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Sanfilippo, Brenda

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BLOOD WINGS:
FEELING WAR IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

Brenda Sanfilippo

June 2014

The Dissertation of Brenda Sanfilippo is
approved:

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Professor Wlad Godzich, chair

_____
Professor Susan Gillman

_____
Professor Murray Baumgarten

_____
Professor Todd Presner

_____
Tyrus Miller
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

Blood Wings: Feeling War in the Twenty-First Century

by

Brenda Sanfilippo

Although currently still engaged in the longest war in U.S. history, the

military is comprised of only 1% of the U.S. population. In the absence of

conscription, most Americans are isolated from the experience of combat and limited

in their affective connections to war. Despite these limited geographic,

psychological, cultural, aesthetic, and affective connections, the costs of war are

coming home. Since 2001, more than 7,000 U.S. troops have died; 50,000 were

visibly wounded; and more than 500,000 suffer from invisible injuries such as PTSD.

These human losses only begin to index the effects of the wars on returning

servicemembers, their families, and the larger civilian population, as rising rates of

military suicide, domestic violence, sexual assault, alcohol and substance abuse, and

homicide point to a larger crisis in which the homefront and battlefront are

increasingly merged.

In this dissertation, I analyze how contemporary war novels, cinema, and

post-cinematic media try to bridge the "military-civilian divide" through the affective

conditions of war. My central claim is that the traces of war can be found not only in

the content but also in the form of texts such as Toni Morrison's *Home* (2012), Ha

Jin's *Nanjing Requiem* (2011), and Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker*. I argue that

these text's hybrid forms, which transgress boundaries of fact and fiction, generate war's multiple affects within the fictional textual world and in the real audiences who read or watch them.   These texts help to bridge combat experience and civilian ignorance by appealing to affective states both in the characters and the audience. To better understand the effects of modern war's changing spaces, times, tactics, strategy, and weapons, I analyze texts that represent both the battlefront and the homefront. By bringing together different scales of representation and affective resonance, we can see the war stories that are often neglected and better understand how to engage with and heal a new generation of war wounded.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to many individuals for their dedication, vision, and support of this dissertation. I thank firstly my fantastic committee members and mentors, Susan Gillman, Murray Baumgarten, Todd Presner, and Wlad Godzich. All believed in my project from the beginning--even as the pool of texts was still limited--and have encouraged me to see where it might lead. My writing owes much to Susan, whose unstoppable energy and enthusiasm pushed and inspired me every day. Murray is nothing less than my model for the best of academia. His incredible generosity as a teacher and scholar has inspired my own collaborations with others. Many years ago, Todd first introduced me to thinking about war and literature. The methods and scope of this project have been powerfully shaped by his insights and questions. Finally, I deeply thank Wlad Godzich for his patient, honest, and generous advice over many years. I could not have written this dissertation without his willingness to read many muddled drafts and his brilliant suggestion to pursue a nascent area of war literature.

Outside of my committee, I have learnt much from many others at UCSC. While many faculty members have shaped my thinking and learning, I especially appreciate the early support I received from Loisa Nygaard, Mary-Kay Gamel, and Kirsten Silva Gruesz. Each of them encouraged me to develop projects that ultimately shaped this dissertation. In addition, my friends Ariane Helou and Keegan Finberg provided thoughtful comments on early and very rough stages of my work, for which I am grateful.

Introduction

> "War is hell, but that's not the half of it, because war is also mystery and holiness and pity and despair and longing and love. War is nasty; war is fun. War is thrilling; war is drudgery. War makes you a man; war makes you dead."
>
> --Tim O'Brien,
> *The Things They Carried*

What is a blood wing? Blood wings refer to the unofficial initiation rite for soldiers who complete the elite U.S. Army Airborne School. During this controversial but prestigious ceremony, a soldier receives a wing-shaped Parachutist Badge from an instructor. Instead of pinning the badge to the soldier's uniform, the instructor places the badge, pointed back uncovered, on the shirt. While the backless pin rests in the shirt, the airborne instructors and fellow graduates take turns punching the badge, forcing it into the skin beneath. The soldier's shirt hides the wound. This bloody ceremony marks the ideal soldier both physically and symbolically as one who can suffer pain willingly, silently, and secretly, without crying out or otherwise acknowledging it. The true soldier, in this world, is willing to suffer without speaking, as the secretive and exclusive nature of the ceremony adds to its prestige and allure.

