both people of color and whites” (3). As a racialized category of knowledge and power, the term “White trash is a complex cultural category” that “is associated mainly with stereotypical representations of low-class, ill-mannered white folks” (4). Poor rural whites, for instance, such as the members of the Lister family, are historically viewed as “incestuous and sexually promiscuous, violent, alcoholic, lazy, and stupid” within racist stereotypes (2). While this chapter does not provide a detailed analysis on the racialized dimensions of the Lister’s lifeworld within discursive formations of whiteness, Proulx’s short story does provide, perhaps, a micropolitical lens for rendering visible these racial formations of power in subtle, albeit important ways.

one of the irrigation ditches. A defunct electric stove rested on the front porch. The Lister cows roamed the roads, constantly suffering accidents—drowning in the creek in spring flood, bogging in mud pots that came from nowhere.<sup>575</sup>

Growing up, Dakotah's lifeworld remains as precarious as the lifeworld of the Lister's cows that constantly find themselves, as Verl puts it within a rural Wyoming sensibility, "tits-up in a ditch," as they fall upside down on the impoverished farm's mud-spots. Without significant affection from her grandparents, Dakotah yearns for more intimate attachments to another. Put simply, "She was ready to love anyone."<sup>576</sup> During her senior year of high school, she settles for classmate Sash Hicks, both for his "lustrous aura of outlawry and gun expertise" and more importantly, because the marriage enables her to escape the "unjust imprisonment" of living under the same roof as Verl and Bonita—a sense of imprisonment her grandparents reciprocate.<sup>577</sup> Dakotah drops out of high school a few months before graduation, secures a serving position at a local diner, and moves into an apartment with Sash in town.

Dakotah soon finds however that living under the same roof with Sash is just as much an "unjust imprisonment" as living with her grandparents; this time, a sense of imprisonment Sash reciprocates. Dakota, fed-up with providing the gendered care labor that Sash demands of her as his "biddable wife," and Sash, tired of Dakotah's "stubbornness" and refusal to wait on him hand and foot, both agree on a divorce. Sash moves back with his parents, enlists in the U.S. military, and heads to basic training before his deployment to Iraq. Meanwhile, Dakotah learns she is pregnant, and while she plans on keeping the apartment and her job at the diner in order to hold onto her new sense of freedom, her boss fires her six days before

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<sup>575</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid., 195.

she gives birth to her son—“the company got a policy that no lady more than six months gone can work here.”<sup>578</sup> Unable to financially support herself and the baby, who exceedingly demands more of her attention than she expected, Dakotah finds shelter once again with her grandparents, who are sure to remind her upon returning to the ranch that she has brought shame to the family.

While Shaina shames the family by skipping town and leaving Verl and Bonita with Dakotah, the shame that Dakotah brings to the family as a new mother whose “no-good-bum” husband cannot be found is cushioned by the fact that “Baby Verl” is a boy.<sup>579</sup> While Dakotah’s childhood consisted of scarce affection from her grandparents, one of the “privileges of western manhood from which the baby benefited were opened damns of affection in Bonita and Verl.”<sup>580</sup> It is at this point in the story that Dakotah is awe struck by the patriarchal norms that have governed her apperception of the self over the years, especially her grandparent’s “involuntary love,” one which “had not moved them when they brought her as an infant to the ranch.”<sup>581</sup> As the story continues, Dakotah’s grandparents make it clear that applying for social services or welfare in order to generate additional income to support the baby is not an option—“for the Matches would rightly condemn them as weak-kneed sucks on the taxpayer’s tit.”<sup>582</sup> Instead, Verl and Bonita encourage Dakotah to enlist in the U.S. military. The military will provide her with an education that will help support the newborn. Enlisting in the Army will also enable her to navigate the red tape of the military and track down her wayward husband Sash, Verl slyly remarks. Though shocked

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<sup>578</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid., 204.

by her grandparents' insistence that she not apply for welfare or social services, she enlists and leaves Baby Verl with her grandparents.

"Rural Time" and "Women's Time" on the Homefront/Warfront

Post-traumatic stress disorder is like a roadside bomb.<sup>583</sup>

—Dave Phillips

While her mother's first flight from the small ranching town is to the cityspace of Los Angeles, Dakotah's first departure from the Lister ranch is to the cityspace of Baghdad. At this point in the narrative, it is important to underline the political significance of Dakotah and Sash's enlistment in the U.S. military in relationship to another competing rural dimension surrounding the U.S. injured soldier-body and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars since the events of 9/11. Indeed, as Deborah Cowen demonstrates, the militaries of today's "advanced capitalist nations," such as those of the U.S. and Canada, are overwhelmingly comprised of recruits drawn from rural communities and small towns.<sup>584</sup> While contemporary advanced capitalist nations increasingly fight their imperialist and neocolonial wars in cityspaces abroad, it is rural soldiers who comprise the majority of these nation's volunteer forces.

For example, by reexamining the Department of Defense's hometown demographics amongst U.S. soldier casualties since the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, and subsequent 2003 invasion of Iraq, one research study by the Carsey Institute confirms that the majority of U.S. soldiers killed and severely injured between 2001 and 2006 came from rural rather than

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<sup>583</sup> "Casualties of War, Part I."

<sup>584</sup> Deborah Cowen, "National Soldiers and the War on Cities," *Theory & Event* 10, no. 2 (2007).

urban areas.<sup>585</sup> Recalling our earlier discussion on the AP photograph of Lance Cpl. Joshua Bernard, moreover, and the circulation of the image of his fatally wounded body in the media, Bernard is from the “Friendly Town” of New Portland, a small community of fewer than 1,000 people on the Carrabassett River in Maine.<sup>586</sup> Proulx’s short story thus illuminates both the macropolitical and micropolitical dimensions surrounding the ways in which many U.S. soldiers experience the sudden shift from a rural sensibility of time and space to a military sensibility of time and space. For example, in the following passage, a “shuffling of images”<sup>587</sup> between Dakotah’s attachment to the landscape of signs of rural Wyoming on the one hand, and the density of bodies in close proximity to one another in the Army on the other, enables Proulx to reframe what counts as an “insignificant and [the] overly significant”<sup>588</sup> moment of encounter with the U.S. military machine as a newly enlisted soldier:

The worst thing about the army, the thing she could never get used to, was the constant presence of too many people, too close, in her face, radiating heat and smells, talking and shouting. Someone who has grown up in silence and vast space, who was born in solitude, who feels different and shrinks from notice, suffers in the company of others. So homesickness took the shape of longing for wind, an empty landscape, for silence and privacy. She longed for the baby and came to believe she was homesick for the ranch.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> See O’Hare, W. and Bill Bishop (2006) “U.S. Rural Soldiers Account for a Disproportionately High Share of Casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan,” *Carsey Institute Fact Sheet* 3, Fall 2006.

<sup>586</sup> See New Portland, Maine town website at <http://www.newportlandmaine.org/>.

<sup>587</sup> Rancière and Rockhill, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 37.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>589</sup> Proulx, *Fine Just the Way It Is*, 207.

Dakotah's enlistment in the U.S. military and her deployment to Iraq also illuminates the competing modalities of "women's time" in both the small rural town on the "homefront" and as a female soldier in Iraq on the "warfront," and the blurring of these boundaries in contemporary war assemblages. As Julia Kristeva famously put in her essay "Women's Time" (1979), the time of history or of *linear time* functions as a patriarchal ideological apparatus of power insofar that women's corporeal rhythms (i.e.. childbirth) are informed by intuition and *cyclical time*. "Female subjectivity," writes Kristeva, "as it gives itself up to intuition becomes a problem with respect to a certain conception of time: time as project, teleology, linear and prospective and unfolding: time as departure, progression and arrival – in other words, the time of history."<sup>590</sup> In many ways, Proulx's short story underlines the multiple dimensions of "women's time" in the U.S. military by illuminating the ways in which Dakotah—as a young single mother and newly enlisted U.S. soldier—navigates the different temporal and spatial dimensions of (white) male patriarchy on the homefront and warfront.<sup>591</sup>

Proulx underlines the ways in which Dakotah's inability to succeed on both her high school standardized tests and the military's entrance exams condition the possibilities for

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<sup>590</sup> Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader* (Columbia University Press, 1986), 192.

<sup>591</sup> I would like to thank Vivienne Jabri and her critique of my use of this concept at the International Political Sociology (IPS) Doctoral Workshop in London, October 5-7, 2011. According to Jabri, Kristeva's concept of "women's time" is a more "complex" concept within the fields of psychoanalytic and feminist thought than how I describe it here. As Jabri put it, my use of the concept therefore does not work sufficiently to analyze the temporality of trauma within gendered formations of power in this essay. While I was not afforded any time to respond to her critique at the workshop, I want to note that it is not my intention to be faithful to Kristeva's use of the concept within its proper psychoanalytic context. I am more interested in taking concepts and putting them to use in new and creative contexts. I am actually less interested in Kristeva's concept of "women's time" in this chapter than I am in the gendered dynamics and temporalities of war trauma and Proulx's articulation of these everyday dimensions of life for a soldier.

how she will spend her “time” as a young mother and newly enlisted U.S. soldier. Despite the dominant image of the modern American female soldier that is able to transcend all gendered, racist, and sexist hierarchies through one’s ability to become a “superhuman” through the reconfiguration of the soldiers’ body in high-tech military gear, such as U.S. military recruitment ads that feature women soldiers in high-tech gear training in unison with fellow male soldiers, Dakotah quickly learns during her basic training in Missouri that “it was still a man’s army and that women were decidedly inferior in all ways.”<sup>592</sup> After barely passing her exams to become a combat medic, she and her friend Marnie, also a young working-class woman from a small rural town, are deployed to Iraq as military police. While Dakotah and Marnie are deployed as military police to Iraq, their friend Pat Moody, a daughter of a wealthy doctor who plans on following her father’s footsteps after the Army, scores high on the military aptitude tests. Consequently, Pat is sent to a military simulation center at Fort Drum in New York in order to undergo simulated combat-medical training for treating the U.S. injured soldier-body as an “assemblage of capacities” within militarized technosciences. In the following quote, for instance, Proulx de-familiarizes the scene of military technoscientific experimentation and game simulation technologies by humorously illuminating Pat’s encounters with “Private Hunk”:

Pat went to Fort Drum in New York for training at the medical simulation center, where darkness, explosions and smoke mimicked realistic battlefield simulations. She sent Marnie and Dakotah a letter describing Private Hunk, a computerized patient-simulation mannequin who could bleed, breathe, even talk a little. He was complete

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<sup>592</sup> Proulx, *Fine Just the Way It Is*, 206.

in the last detail, constructed for countless intubations, tracheotomies,  
catheterizations...<sup>593</sup>

These competing gendered and socioeconomic inequalities surrounding “women’s time” and “military technoscientific time” in Iraq since 9/11 are problematized too when Dakotah and Marnie are placed together on patrol duty in Baghdad. During their routine “patrol time,” Marnie and Dakotah become intimately attached and talk about “setting-up house together” with the baby in Dakotah’s hometown after their return from Iraq—“Marnie said maybe they were in love.”<sup>594</sup> By gesturing to Dakotah and Marnie’s intimate attachments, Proulx illuminates the complex ways in which queer intimacies are forged within militarized spaces between women. Indeed, despite the ways in which Dakotah’s apperception of the self has been governed by heteronormativity over the years, her time spent with Marnie enables her to develop close intimacies with women that she did not have growing up in rural Wyoming.

Proulx’s placement of the home and family within an alternative economy of meaning politicizes the home and its normalizing functions. In Lauren Berlant’s discussion on structures of feeling, intimacy, and institutionalism, unmarked places such as the home, domesticity, and marriage are dominantly understood as places of non-feeling, rather than as complex “institutions of intimacy.”<sup>595</sup> For Berlant, intimacy is just as much a site of optimism as it is a sight of tension, of “shifting registers of unspoken ambivalence,” and of trauma.<sup>596</sup> Who is allowed to be intimate, how one is able to intimate, and what counts as intelligible forms of intimacy in national and institutional frameworks are each contingent on exposing the fragility of intimacy’s presumably unproblematic implications. Berlant calls for

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<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>595</sup> Lauren Gail Berlant, *Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid., 6.

a more nuanced approach to intimacy by politicizing “modes of attachment” and locations of anxiety produced by intimacy’s “norms, forms, and crimes”.<sup>597</sup>

To rethink intimacy is to appraise how we have been and how we live and how we might imagine lives that make more sense than the ones so many are living...intimacy reveals itself to be a relation associated with tacit fantasies, tacit rules, and tacit obligations to remain unproblematic. We notice it when something about it takes on charge, so that the intimacy become something else, an “issue”- something that requires analytic eloquence. It becomes harder to see the presumption or even the desire for stable tacitness itself as a problem that reproduces panic in the intimate field.<sup>598</sup>

It is therefore the governmentality of cultural intelligible forms of intimacy that is at the core of intimacy’s panics as well as unintelligible ways of being intimate. Two men cooking in a kitchen, perhaps, might comprise a particular form of intimacy understood individually, yet also spark resistance from others who associate this to homo-social forms of bonding, erotic intimacy in a feminized “women’s space,” and non-heterosexual tendencies. The two men, aware of the governing of intimacy and its unspoken precautions, might resist cooking dinner together in moments of publicness—cooking together only when privacy is allowed.

Foucault would call this self-governing of intimacy the governmentality of the self.<sup>599</sup> In a similar, yet different vein, Laura Kipnis would call this an “economy of intimacy governed... by incessant assurances that there are no viable alternatives.”<sup>600</sup> An economy of intimacy

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<sup>597</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>599</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 97.

<sup>600</sup> See Laura Kipnis (2000) “Adultery” in *Intimacy*, Edited by Lauren Berlant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 11.

governed involves the continual push toward and resistance to the incessantness of monogamy, the imagined home, and narratives of culturally intelligible ways of being intimate, in effect producing an economy of “intimacy labor.”<sup>601</sup> In these terms, Marnie and Dakotah’s “intimacy talk” about “setting-up house” gestures towards a different, albeit similar, heteronormative ideal of the family in contrast to her marriage with Sash.

Dakotah and Marnie’s intimate attachments to one another illuminate the politics of “queer time” surrounding rural life and U.S. soldiering. As Jack Halberstam demonstrates, rural queer lives are often rendered invisible within academic scholarship and popular culture. Particularly, the historical archives of queer lives “reveals how little we actually know about the forms taken by queer life outside of metropolitan areas.”<sup>602</sup> While Halberstam’s project draws on critical research that maps the assemblages between rural life, sexuality, and whiteness, the following quote helps situate how we might approach the ambiguities and colonial complexities surrounding Marnie and Dakotah’s intimate attachments within the context of rural life and “city time” in war torn Baghdad. In Halberstam’s words:

White rural populations in the United States, particularly in the Midwest, must in fact be thought about through the racial project of whiteness and the historical construction of working-class “whiteness” as a place of both privilege and oppression. Because of this complex construction, we must avoid either romanticizing rural lives or demonizing them: rural queers in particular may participate in certain

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<sup>601</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>602</sup> Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 35.

order of bigotry (like racism or political conservatism) while being victimized and punished by others (like homophobia and sexism).<sup>603</sup>

Hallberstam reminds us to pay attention to the ambiguities surrounding what constitutes a “queer life” when considering how rural queer lives are embedded within historical constructions of whiteness, heteronormativity, racism, homophobia, and colonial complicities in the Global War on Terror. For example, Marnie and Dakotah’s intimate attachments are constructed not only through the militarization of everyday life but also by the military’s attempt to have women soldiers police women’s bodies in Iraq. Significantly, the Iraq war after 9/11 is the first war where the U.S. military has organized women soldiers into female patrol units. These units, called “Lioness Groups,” are created in order to conduct, amongst other things, routine security checks on Muslim women and women in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the popular website *US Marine Corps News* puts it, the Lioness Program was constructed in order to “provide culturally-sensitive searches on Iraqi women” since Muslim cultural practices deny a man to touch a woman who is not related to her [See Figure 35].<sup>604</sup> According to the military’s logic, such “culturally-sensitive” searches are necessary for current U.S. military counter-terrorist strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan, because many male insurgents use women’s bodies as weapons to carry bombs and information, under the presumption that women might more easily pass U.S. security checks.

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<sup>603</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>604</sup> See

<http://www.2ndmlg.marines.mil/News/NewsArticleDisplay/tabid/3874/Article/58277/lionesses-work-to-improve-comm>.



Figure 35: “Cpl. Kimberly A. Martin, a lioness attached to 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5, searches an Iraqi woman in Haditha, Iraq, May 1. Lionesses have the responsibility of searching Iraqi women at traffic control points because men are forbidden to search women in Iraqi culture. Before arriving to Haditha, the Lionesses went through training at Camp Ripper, Iraq. (Photo by Cpl. Shawn Coolman).” Source: “Lionesses Prowl in Haditha,” Cpl. Erik Villagran, May 4, 2008, U.S. Marines official website:

<http://www.1stmardiv.marines.mil/News/NewsArticleDisplay/tabid/8585/Article/88328/lionesses-prowl-in-haditha.aspx>.

U.S. women soldiers, as “lionesses,” provide the gendered labor for securitizing, colonizing, and policing women’s bodies in Iraq and Afghanistan. These militarized practices demand too dominant understandings of masculinity, femininity, and security within U.S. military

networks of power and knowledge. As Kelly Oliver demonstrates, women's bodies on the homefront and warfront in the Iraq war become militarized through a multiplicity of images and stories that equate women's bodies (such as Iraqi women's bodies) as dangerous and sexually threatening bodies within dominant western male fantasies and media circuits of power. Female suicide bombers in Iraq, U.S. women soldiers, and abuse of prisoners by female soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison are just some examples of how women's bodies become militarized as "weapons of war" in the (until recently) war in Iraq.<sup>605</sup> "Even as the presence of women in the military seems to signal their liberation from patriarchal conditions," Oliver writes, "the rhetoric surrounding their involvement betrays the lingering association between women, sexuality, and death."<sup>606</sup> Created by the U.S. military in 2004 as part of a broader U.S. imperial effort to control women's bodies as "weapons of war," the Lioness Program "attaches female Marines to combat units to search Iraqi women and children who may be trying to smuggle money or weapons through security checkpoints in Iraq" and the "lioness" also trains Iraqi women how to conduct security checkpoints on other women.<sup>607</sup> Minimally, these competing temporalities of the female subject within the cityspace of U.S.-occupied Iraq subtly gestures towards some contradictions between what constitutes "women's time" as a U.S. soldier on the one hand and what constitutes "women's time" as a "civilian" woman in Iraq and Afghanistan on the other.<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Oliver, *Women as Weapons of War*, 19.

<sup>606</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>607</sup> See

<http://www.2ndmlg.marines.mil/News/NewsArticleDisplay/tabid/3874/Article/58277/lioness-es-work-to-improve-comm>.

<sup>608</sup> It is important to note at this point that this chapter, regrettably, does not take into account the multiplicity of differences between "women's time" in Iraq and Afghanistan after 9/11. and the multiplicity of "women's time" in the military, especially when taking into account sexual harassment, rape, and violence against women in the U.S military and against

These gendered dynamics surrounding the militarization of “security time” and “women’s time” in Iraq and Afghanistan since the events of 9/11 is rendered visible in Proulx’s short story when Dakotah and Marnie watch a local woman during duty patrol attempt to cross the security checkpoint —“unable even to buy and carry home a few eggplants,” Dakota remarks, “without an American soldier groping at her.”<sup>609</sup> While Proulx does not illuminate the multiple political dimensions of the Lioness Groups, she does highlight the ways in which women soldiers—as military police, combat medics, and Lioness Teams—are injured and killed in direct combat despite U.S. official policy that bans women from direct combat operations. Indeed, during Dakotah and Marnie’s patrol duty one day, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) strikes their Humvee. While Dakotah survives with the loss of her arm, Marnie is killed.

Proulx provides a strikingly cinematic close-up shot of Dakotah’s face in this scene as she looks up at the combat-medic, who is surprisingly Chris Jinkla. Like Pat Moody, Chris Jinkla too scored high on the military aptitude tests and plans on following his father’s footsteps as a veterinarian after military service. Looking up at Chris, Dakota slowly and faintly utters “Mooooo...”<sup>610</sup> Significantly, in contrast to the U.S. injured soldier-body as an assemblage of capacities within military networks of power/knowledge, Proulx stages here a “scene[s] of dissensus”<sup>611</sup> by illuminating the multiple complexities surrounding the moment

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“civilian” women and children in Iraq and Afghanistan. Helen Benedict’s *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* is a helpful text here in order to explore the politics of “women’s time” in the U.S. military since the events of 9/11. As Benedict illustrates, “women’s time,” such as menstruation and childbirth, amongst other things, is significantly militarized within contemporary U.S. military routines and policies.