To receive blood wings, a soldier must be willing to sacrifice his body for intangible military values like honor, comradeship, and bravery. But behind the wings lie hidden streams of unseen and unspoken blood, known only to those who

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have been there. The ceremony marks the soldier as the ultimate insider, as few

outside the military know about blood wings, and increasingly few within the military

have received them, as the process has been banned as a form of hazing. The blood

wings are performative and metonymic—that is, you get blood wings only by getting

blood wings, as the small puncture of the pin comes to stand for the larger hole of the

bullet. In short, blood wings symbolize a larger epistemological gap in which

soldiers often will not or cannot speak their pain and civilians, for their part, want to

be protected without thinking about the blood that lies beneath the uniform. Blood

wings, then, are a metaphor for military service—a marker that both instrumentalizes

and disguises violence.

As of this writing, the United States is still engaged in the longest war in U.S.

history. Currently, that war has lasted for nearly thirteen years, beginning with the

invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. It will continue, depending on the

results of ongoing negotiations with the Afghan government, through 2016 at best

and, in more dire estimates, through 2024, for an astonishing fifteen to twenty-three

years of war.   Most Americans, however, have been geographically, psychologically,

socially, and affectively insulated from the effects of what reporter Dexter Filkins has

described as "The Forever War." In fact, in contrast to every other large-scale war in

U.S. history, a mere 1% of the population serves in the military.[1] In previous wars,

almost everyone went to war or knew and cared for someone at war, as they lost

husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons on the fields of Gettysburg or the beaches at

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[1] By way of comparison, approximately two percent of the total population *died*

Normandy or the hills of Dak To.[2] Both of my grandfathers were enlisted in World

War II; my father, who was not draft eligible until the end of the Vietnam war, lost

his beloved older cousin Mitch there. Even during heavy press censorship and

casualty numbers so high that representations of individual losses were occluded,

these stories were often already intimately felt in interpersonal connections (Casey

205; Gologorsky, "In the Shadow of War").[3]

     These personal affective connections to war changed after Vietnam. The

creation of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), instituted in 1973 in response to the

drafting of men for the intensely unpopular war in Vietnam, was intended to make

U.S. military actions less likely, as the American people would have a stake in

choosing the fights for which they would send their sons and, increasingly, daughters.

However, "the draft had commanded the attention of the nation. It had ensured that

the broader public felt—in some limited way—the force of war, saw its physical and

psychological toll, understood something of the blood sacrifice being demanded of its

nation's youth" (Bailey 254).[4] Today, the absence of direct or even second-hand

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[2] Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Civil War buff Tony Horwitz has argued, for example, that Civil War death counts are now believed to be much higher than earlier calculations—over 750,000, or 20% higher than the earlier estimate of 618,000 ("150 Years of Misunderstanding . . ."). According to these calculations, a comparable loss in today's population would be 7.5 million troops. Faust similarly cites several studies that claim that the death totals are inaccurate due to miscalculations of "incomplete records" that do not accurately record disease deaths (274).

[3] For an analysis of the changing nature of casualty reporting in the U.S. military during the twentieth century, see Steven Casey, *When Soldiers Fall*.

[4] The draft was by no means fair, as the lottery system did not account for those with money and connections who found ways to avoid service or receive preferable assignments.

knowledge of and affective connections to war has made the "military-civilian divide" even more pronounced.[5] At the same time, popular representations of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been limited, with few films or novels to provide a vicarious experience of war.

Even during the small-scale wars of the 1980s and 1990s, the AVF has struggled to attract sufficient numbers of recruit. As the draft ended the military could no longer rely on forced enlistments to fill its ranks, so "Congress tripled the recruiting budget, doubled enlisted pay, offered bonuses to those who signed up for combat units, and opened nearly all military positions to women" (Lutz 167).

The personnel needs of the AVF also forced a rethinking of the roles of women and minorities. The military, while one of the first official institutions to integrate, had a long history of racial strife (Lutz 139) and exclusion of women. However, after 1973, the needs of the AVF required a rethinking of the role of women and minorities:

> a perennial topic of military strategizing had become acquiring and retaining the numbers and types of military volunteers that Defense, White House, and congressional decision makers though the country needed. Young women— of all races and ethnicities—seemed suddenly attractive to these recruiting strategists. They, it appeared, would help make up for the loss of the middle-class white young men, out of high school and newly released from the draft, who would be more likely now to seek their futures in colleges and civilian workplaces. Young African American young men, with fewer civilian workforce opportunities and usually less money for college, these strategists calculated, could also be encouraged to volunteer, especially if the military's racism could be effectively tackled. (Enloe 135)

After several operations in Central America, the military began to target Latino youths for recruitment as well (140). In the post-9/11 era, the growing Latino population in the United States caught the attention of the Department of Defense (DOD), which began to publish Spanish-language recruitment ads in Spanish-language newspapers and on television (140-141).