<sup>609</sup> Proulx, *Fine Just the Way It Is*, 213.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> See Jacques Rancière, (2004) “Jacques Rancière: The Politics of Aesthetics,” *Klein Theater* website, submitted by Bojuna Cvejic on Aug. 9, 3.

of encounter between Chris and Dakotah (or Private Hunk and the mannequin). In effect, Proulx puts into motion a “shuffling of images” between the images of Dakotah “tits-up in ditch” and the image of Chris who is unable to recognize Dakotah and “thought she was moaning.”<sup>612</sup> By doing so, Proulx juxtaposes the U.S. injured soldier-body as an assemblage of capacities in military modes of technoscientific power to Dakotah’s *incapacity* to both ascend the U.S. military hierarchy and remain an intelligible subject of recognition.

Accordingly, the sound-image of Dakotah tits-up in a ditch blurs the boundaries between the homefront and the warfront. Indeed, while Chris maintains a limited capacity to render intelligible Dakotah’s speech act, the reader at this point is afforded the capacity to remain intelligible to the dense landscape of signs surrounding the image of Dakotah upside down like a cow in a ditch. Doubtless, the reader shuffles back to the image of Dakotah roaming along the Lister farm, navigating the farm’s mud-spots. Nevertheless, this disorienting moment in the text is quickly interrupted by the movement of Dakotah’s injured soldier-body that is flown to Germany then to Walter Reed Medical Hospital, where she receives a prosthetic device for her limb.

Following these concrete mappings of time and place, the landscape of signs surrounding the title of Proulx’s short story “Tits-Up in a Ditch” also directs our attention to the ways in which more women soldiers are experiencing direct combat, and surviving severe war related injuries, in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan since the events of 9/11. As previously mentioned, despite U.S. military policy that bans women from enlisting in the infantry and deployment to ground combat operations, more women soldiers are experiencing combat despite official military rules and regulations. In her article “GI Jane

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<sup>612</sup> Proulx, *Fine Just the Way It Is*, 213.

Breaks the Combat Barrier,” for instance, journalist Lizette Alvarez reports that women soldiers are increasingly finding themselves in combat operations as military police, combat medics, as gunners on Humvee vehicles, and as specialists for deactivating explosive devices in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11.<sup>613</sup> Significantly, because the most dangerous place for one to be as a soldier in Iraq or Afghanistan is in a moving vehicle, insofar that Bradley Vehicles and other moving vehicles are primary targets for Improvised Explosive Devices (IED’S) and rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) by insurgents, many women soldiers are direct targets of the “shock and awe” of postmodern war assemblages.

Recalling the discussion on the U.S. military’s creation of Lioness Teams above, Meg McLagan and Daria Sommer’s documentary film *Lioness* (2010) demonstrates, for instance, how women soldiers in “lionesses” teams (attached to combat units) often experience direct combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the film, the female soldiers recount the ways in which they experienced direct firefight in Iraq, despite the invisibility of their wartime experiences in the dominant media. By illustrating the competing ways in which the women soldiers grapple with the traumatic effects of their combat experiences upon returning from the homefront, the film renders visible the multiple ways in which the Lioness Team soldiers question their roles and experiences in the military and gendered inequalities.

Paying attention to women soldiers’ experiences in the Global War on Terror both before and after the events of 9/11 also demands directing attention to the multiplicity of differences between “women” in the U.S. military.<sup>614</sup> Since 2006, women constitute between

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<sup>613</sup> Lizette Alvarez, “G.I. Jane Breaks the Combat Barrier,” *The New York Times*, August 16, 2009, sec. US, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/16/us/16women.html>.

<sup>614</sup> Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism*.

sixteen to seventeen percent of all U.S. recruits.<sup>615</sup> While women constitute a growing majority of the all-volunteer U.S. military force, it is women of color who constitute the majority of new women recruits, and in particular, African American women.<sup>616</sup> While more women soldiers are returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with missing limbs, like Dakotah Lister, images of women service members maimed by contemporary war become problematic images within militarized patriarchal assemblages. Images of women amputee soldiers disrupt dominant ideologies of femininity and of the new “woman soldier” (self-determined, modern, respectable) in the media and discursive frameworks of power. As Cynthia Enloe puts it:

It is when a woman soldier is killed or severely maimed in a combat zone—even if her own job is not strictly speaking a “combat” job—that the norms of patriarchal femininity seem to be most in jeopardy and thus a government’s balancing act particularly difficult to sustain.<sup>617</sup>

These gendered dimensions surrounding “women’s time” in the U.S. military and women soldiers’ severe combat-related injuries become a complex site of investigation in the story. During Dakotah’s “recovery time” at Walter Reed Medical Hospital, Bonita visits Dakotah

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<sup>615</sup> *National Priorities Project* (2008) “Army Recruitment in FY 2008: A Look at Age, Race, Income, and Education of New Soldiers,” available online at: [<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/print/book/export/html/7156>].

<sup>616</sup> *National Priorities Project* (2008) “Army Recruitment in FY 2008: A Look at Age, Race, Income, and Education of New Soldiers,” available online at: [<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/print/book/export/html/7156>]. Moreover, as Sandra Whitworth demonstrates in her essay “Militarized Masculinity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” in *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender, and Violence in International Relations*, edited by Jane L. Parpart and Marysia Zalewski, differences between men in the U.S. military direct us to how men of color and immigrant soldiers that are attaining expedited citizenship through military service significantly experience the traumatic effects of war differently than white male soldiers within institutionalized racisms and cultures of militarized masculinities.

<sup>617</sup> Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism*, 89.

and, with great difficulty, informs Dakotah that Baby Verl is dead. Verl had placed the infant in the backseat of the pickup truck with the dogs, because he was “proud of the boy and wanted him to be tough.”<sup>618</sup> Nonetheless, like the cows that constantly fall “tits-up in a ditch” on the Lister ranch when coming across the farm’s mud-spots, Verl hit a dip in the road that flung the baby out of the truck; baby Verl fell under the truck’s tires.

During her “recovery time” at Walter Reed Medical Hospital, Dakotah learns that Sash is also recovering from an injury at the hospital. Though she forgets that her and Sash’s divorce action had been stalled following his deployment to Iraq, she is reminded that she is still officially Mrs. Dakotah Hicks when paid a visit by a volunteer at the hospital who urges her to visit her severely injured and suffering husband. Upon her visit, Dakotah finds Sash who suffers from severe brain damage, with “both legs blown off at mid thigh, the left side of his face a mass of shiny scar tissue, the left ear and eye gone.”<sup>619</sup>

Upon returning home to the Lister ranch, Dakotah, her grandparents, and Sash’s parents come together one night for dinner around the table. Just as Bonita stumbled to find the words to tell Dakotah that Baby Verl was dead, Dakotah informs Sash’s parents with great difficulty that their son is “tits-up in a ditch.” While Sash’s parents “sat frozen like people in the aftermath of an explosion,” Mrs. Hick’s suddenly adjusts her gaze to Dakotah—“You’re his wife.”<sup>620</sup> In these last moments of the narrative, Dakotah realizes that she too is “tits-up in a ditch,” as she is expected to provide the gendered care labor for as Sash as Mrs. Dakotah Hicks. In many ways then, Dakotah’s lifeworld mirrors but refracts from the lifeworlds of both her mother and grandparents. While Verl and Bonita were left “stuck with the baby”

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<sup>618</sup> Proulx, *Fine Just the Way It Is*, 214.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

when their daughter skipped town for L.A., Dakotah loses her first son and is stuck instead with taking care of Sash. Unable to take care of his most basic needs due to his severe war related injuries, the attending care labor attached to overseeing Sash's recovery in the years that follow mirrors, in many ways, the demanding labor and time needed to take care of a child.

Verl and Bonita suffer from arthritis and injuries from the hard labor involved with taking care of the farm over the years (both of whom resist hospital visits), but Dakotah and Sash suffer from severe combat-related injuries from their brief deployment to Bagdad as infantry and combat support in the U.S. war machine. One is left to ponder then the ongoing moments of grief and everyday struggles that bind Dakotah and Sash over the years to come. In which ways will Dakotah experience an ongoing sense of "unjust imprisonment," both as a young woman bound by patriarchal heteronormative norms of the family proper, and by extension, the domestic economy of gendered care labor, especially as the official Global War on Terror in Afghanistan (and until recently Iraq) continues into its tenth year?

#### Conclusion: A Micropolitics of Grief

I end with a brief conclusion by evoking the "landscape of signs" surrounding the road to the Lister ranch named Sixteen Mile and the uncertain distance that marks the road for the Lister family at the beginning of Proulx's short story. Upon returning to the ranch after her "recovery time" at Walter Reed Medical Hospital, Dakotah comes to "see" for the first time the landscape of signs that surround her lifeworld on multiple homefronts and warfronts as her and Bonita turn onto the Sixteen Mile road. In this remarkable passage from the short story, Proulx puts into motion the shuffling of images between a micropolitics of "grieving

time” on the warfront and homefront, in effect, blurring the presumed boundaries between these lifeworlds in nation-state frameworks of time and space:

They passed the Match Ranch, unchanged, and turned onto Sixteen Mile...She realized that every ranch she passed had lost a boy, lost them early and late, boys smiling, sure in their risks, high trestles, tractor rollovers and “unloaded” guns. Her boy, too. This was the waiting darkness that surrounded ranch boys, the dangerous growing up that cancelled their favored status. The trip along this road was a roll call of grief. Wind began to lift fine dust and the sun set in a haze. <sup>621</sup>

Recalling Goldberg and Willse’s emphasis at the beginning of this essay on the rehabilitation of the injured soldier-body as one that circulates within “networks of technoscience and capital that continually calculate, engineer, and mutate the matter of life itself”<sup>622</sup> in contemporary war machines, this essay has attempted to illustrate the subtle ways in which Proulx’s short story disrupts these rehabilitation discourses and techniques of control surrounding the injured soldier-body in military networks of power. In juxtaposition to discourses of mastery, control, and scientific cures surrounding the U.S. injured soldier-body in the current wars, Proulx’s poetic sensibility of the politics of trauma and the Global War on Terror problematizes in subtle but nevertheless significant ways how these discursive structures of power and knowledge are forcefully felt in everyday life and colonial complicities.

While this chapter began with the snapshot or the “fragile instant” of truth embedded within the photo of Lance Cpl. Joshua Bernard’s death in the dominant media, Proulx’s short story circulates as a rhizomatic assemblage that loosely *roots* these instants within a

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<sup>621</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>622</sup> Clough and Halley, *The Affective Turn*, 266.

historical sensibility of time and place through storytelling practices. As a counter-narrative to dominant truth-practices of military time, historical time, and national times, Proulx's story reframes the Global War on Terror as a story about the multiplicity of female modes of embodiment and trauma since the events of 9/11. Her story ends without narrative closure, and instead affirms intensive movement, of falling upside down "tits-up in a ditch" within a rural Wyoming and, perhaps, female sensibility of cyclical time. Proulx ultimately redistributes the distribution of the sensible surrounding the "fallen soldier" and "wounded warrior image" in dominant military rhetoric and national discourses surrounding the U.S. injured soldier-body. "Tits-Up In a Ditch" offers a competing image of what it means to be a "fallen soldier" in the Global War on Terror since the events of 9/11. By shuffling through a competing set of images of the "fallen soldier"—from Dakotah, Marnie, and Sash—to the fallen image of her baby under the tires of Verl's car, Proulx encourages us to think dialogically about trauma and the micropolitics of grief and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars within more global formations of power and militarization of everyday life.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Conclusion: Veteran Resistance, Art, and Transnational Collaborations**

The idea of emancipation implies that there are never places that impose their law, that there are always several spaces in a place, several ways of occupying it, and each time the trick is knowing what sort of world one is constructing.<sup>623</sup>

—Jacques Rancière

As someone who has never served in the U.S. military, I am an outsider studying the traumatic effects of the wars that U.S. soldiers experience in the recent wars. While I have family members who served in the military, my father in the Vietnam War and my grandfather in the Second World War, we never spoke about the wars or their experiences. My father, however, is what you could call a military buff. He was deployed to Germany during the Vietnam War, which is all that I know about his experiences. He consumes military history books and war films. Recently he returned to Germany and posted dozens of photographs of his trips to war memorials and old photographs of himself in his uniform on his Facebook page. I gather from the photographs and images that his experience in Germany, years later, is a sentimental memory tainted by some kind of masculine, patriotic honor. I've always wondered how he felt about being deployed to Germany, while many of his friends were deployed to Vietnam. I often hear that many soldiers who served in Germany felt feminized to the extent that they never experienced combat and/or they felt grief and guilt for having been sent to Germany while their peers were sent to Vietnam.

For the most part, my father has been absent from my life, showing up sporadically and leaving for years at a time without any warning. While my father encouraged me to join the military, several years before the events of 9/11, I was convinced my college scholarship would enable me to pursue my degree without joining. Despite my resistance, he brought me

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<sup>623</sup> Jacques Rancière, "The Emacipated Spectator," *Art Forum*, March 1, 2007, 262.

to the recruiter's station at the University I had just started attending at the University of North Florida, and suggested that not only would the military pay for all my college expenses but that women could have great careers in the military. At the time, I thought I was "too feminine" to be in the military. I also was a bit frustrated with his suggestion, since he did not play any part in supporting my ability to obtain a scholarship. My mother told me that I had to attend college, but that I also had to pay for it and that I needed to find a way to do that. I obtained a scholarship through the Florida Bright Futures program that she helped me navigate, funded through the Florida State lottery (obtaining the scholarship required two years of child care or shop classes and in a gendered matrix of power relations, I chose the former). However, if I had not had a scholarship to attend college then I would have perhaps been more willing to do more with the recruiter's glossy packets than throw them in the waste bin once my father left. Or perhaps I would never have attended College.

So as an outsider researching war and trauma, I felt a bit nervous when my colleague from Hawai'i, Benjamin Schrader, an Iraq War veteran, and I were driving to Branchburg, New Jersey, to attend a Combat Paper Project for veterans, their families, and civilians. Would I feel out of place amongst a group of war veterans? Would the facilitator of the project that day think that perhaps I was part of the anthropological gaze, participating in a combat paper workshop as an outsider? Even though the workshop was open to "civilians" I was a bit worried that others may question my interest in the project. What happened if they asked what I did? Would it be awkward if I said I was writing a dissertation on wounded soldiers and that I was currently teaching a class on veteran activism? How could I teach a class on veteran activism if I didn't even speak with veteran activists? I had turned to the testimonies, poems, artworks, and stories of veterans from the current and past wars in my

dissertation project. However, I had not actually interviewed any veterans. I was not a part of their community. Given my self-absorption at the time, these are the thoughts that preoccupied my mind.

I felt somewhat ashamed at that moment for having closeted myself in my academic “house” for so long without actually talking to veterans. Perhaps ashamed isn’t the best word. I felt distanced from the veteran community and veteran activists. I had spent nine years in Hawai‘i and while there are many de-militarization activists, there is not a chapter of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) or any Combat Paper Projects. But surely I could have interviewed veterans and wounded soldiers in Hawai‘i and perhaps I would have met some who resisted the wars. I did meet several veterans against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan at various events that I participated in while in Hawai‘i, including a panel on Danfung Dennis’s film *Hell and Back Again* at a Community Cinema event. Nevertheless, I was still excited to be attending the Combat Paper Project, which Ben had introduced me to. He also encouraged me to read the poems and stories of veterans from The Warrior Writers Project.

The Combat Paper Project is an art project for veterans initiated by Iraq War veteran Drew Cameron. It grew out of the Warrior Writers Project (described in Chapter Two) where soldiers deal with the emotional experiences of war by writing about them through poetry, short stories, and art. The Warrior Writer Workshops, first headed by Lovella Calica, enable soldiers to write about their experiences and share them in a group, in travelling art exhibits, performances, and in a collection of three books. The Warrior Writers project describes itself as “a veteran-focused arts organization that fosters artistic exploration and expression through casual, welcoming workshops and retreats. By reflecting and creating in a comfortable and open space, we encourage and support healing and community building. Art

making becomes the creative tool through which we understand and transcend experiences of trauma and emotional disruptions that are not easily identified but constantly felt.”<sup>624</sup>

Through the Combat Paper project, veterans turn their military uniforms into paper through papermaking workshops. Drew Cameron and artist Drew Mattot co-founded a paper-making studio in Burlington, Vermont, called the People’s Republic of Paper (PRP).

A favorite art work of mine from The Combat Paper project gallery, titled “Broken Toy Soldiers,” by veteran Eli Wright, includes a poem with faint traces of stitch work, signifying the multiple layers of deconstructing uniforms and narratives and turning those stories and experiences into something new, and as the poem suggests, “beautiful” [See Figure 36]. The Combat Paper Project is housed at the PRP and offers artist residences for veterans.<sup>625</sup> At the Combat Paper Project that I went to, for instance, there was a new resident who was in charge of deconstructing the uniforms into paper with the use of the mill. The Combat Paper Project collaborates with veterans, volunteers, colleges and universities, cultural foundations, art spaces, military hospitals and installations to create a new and collective language through writing, art, and papermaking. As their website puts it:

Coming home from war is a difficult thing. There is often much to account for as a survivor. A new language must be developed in order to express the magnitude and variety of the collective effect. Hand papermaking is the language of Combat Paper. By working in communities directly affected by warfare and using the uniforms and

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<sup>624</sup> See the Warrior Writers website at: <http://www.warriorwriters.org/about.html#whatWeDo>

<sup>625</sup> See Dahr Jamail, “Art and Resistance,” TruthOut, <http://www.truth-out.org/archive/item/85961:art-as-resistance>.

artifacts from their experiences, a transformation occurs and our collective language is born.<sup>626</sup>

Ben and I have come to the Combat Papermaking session with Class A uniforms. They are dark green and include badges of honor. We visited an Army Depot in Canandigua in upstate New York to buy the uniforms for the project. The depot turned out to be a storage house for new and old military uniforms, some of which were displayed on mannequins, perhaps for customers who visited the depot to buy khaki uniforms and bags that appeared stylish and trendy. One mannequin featured a woman's military police uniform; they had dressed it up by giving her a thick leather belt and long black leather gloves, suggesting that perhaps the military depot was also for costumes (or sexy outfits for play?). I was surprised that the Army depot held so many old uniforms, stuffed in the back rooms of the musky and cluttered storage house.

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<sup>626</sup> See the Combat Paper Project website at:<http://www.combatpaper.org/about.html>.