[5] Sabrina Tavernise cites a 2011 Pew Research Center study that found that the number of Americans in the U.S. military is currently at its lowest percentage of population since between World War I and World War II. The study further found that only 33% of adult Americans under age 30 had an immediate family member who had completed military service, as opposed to nearly 60% of those between the ages of 30 and 49 and 75% of those over age 49 ("Civilian-Military Gap"). For more on the civil-military divide, see Bacevich; Gallagher; and Thompson.

At the same time, however, the all-volunteer military has required war to intrude into cultural life in new ways. The AVF functions well in situations in which overwhelming technological, tactical, and even numeric superiority can be exploited to gain a swift victory before American casualties erode popular support, as in the first Gulf War and interventions in Kosovo, for example.[6] Since 9/11, and particularly since the initial wave of swift and seemingly decisive battlefront victories in Iraq and Afghanistan gave way to the long-term hazards of counterinsurgency, the military has had to appeal to young people who until 2008 were basking in the glow of a booming economy. Between 2003 and 2008, marketing military service as an opportunity for advancement and personal growth was difficult, as increasingly grim casualty figures coming out of Iraq made joining the military a risky option in an economically stable United States.

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[6] In 2012 General Stanley McChrystal, former NATO Commander of Afghanistan, argued that the draft should be reinstated so that "if a nation goes to war, every town, every city needs to be at risk. You make that decision and everybody has skin in the game" (Rogin). The current military, however, is also ill suited for a draft. Servicemembers are trained for months to more than a year for certain jobs. The trainings are lengthy, highly specialized, and quite expensive, even among infantrymen, and the standards to get into the military are high for a number of jobs. As a result, a draft would have to account for increased training times and improved standards, making it both costly and inefficient to draft servicemembers (Bailey 259).

For example, a draft that requires more than a year of service would not provide time to train for most jobs, or Military Occupational Specialties, which require between two and four months of basic training before Advanced Individual Training (AIT) can begin. AIT can last from a few months to up to two years for Arabic interpreters. Drafted soldiers are also apt to be less motivated. Bailey also describes issues of quality with drafted servicemembers: "Bottom line: less able, less well trained, less experienced, less motivated soldiers are more likely to fail in their missions. And they are more likely to get themselves—and their comrades—killed" (259-60).

In order to combat these recruiting difficulties, the military was required to see--and sell--itself as a brand. To appeal to large numbers of potential servicemembers, the military threw money at the problem, in the form of large enlistment and reenlistment bonuses and a variety of marketing campaigns, from TV ads during primetime and, in particular, sports programming, NASCAR sponsorships, air shows, support for big budget films and video games (Lutz 168; Enloe 160), and performances at professional football halftime shows.   Further, military recruiters gained access to high school students through a little-known provision of the No Child Left Behind Act, which required local school administrators "not only to allow military recruiters access to students within their schools, but also to pass along to the Defense Department the names and addresses of all their high school seniors" (Enloe 132). These marketing efforts tell the official story, one affected and inflected by the military's need to fill its ranks with bodies. Although the AVF had reduced the number of experiential and affective connections to war, in effect all of these efforts to sell the military gave the armed forces a widespread "cultural reach" (Lutz 168) that encompassed home, school, and leisure.

Yet while the presence of war is now ubiquitous throughout cultural life, the effects of war have been more insidiously hidden, in part because official stories, as Margot Norris and Steven Casey have demonstrated, are instrumental to waging war. To encourage enlistments, the military has relied on tight control of when and how stories of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are released. From the first Gulf War in 1991 through 2009, the military had banned footage of U.S. military coffins arriving

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at Dover Air Base. Journalists were embedded with U.S. troops to give the

appearance of transparency, yet these embedded assignments came with strings, from

heavy security vetting to limits on what kinds of photographs could be taken and

shown (Casey 3-4; Jones, *They Were Soldiers* 18-19; Gilbertson). Embedded

photographers, as Ashley Gilbertson has explained, were initially allowed to

photograph wounded or dying soldiers. After several controversies about these

photographs,[7] photographers were only allowed to take such footage if the soldiers

signed a waiver first. Not surprisingly, superstitious soldiers were not inclined to sign

a waiver allowing photographs should they be injured or killed.   Ultimately, the

Pentagon hoped that the reporters would develop personal relationships with the

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[7] The controversies have revolved around issues of showing military members
committing war crimes as well as whether to show images of dead or dying soldiers.
For example, in November 2004, embedded journalist Kevin Sites filmed a Marine
shooting an unarmed wounded insurgent in a Fallujah mosque. He reported the
incident to the chain of command and briefly considered destroying the footage but
ultimately determined that it was important for American citizens to see. When it
was shown on NBC, the report attempted to contextualize the shooting in ways that
would explain possible mitigating circumstances. However, as Sites belonged to a
journalism pool, the footage was released elsewhere without explanation and angered
a number of the Marines' families.