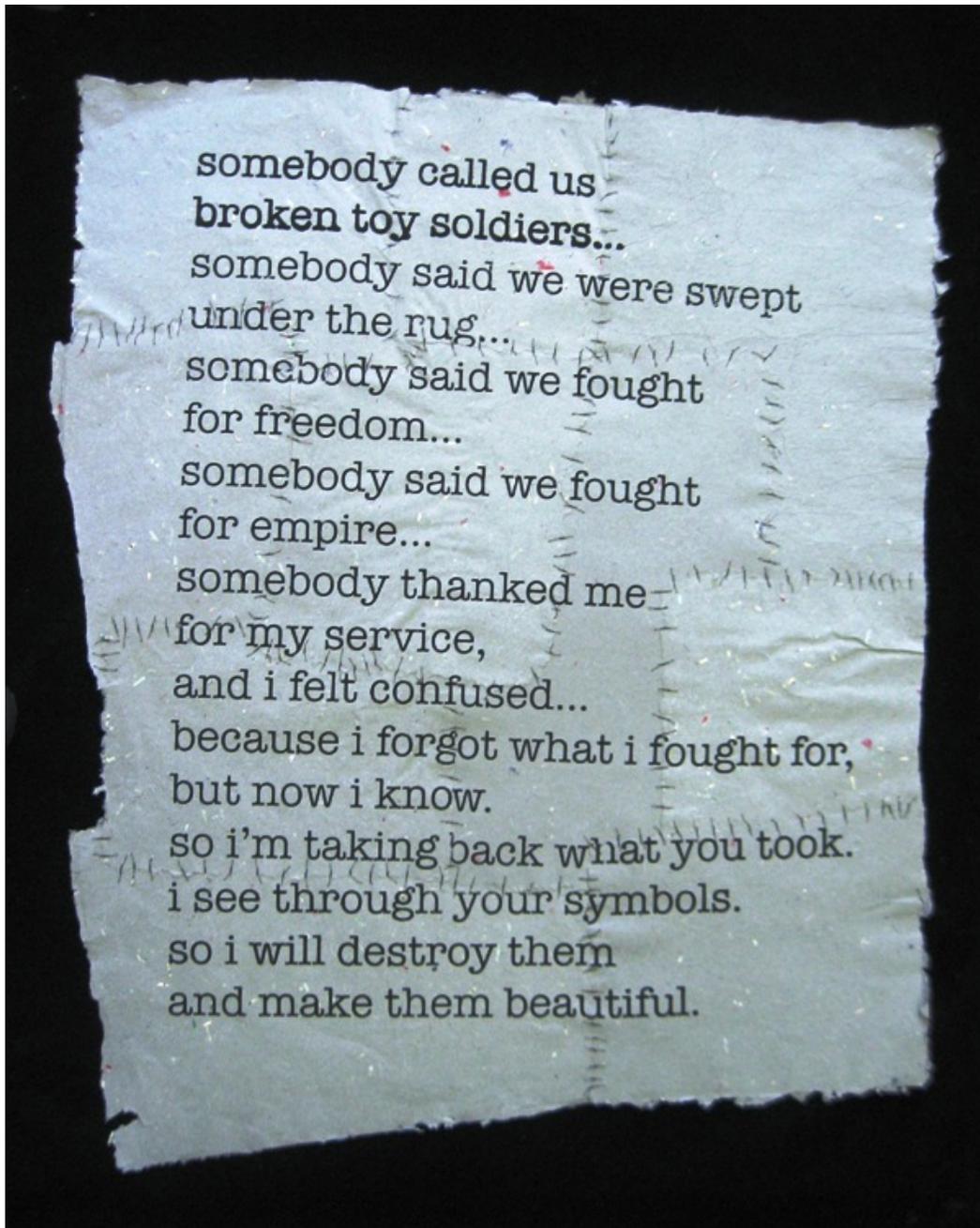


Figure 36: *Broken Toy Soldiers* by Eli Wright, 2009, Serigraph on sutured Combat Paper 33

x 28. Source: Combat Paper Project gallery website:

<http://www.combatpaper.org/images/gallery/brokentoyssoldiers.html>.

Originally, we chose two uniforms that had probably been worn by soldiers from the current

wars. When the owner however learned that we would be cutting the uniforms to pieces for the Combat Paper Project, he suggested we purchase the Class A uniforms instead. He had been storing a large selection of these old Vietnam War uniforms in a large room for years, waiting to see what he would do with them. Nobody wanted these old dark green uniforms, especially since they were not considered as stylish as the khaki or camouflage ones. The khaki uniforms, he said, he sold to other militaries. Referring to the Class A uniforms, he said, “None of the paramilitaries in Latin America want them either since they want their own uniforms.” I was taken aback at the suggestion that he would be willing or asked to sell these old, Class A uniforms to paramilitaries in other countries. I was even more surprised when he said he could sell the regular khaki uniforms to militaries in Latin America. I am not quite sure if he was suggesting that he could sell the uniforms, or if he did, since it’s illegal, to my knowledge, to sell U.S. uniforms to other countries. It had never occurred to me that military uniforms could come to have so many different layers of value, especially when they were sitting in a stuffy military depot in upstate New York.

The owner, perhaps a Vietnam War veteran, was intrigued by the idea of turning the uniforms into paper, especially since he saw the Combat Paper project as a way to create a new mode of value for these old Class A’s. He was even more interested in the possible profit he could make off of previously devalued uniforms. He had some offers, he said, by others who said they would take the storage house of uniforms and turn them into rags. That didn’t appeal to him. Take former soldiers’ uniforms and turn them into cleaning rags and carpets? He was interested in how the Combat Paper project though would use the uniforms in a more political way that served veterans and their families. He asked Ben to ask the members of the Combat Paper Project if they would be interested in purchasing the uniforms

or accept them as a donation.

As he spoke to Ben and I about the uniforms, I glanced around the front counter he stood behind. The depot reminded me of a museum with all of the glass casings that held shiny bullet cases, old military badges, knives, and flags. On the panel walls behind him, eight to ten gas masks hung from the ceiling. Under the glass countertop were pictures of the charity organizations he donated money to, including a charity organization for wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Medical hospital. His cell phone was covered by a design of the American flag. It rang once, playing the patriotic song usually played on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July by marching bands—“Red, White, and Blue.” “I’m offering to donate these uniforms to you and the project because you’re a war veteran,” he told my friend Ben. He continued with a smirk, “If you were a bunch of hippies from Ithaca I’d tell you to get lost.”

With the Class A uniforms laying in the back seat, Ben and I were entering the suburbs in New Jersey to attend the Combat Papermaking Project. We walked into the small white building where the paper-making project was taking place that Sunday afternoon. We met the organizer, a young veteran of the recent Iraq War, who was in charge of the workshop that day, and who worked at the paper mill on a regular basis. He welcomed us and we began to meet the others at the workshop, whom I slowly came to know better over the course of the day. I first met a mother and her son; the son was in a wheelchair but to my surprise he was not a war veteran. I took a spot at the large cutting table next to another woman who was an artist; she worked with textiles and broke them down to make new forms of art, which I thought was really interesting since the Combat Paper Project utilized a similar method of deconstruction and reconstruction of materials. She worked steadfastly cutting apart the uniform she had with her scissors, and she helped over the next hour or so cut apart the

uniforms I had brought, since the fabric of the Class A uniform was thick and it was difficult to cut the seams apart by myself. Another woman stood at the other side of the table with her father's uniform from the Korean War. Later I would learn that it was the first time she had taken the uniform out of a storage box or talked about her father to anyone since he died years ago.

We all sat and stood around the large art table and began chatting and cutting away, as the organizer explained to us that the day would be dedicated to cutting apart the uniforms into tiny pieces. This was part of a three step process—today would be spent cutting, the next weekend we would mash the uniforms into a pulp and put them through the paper-making press, and the third weekend we would have the final paper form to write or paint on. I found the process of breaking down the uniform to be somewhat of a ritual; something I never usually do on a Sunday afternoon. As I cut away and looked around the room, I began to feel energized and alive for the first time in a while. As someone who spends so much time alone in a new academic institution and who is constantly in her office or behind a computer, it felt rejuvenating to be working on an art project such as this one with others in a creative and welcoming space. I wish I spent more time working with textiles, cutting apart uniforms and telling stories with people in a circle like this one.

The process of cutting the uniforms, learning of the different layers of the material, “talking story” with strangers about everything from the cities they are from to the reasons why they were there, was a creative and inspiring process. It provided a very safe and open space to bring people together. I could slowly begin to see how the process of cutting the uniforms, creating a safe space, and welcoming everyone with respect and kindness, was central to how the combat paper project worked as a space of healing and transformation.

The repetition of the movements: cutting; grabbing a new scissor; placing the cut-up pieces in the bin; moving your chair; removing a badge; keep cutting—they all kept the room busy as we chatted away about militarism, education, life stories and told jokes. The process of deconstructing the uniforms was personal and collective, and everyone in the room was there for a particular reason, with a particular story.

I met a young Japanese woman, who lived in New Jersey, who brought an embroidered tapestry project with her. She had a warm smile, and she kept the tapestry on the table so that everyone could see it and come by and sign it. It was in the process of completion; woven into the tapestry in bright colorful threads were images of stick figured children, surrounded by hearts, stars, and rainbows. A few of the images included a young girl laying in a bed and girls holding hands. She asked me to sign the tapestry and said it was created for girls in Iraq who are dying of cancer. She had brought it here for us to sign and then her friend in Japan would embroider our messages and images. The tapestry would eventually be auctioned in order to raise funds for the girls' cancer treatment. I asked her more about her friend's project in Japan, and she gave me a card of her friend's organization. I later learned more about it on the Internet. JIM-NET, the Japan Iraq Medical Network, was founded in 2004 with the aim of taking care of Iraqi children with cancer. JIM-NET's website cites the history of Depleted Uranium (DU) used in Iraq since the 1990's and the current use of DU in Iraq. "In 2004," the website states, "An Iraqi doctor came to Japan and complained of their difficult situation. In Japan, more than 80 percent of children who got cancer can recover." As a result, JIM-NET was founded and is comprised of eight groups, including NGOs, private companies, and private medical clinics.

JIM-NET supports five hospitals in four cities in Iraq, including Baghdad, Basra, Mousl,

and Erbil [See Figure 37]. They provide everything from medical support, such as anti-cancer drugs and medical equipment for blood transfusion to financial support for families that cannot afford medical fees. They train Iraqi doctors and nurses in Japan and neighboring countries and provide hospital teaching to ease the transition for children to go back to school. They help cover medical expenses for children who need more advanced treatment such as Bone Marrow Transplantation (BMT) and Irradiation Therapy. They cooperate with UNHCR and provide Emergency Medical Relief to provide medicines for refugee camps on borders between Iraq and some neighboring countries. They also provide advocacy activity “to governments and the UN to solve [the] refugee problem, to ban DU and demand Iraq War Inquiry.”<sup>627</sup> In addition, the organization provides medical relief to peoples affected by the recent Fukushima disaster.

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<sup>627</sup> This is a summation of JIM-Net services taken from their website: <http://www.jim-net.net/en/>.

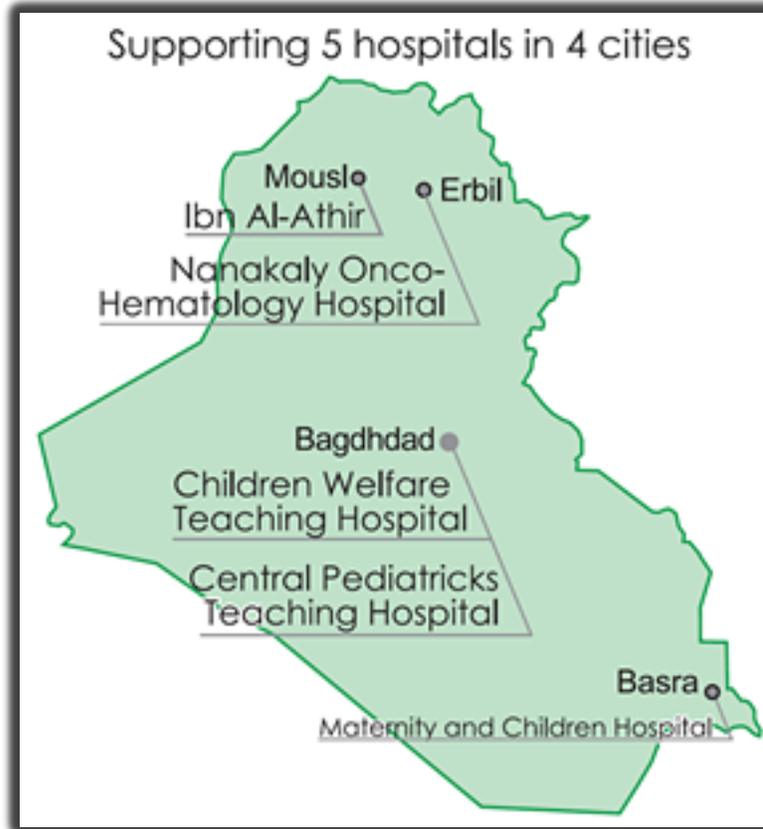


Figure 37: Hospitals that JIM-Net Supports in Iraq. Source: JIM-Net website: <http://www.jim-net.net/en/>.

I thought it was odd that I had just spent nine years in Hawai‘i where there are many scholars who study militarism in Japan, and yet here I was in New Jersey learning of this project. I took one of the pencils lying on the table and tried to figure out what I would say. The tapestry was covered with short messages and simple images, “Sending love, Alex xoxo” and “Peace be with you.” I can’t remember what I wrote, something like, “Sending love and healing wishes,” and I carefully created a design around the message with stars and hearts. I thought for a moment, this is silly. What will this do? Then I realized that that was my callous and disheartened voice.

I looked at the tapestry, which had already begun to be embroidered. The intricacy of the embroidery reminded me of the time and detail that went into making such a tapestry. I thought of a recent visit by a visual artist and writer, Andrea Dezsö, to the College where I am currently a predoctoral fellow. Dezsö grew up in Transylvania when it was a Communist region of Romania. She gave a fascinating and humorous talk on one of her recent art projects, which involved embroidering sayings that her mother told her while she was growing up. Some of the sayings included things like, “My Mother claimed my sister was a rubber accident” and “My Mother claimed that you should not hold back your bowel movement or else the feces will come out through your mouth.” As Andrea went through each of the embroideries, we the audience laughed along with her and I remember thinking how amazing it was that she had taken something so personal and turned it into a work of art and storytelling practice.

Embroideries are a common art form in Transylvania, and many women’s kitchens have an embroidered piece with a more patriarchal overtone, with sayings that signal that the woman’s place is in the home and kitchen. What struck me most though was how Andrea described the politics of value and labor in her artwork. Rather than creating art works through digital technologies that could be easily reproduced, she found that embroidery was a labor-intensive and time consuming art form that could not be easily reproduced within capitalist cultures where artists are often replaced by digital technologies of reproduction. Our time on this earth is very limited, she said, and how we spend our time is political. When she was asked to create an image for the cover of a popular Art journal, she embroidered a heart and she proudly stated that no one could reproduce it [See Figure 38].

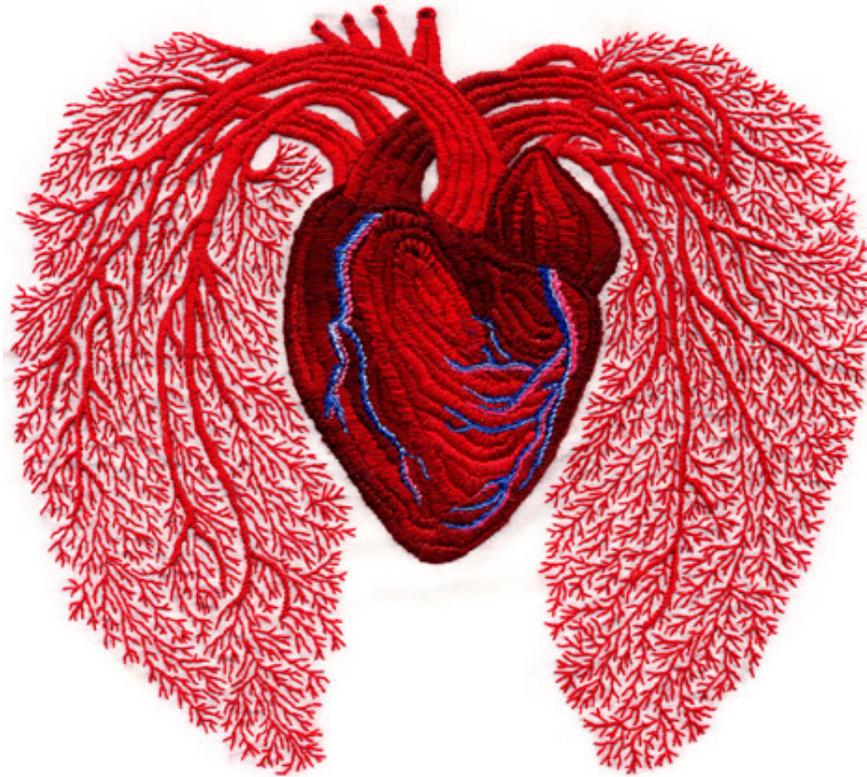


Figure 38: Andrea Dezsö: Heart Embroidery, “One-of-a-kind hand-made embroidery,” by the artist. Cotton thread on white cotton canvas, 2004. Source: [http://andreadezso.com/DRAWING\\_Embroidered6.html](http://andreadezso.com/DRAWING_Embroidered6.html).

As I looked at the color of the threads then and the careful needlework that went into the stitching of each heart and letter, I thought of the politics of value and time that this one woman in Japan had put into the tapestry. After the workshop was over, I wondered who she was and how she had become involved in the non-profit JIM-NET. I thought about the horrific and disabling effects of the bombing of Hiroshima and the more recent Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan. Journalists report that the nuclear fallout of radioactive materials from the Fukushima plant has contaminated soil around the plant despite the return of

farmers to the land. Japanese farmers won't eat the food themselves and they feel guilty for selling it. The dumping of contamination into the ocean has threatened the seafood industry, and scientists and wildlife specialists state that it will no longer be safe to eat fish from the Pacific ocean; and some suggest there is increased levels of radiation in U.S. snow and beach sand.<sup>628</sup>

The transnationality of radioactive contamination of course extends beyond Hiroshima and Fukushima to Nagasaki (1945), Chernobyl (Belarus, Ukraine, 1996), the Windscale Fire (Great Britain, 1957), Sellafield (2005, North–West England), Three Mile Island (Pennsylvania, U.S., 1979), Iraq (Basra and Fallujah, the First Gulf War, 1991), and nuclear bombing, and relocation of indigenous peoples from their lands, in the Pacific (Marshall Islands, 1945–1957), amongst others. Within this transnational constellation of peoples and ecosystems affected by radioactive contamination, JIM-NET focuses on providing medical relief to children affected by the fallout at Fukushima and children's exposure to radioactive contamination in Iraq. Such collaboration is significant given a recent study in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* that found rates of infant mortality, cancer, and leukemia in the Iraqi city of Fallujah exceed the rates reported by survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.<sup>629</sup>

U.S. Marines bombarded Fallujah during April 2004 after four employees from the private security company Blackwater, which Jeremy Scahill calls former President George Bush's "Shadow Army," were killed and their bodies burned. The killing of the security

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<sup>628</sup> "Fukushima Update: The Nuclear Disaster That Won't Go Away," *Truthout*, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://truth-out.org/news/item/21169-fukushima-update-the-nuclear-disaster-that-wont-go-away>. You can watch the testimony of Japanese farmers in the article.

<sup>629</sup> "Cancer, Infant Mortality and Birth Sex-Ratio in Fallujah, Iraq 2005-2009," by Chris Busby, Malak Hamdan, and Entesar Ariabi, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2010, 7.

guards from America's mercenary army resulted in a U.S.-led massacre on the people of Fallujah. I use the term "resulted" but it is more appropriate to situate the American bombardment of the city to broader biopolitical and U.S. imperial apparatuses of power. The short documentary film, "Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre," directed and produced by Italian journalists Sigfrido Ranucci and Maurizio Torrealta, provides evidence of the U.S. military's use of white phosphorus in the city of Fallujah in 2004. The film interviews two Iraq war veterans, Jeff Englehardt and Garret Repenhagen, who participated in the U.S.-led invasion of Fallujah, dubbed Operation Phantom Fury. According to Englehardt, American troops were told, "that every single person in that area that was walking, talking and breathing was an enemy combatant...as such everyone was a target."<sup>630</sup> Attempting to screen the violence of the massacre of Fallujah as the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars to a more global audience proved to be an almost impossible task for journalists. Freelance journalists in Fallujah were arrested by the Iraqi police force; one journalist was killed; and many others had their cameras confiscated by police forces. The film illustrates how the screening of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan come to be viewed within the American public, and in many other countries, as "clean wars" without civilian deaths or injuries.

The Italian journalist Giuliana Segrena was kidnapped when she tried interviewing refugees who all fled the city after the U.S.-led attack on the city. She spoke with men, women, and children who all reported that the U.S. military had used incendiary bombs and white phosphorus against civilians during the ongoing attacks of the city since 2003. Her interview with the film's directors sheds light on how the use of white phosphorus affected the everyday lives of women and children and is worth telling here:

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<sup>630</sup> You can view the film here:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9fvR9I7ITE>.

Not only in Fallujah, I had heard stories from the inhabitants about the use of certain weapons, like napalm, in Baghdad during the battle at the airport in April 2003. And then I had collected just before going to interview the city refugees, testimonies from other inhabitants in Fallujah about the use of guns and white phosphorous. In particular, some women had tried to enter their homes and they had found a certain dust spread all over the house. The Americans themselves had told them to clean their houses with detergents because that dust was very dangerous. In fact, they had some effects on their bodies—bleedings and very strange things.

She continues:

I would have liked to interview those persons but unfortunately my kidnappers, who were said to be part of Fallujah's resistance, have forbidden me to tell what I know about Fallujah by kidnapping me. This war cannot have witnesses. It cannot have witnesses because it's based on lies. The Americans have permitted only embedded journalists go to Fallujah. Despite that, for example, the image of the Marine that shoots the wounded and unarmed warrior inside the Fallujah mosque has gone out, and exactly because this image has gone out, we do not know how, and because it has circulated all over the world, the Embassy journalist who has recorded it has been immediately expelled from the embedded body.<sup>631</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> Transcribed from video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9fvR9l7ITE>.



Figure 39: Video footage of U.S. soldiers killing a wounded and unarmed man in a mosque in Fallujah, from the short documentary film, “Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre,” directed and produced by Italian journalists Sigfrido Ranucci and Maurizio Torrealta.

U.S. spokespersons told the American public that there had been no serious injuries of civilians during the attack. Yet, the images that began to leak in the media, such as the killing of the wounded man that Segrena describes began to disrupt the official narrative and media accounts of the war’s injurious effects on civilian bodies [See Figure 39]. The documentary film provides multiple images of civilian injuries following the U.S.-led massacre of Fallujah. While the film does not explain how the filmmakers obtained these images, perhaps they too “leaked” from the dominant media scripts of a so-called “clean war” in Iraq and Afghanistan—as a collection of “unofficial” and “missing images” of American war

crimes.<sup>632</sup> One scene from the film shows images of children who were physically injured in the attack, such as the video footage of an Iraqi woman who stands next to her young son whose leg was blown off [See Figure 40].



Figure 40: Video footage of an Iraqi child wounded during the U.S.-led invasion of Fallujah, from the short documentary film, “Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre,” directed and produced by Italian journalists Sigfrido Ranucci and Maurizio Torrealta.

The film provides several interviews with other Iraqi fathers and mothers whose children’s bodies were maimed, burned, and seriously injured during the bombing of the city. Doctor Hamad Hamid was given U.S. authorization to enter Fallujah and identify and bury the dead. Many of the bodies displayed “strange” injuries such as bodies burned to the bone and skin hanging from the flesh. Mohamad Tareq al Deraji, the Director of the Center for the Study of Human Rights, an organization founded in Fallujah in 2004, was invited to speak to members

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<sup>632</sup> I refer to Jacques Rancière’s use of these terms as described in previous chapters.

of the European Union on the bodies of the dead. He brought with him images of civilians whose bodies were melted by heat; bodies tortured; animals that had died without any apparent physical injuries; and of civilian testimonies that they had witnessed Americans attack some places with a “shower of fire.” Many of the bodies were charred with their clothes intact.

Jeff Englehardt reports that the U.S. military did indeed use White Phosphorous in Fallujah; their combat team was told they would be dropping “Whiskey Pete,” the military slang for White Phosphorous, on the city. The U.S. at first denied the use of White Phosphorous in Fallujah but later admitted to the use of the chemical weapons against civilians during the 2004 U.S.-led invasion of the city.<sup>633</sup> The film shows video footage of the use of White Phosphorous showering over the city in 2004 [See Figure 41). Englehardt describes how his troops were told, directly from the Pentagon, that their units would wait to bomb Fallujah until after the 2004 election between former President George Bush and Senator John Kerry. President Bush wanted to attack Fallujah once the Blackwater security guards were killed, but waited until the American election was over; he had set-up the operation days before the American election.

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<sup>633</sup> “US Army Admits Use of White Phosphorus as Weapon in Iraq,” *Global Research*, accessed February 1, 2014, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-army-admits-use-of-white-phosphorus-as-weapon-in-iraq/1227>.



Figure 41: Video footage of the “shower of fire” or of white phosphorous used by U.S. forces during the U.S.-led invasion of Fallujah, from the short documentary film, “Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre,” directed and produced by Italian journalists Sigfrido Ranucci and Maurizio Torrealta.

These “missing images” of injured and dead civilian bodies in Iraq in the media, and the film’s restoration of these images to a broader online and viewing public, recalls an international art project initiated by the American Friends Service Committee, titled *Windows and Mirrors: Reflections on the War in Afghanistan*. The project is a travelling mural exhibit that renders visible the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars by making “a powerful statement on a nearly invisible reality.”<sup>634</sup> It includes forty-five large-scale paintings by international artists and drawings from a group of high school students in Kabul, Afghanistan. Professor Zahir Wahab of Lewis & Clark College, who spent a year teaching in Kabul, asked the

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<sup>634</sup> A description of the project from the website at: <http://windowsandmirrors.org/>.

students to draw the reality of their everyday lives for the travelling exhibit and collected the drawings in June 2010. One painting, by Alfonso Munoz of N.Y., New York, is a blood-spattered outline of a body with missing limbs. The image is particularly striking insofar that it evokes the image of the wounded or fatally wounded body of war that is rendered invisible in the dominant media [See Figure 42].



Figure 42: Untitled art work, by Alfonso Munoz of N.Y., New York: a blood-spattered outline of a body with missing limbs is part of the Windows and Mirrors project.

The wounded body of war in this image is one that defies all national affiliations and markers of gender, ethnicity, occupation, and more. As a universal image of the wounded body of war, it could be a U.S. soldier, a civilian, a journalist, a combatant, or soldiers from any other Armed forces. Describing his untitled painting, Munoz writes: “I wanted to convey the

atrocities like an investigator who outlines the bodies on the scene of a crime, leaving behind a silhouette on the ground where the horrific events have taken place.”<sup>635</sup> Another image by John Pitman Weber of Chicago, Illinois offers a compelling juxtaposition to the children’s wounded bodies in the documentary film described earlier. In this painting, titled “Learning to Walk Again,” viewers are forced to consider the ways in which the U.S.–led invasion of Afghanistan has led to the maiming of many children’s bodies, especially after years of living amongst landmines left over by U.S. and Russian forces since the 1980s [See Figure 43]. Weber provides a description of the painting that is worth telling here, since he provides an important juxtaposition between the “hierarchies of grief” between the maiming of U.S. soldier and Afghan children’s bodies. In his words:

The US Occupation of Afghanistan began as an irrational and vengeful “punitive expedition,” without clear goals, without strategy, tactics, logistics or intelligence, -a “bull-in-a-china shop” with high tech weaponry but with a 19th century colonial mentality. Afghan civilians have paid a terrible price for this aimless exercise in looking “strong” and “projecting power.” While the US elite experiments with unconstitutional executive powers beyond our borders and beyond all restraint in tortures, arbitrary detentions, and extra-judicial executions, US soldiers’ pay with lost limbs and massive head traumas. For every injured US soldier, dozens, if not hundreds of Afghan civilians lose limbs, mere collateral damage, invisible to our “embedded” press. The tens of thousands who must learn to live with their mutilations seem to me more dramatic than the mourning of the tens of thousands dead. The making of artificial limbs is both an urgent necessity and a growth industry.

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<sup>635</sup> Quote from the artist: <http://windowsandmirrors.org/mural/untitled>.

My painting is a small protest of this terrible waste of resources and human life. It renews my commitments in art begun during the Vietnam War.<sup>636</sup>



Figure 43: “Learning to Walk Again,” a painting by John Pitman Weber of Chicago, Illinois that is part of the Windows and Mirrors project.

This image provides a striking juxtaposition to the drawings by the Afghan high school students. Several of the drawings include images of children who are missing limbs. In one drawing, a student drew a figure of a boy in front of a tree with a missing limb [See Figure

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<sup>636</sup> Direct quote from the artist. Source: <http://windowsandmirrors.org/mural/learning-walk-again>.

44]. Written underneath the boy, in Arabic, is “A boy himself is information of war.”<sup>637</sup>

Another drawing includes an outline of the country with a boy with a missing limb and crutches. The drawing signifies that children’s wounded bodies, especially those with missing legs and without prosthetic devices, are emblematic of the country at large [See Figure 45]. Written above the child, in Arabic, the student wrote: “Consequences of the War in Afghanistan.”



Figure 44: A drawing from an Afghan high school student is part of the Windows and Mirrors project. Translation: “A Boy himself is Information of War.”

Source: Direct translation from website: <http://windowsandmirrors.org/drawing/untitled-3>.

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<sup>637</sup> Direct translation from website: <http://windowsandmirrors.org/drawing/untitled-3>.

These transnational collaborations between Afghan students, an American Professor, the American Friends Service Committee, and international artists all use art and storytelling practices to tell a counter-narrative about the injurious effects of the U.S.-led wars on civilian and soldier bodies. In addition to showing the exhibit in Art galleries in major cities across the U.S., some members of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) take the prints and bring them into the streets as part of an “Art Mob” exhibition. In Indianapolis, AFSC members handed out information about the project to pedestrians passing by in the streets while other members held the murals so everyone could see them during their daily walk. At other exhibits, the artists themselves tell stories about why they painted each piece, and high school youth attending the exhibits share their emotional reactions to the murals. The travelling mural exhibit thus becomes a way to render visible the “human costs of the wars” while also opening up a creative space for everyone to share their stories and feelings about the Afghanistan war, the longest U.S.-led war that continues to remain a mostly invisible and “clean” war in the dominant media.

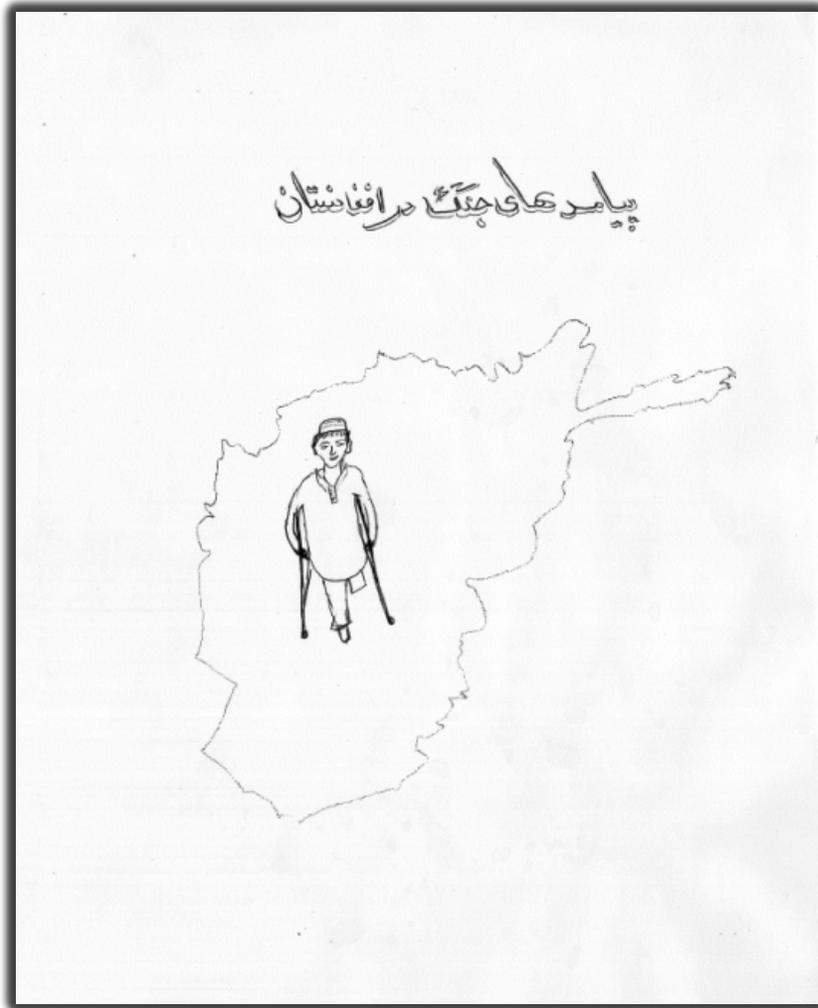


Figure 45: A drawing from an Afghan high school student is part of the Windows and Mirrors project. Translation: “The Consequences of the War in Afghanistan.”

Source: Direct translation from website: <http://windowsandmirrors.org/drawing/untitled-3>.

The paintings and drawings, the “Battle of Fallujah” video, and the tapestry created by a member of JIM-NET, all tell a competing visual narrative about the wounded body of war through transnational collaborations between civilians, veterans, medical doctors, and artists. The Combat Paper Project also creates a counter-public space for politicizing the ongoing effects of U.S. militarism on soldier and civilian bodies. I attended the workshop with the impression that we would mostly discuss U.S. soldiers’ stories and the stories that came from

their uniforms. I was surprised to learn that many of our discussions focused as well on the effects of the wars on civilians, irrespective of the soldier's uniform. Inspired by the artwork of the veterans and artists like Martha Rosler, I created a mash-up of images that juxtapose the "horror of everything to see" and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars. In this photomontage, I contrast the visibility of white male soldiers donning high-tech prosthetic technologies in the dominant media to the policing of images of the fatally wounded soldier-body [See Figure 46].



Figure 46: *The Horror of Nothing to See*, by the author.

Conclusion: Hierarchies of Grief

When I began this dissertation project, I expected to focus on the biopolitical management of

U.S. soldiers' bodies in the wars. While each chapter of this project does indeed focus mostly on the U.S. soldiers' bodies and the institutional management of their bodies within the military-medical complex, I found myself turning to the stories of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan and how their everyday life was affected by the U.S.-led invasions of their homes. In a future project, I would like to focus specifically on their stories, especially the stories of women in Iraq and Afghanistan, who are struggling to find basic healthcare services for themselves and their families. Omar Dewachi's research with Iraqi refugees who have fled to neighboring countries, especially Lebanon and Jordan, in search of medical care for cancer treatment and serious war-related injuries, became an inspiration to me as I began researching the biopolitics of war injuries amongst men, women, and children in the region. Dewachi's concept of the "toxicity of everyday life" in Iraq, which I describe in Chapter Five, has forced me to consider the different ways that wounded bodies of war become valued as lives worthy of grieving within the military-medical complex and within American imaginaries of the Global War on Terror at large.

While there is a growing awareness of the precariousness of everyday life for the U.S. soldier's body within the U.S., and within academic scholarship and journalistic accounts of veterans struggles once they return to the homefront, the wounded bodies of "civilians" in Iraq and Afghanistan are often cast aside as the backdrop to the American veterans' stories of trauma as the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars. As the children's artwork from Afghanistan from Windows and Mirrors project demonstrates, children's bodies in Afghanistan have been grotesquely disfigured by U.S. military weapons and from histories of foreign occupations and military violence. The shift toward drone warfare also continues to kill innocent civilians despite official U.S. rhetoric of waging a war of "precise" targeting in

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen.<sup>638</sup> In addition to America's drone wars, the slow and perhaps even more invisible "costs of war" for the Iraqi and Afghan people is to be found in the rising cancer rates in the region. Depleted Uranium is a radioactive heavy metal produced as a waste product of the nuclear power industry.<sup>639</sup> It was used in armor-piercing munitions fired by US and coalition forces during the two Gulf Wars.<sup>640</sup> It is also used as a protective layer on U.S. military vehicles and armor, which led to the "Gulf War Syndrome" amongst many U.S. veterans from the Gulf Wars. Many soldiers returned from the wars and were impotent as well, and hence their masculinity was also threatened and feminized as young men unable to start families once they returned home.<sup>641</sup>

In Bahman Ghobadi's film *Turtles Can Fly*, the children play and work around military waste and old tanks and weapons. Their everyday survival is intimately structured not only by the international political economy of military weapons, such as the digging up and selling of landmines or the building of shelters with old bombshells. The military waste that surrounds them is also likely contaminated with DU. Many viewers are probably unaware that the children are exposed to these hazardous wastes on a daily basis. As the *horror of nothing to see*, the effects of DU occur gradually over time and these images are significantly policed in the dominant media. In one scene from *Turtles Can Fly*, Risa walks around a maze of walled bombshells that the children have used to create shelter (and perhaps to store the shells for future use on the international market). In this image, Risa calls out "Mommy!"

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<sup>638</sup> See Medea Benjamin, *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control* (London: Verso, 2013).

<sup>639</sup> "Depleted Uranium Contamination Is Still Spreading in Iraq," *Truthout*, accessed February 4, 2014, <http://truth-out.org/news/item/15168-depleted-uranium-contamination-is-still-spreading-in-iraq>.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>641</sup> Susie Kilshaw, *Impotent Warriors Gulf War Syndrome, Vulnerability and Masculinity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

and “Daddy!” while Agrin, who seems to want to escape her reality despite her inability to do so, sits next to the walls of shells and listens to the children unloading more shells from a recent shipment from surrounding village elders [See Figure 47].



Figure 47: Risa looks for who he thinks is his Mom and Dad amongst old artillery shells in *Turtles Can Fly*.

Recent images of children in Iraq and Afghanistan whose bodies are disfigured due to exposure to DU and other hazardous military waste have begun to circulate widely on the Internet. The images recall many other images of children whose mothers were exposed to radioactive material, such as the stories and images of women’s children from the Marshallese Islands. As Marshallese activist and nuclear survivor Darlene Keju testified, women in the Marshall Islands gave birth to what many women called “jellyfish babies,” or babies that were born with severe deformities due to the U.S. military’s bombing of the

Marshall Islands during the so-called Cold War.<sup>642</sup> Many of the Marshallese men and women, whom the U.S. refused to provide adequate medical care for many years, had to travel to the U.S. and Hawai‘i in order to gain access to adequate medical care, particularly treatment for thyroid cancer.

Iraqi civilians too are saving up all of their money and using whatever savings they have just to cross the border and receive cancer treatment.<sup>643</sup> While the war is officially “over” in Iraq, it continues for the women, men, and children whose lives have continued to deteriorate through the dismantling of their educational system, the contamination of their water supply, the increase of sectarian violence, and the bombing of the country’s urban and rural infrastructure. On average, people are able to access around six hours of electricity a day in Iraq due to the destruction of the country’s electrical grids during the U.S.-led invasion.<sup>644</sup>

This dissertation has attempted to multiply the “visible” and “invisible” injurious effects of the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—and the *horror of nothing to see* in the wars—by examining a growing archive of cultural texts that disrupt dominant media and narrative structures of the wars within a militarized order of things. I am especially concerned with Judith Butler’s concepts of precarious life and of what constitutes a grievable life in today’s increasingly militarized order of things. As Butler puts it, by recognizing and affirming our interdependencies as bodies always vulnerable to violence, and as individuals always undergoing grief and its transformative dimensions with others, grief becomes not something

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<sup>642</sup> Giff Johnson, *Don’t Ever Whisper: Darlene Keju, Pacific Health Pioneer, Champion for Nuclear Survivors*, 2013.

<sup>643</sup> Omar Dewachi, “Iraqi Refugees | Costs of War,” December 16, 2012, <http://costsofwar.org/article/iraqi-refugees>.

<sup>644</sup> “Generator Man,” accessed February 4, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/witness/2012/06/2012618132430953572.html>.

to be cured or fixed but a relational affect that has the potential to foster political communities. The Combat Paper Project, and other art projects that I described in this chapter, including the many films and stories by veterans, all point to the ways in which the arts and aesthetics provide a way for building political communities that are attentive to how grief can function as a relational affect that can build and actualize more de-militarized present-futures.

If bodies are sexed, gendered, and racialized through processes of militarization then so too can bodies become something “other” that resists these dominant formations of power and ways of being. Art and literature have the capacity to carry us into new communities that enable “us” to reflect on the micropolitics of violence and how “we” are all affected, albeit through important differences, by the U.S.-led wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and elsewhere. Art and literature enable new stories to emerge; stories that go unnoticed within the dominant media and stories that are silenced within dominant discourses and images of a “clean war” taking place in America’s endless wars abroad. Taking these stories and artworks, and building more transnational networks and alliances with others through social media and aesthetic projects, is one way that many de-militarization activists and artists are trying to building new political communities that offer more than simple “solutions” to ending U.S. military violence on the homefront and warfront. I end with a poem by a writer from one of the recent Warrior Writer projects, whose poem calls forth for another imaging of the future that is de-militarized and divorced from all of the “structures of cruelty” that the U.S. military trains soldiers to undergo. The poem by Liam Madden is titled “Intention”:

## **Intention**

I desire to trust life

To cultivate my unique and needed gifts

Loving with abandon

I intend to weave a web of gratitude into my community

I intend to create a healthy body that gracefully moves me

Into scared relationships with people and places

Living indulgently, feeding

Laughter—appetite an ocean wide

I intend to create a home

Filled with friends and magical moments

Of connection, fun and creativity

That will become the new routine

I intend to unpaved streets and bring sunlight onto bare earth

To grow a city you could mistake for a garden

Where working is mistaken for play

Our time abundant for passion and rest

I intend to create a bank of gratitude

An economy of thankfulness

Circulating our sacred gifts

To our deepest needs

I intend to be happy on the journey

Instead of delaying my joy until the destination

Experiencing life present and vibrantly alive

In the beautiful world we are creating.<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> Calica and Warrior Writers, *After Action Review*, 8.

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