In 2009, photographer Julie Jacobson published a photograph of Marine Lance Cpl.
Joshua M. Bernard, who had been wounded and was in the process of dying. The
Associated Press chose to release the photograph, as pictures of wounded soldiers
were rare and could put a human face to military deaths (Dunlap). The Bernard
family was severely opposed to the publication of the photograph. Secretary of
Defense Robert M. Gates contacted the AP on their behalf as a violation of "common
decency" that showed a lack of "compassion and common sense" (Ibid.).

For a discussion of how the *New York Times* has handled the publication of war
photographs, see Clark Hoyt's "The Painful Images of War."

servicemembers protecting them—and write largely positive stories as a result (Casey 246-247).

On the battlefront, the use of isolated Mortuary Affairs (MA) troops to quietly clean up, identify, and return remains to home has controlled troops' affective responses to war, as they do not have to see—except when directly involved—what an explosion does to the human body (Jones, *They Were Soldiers* 9). Mortuary Affairs, "in their Hazmat suits and gloves, are the ones who pry charred corpses from burned vehicles, dump body parts into bags, scoop up with their cupped hands the bloody shards of flesh and bone and liquefied innards, and later, back at the mortuary on base, try to match the bits and pieces to disembodied heads" (Ibid.). While servicemembers hold onto the dream of a glorious death in combat, MA members "clean up its reality" (Goodell 60), so that no one, not even the troops, has to see what the dead really look like.

Beyond limiting the circulation of images of dead and dying soldiers, the military has similarly hidden the extent of U.S. casualties by narrowly delimiting terms. A soldier killed or wounded in combat is counted as a casualty, but official tallies do not count injuries or deaths that occur in ways related to but not directly in battle (Casey 232). For example, a deployed soldier who dies in a truck accident outside Baghdad, a depressed Navy Corpsman who commits suicide after returning home, or a Marine who dies of cancer as a result of exposure to military toxic waste are not counted as war casualties. Furthermore, ambiguity in how casualties are classified has resulted in a lack of clarity not only in the number of deaths but also in

determining exactly how many are wounded—and whose injuries count.[8] Ultimately,

by minimizing the official casualty counts, the military has limited public attention to

the wars while simultaneously limiting the financial and medical responsibilities of

the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA). As a

result, the DOD and VA have massively underestimated the resources needed to care

for troops and veterans, resulting in human health and financial consequences for

returning troops and their families.

Female troops in particular have been silenced. The Pentagon estimates that

at least 12,000 female troops were sexually assaulted in 2012 alone. As Ann Jones

has described, sexual assault in the military has become so common that

> it earned an acronym of its own: MST; for Military Sexual Trauma. But like
> so many military terms, MST is a self-serving obfuscation. It uses the
> medical and psychological term 'trauma,' which denotes an *effect* of rape, to
> mask rape itself, which is clearly a *crime*. At the same time, by leaving
> criminal sexual assault 'military,' it removes it from the realm of criminal
> prosecution to the shelter of the old boys' network, the military chain of
> command. The clever effect of this mislabeling is evident in cases such as the
> epidemic of sexual assault at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, where
> commanders routinely discharged complaining rape victims from the military
> on psychiatric grounds. (*They Were Soldiers* 128)

Silenced by their traumas and by the commanders who are supposed to protect them,

female veterans have been found to have higher rates of homelessness than male

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[8] Historian Steven Casey cites a 2007 *Los Angeles Times* op-ed that reports that
50,508 servicemembers had been wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq, using a
Department of Veterans' Affairs website. However, the number was reduced to
21,649 a few days later. When this discrepancy was noticed, the VA first blamed the
difference on a clerical error. Finally, it was revealed that the Department of Defense
used more restrictive definitions for wounding, which resulted in lower numbers, and
the VA had altered its counts to match the DOD's report (233).

veterans (Brown). This combination of trauma, difficulty accessing resources, and lack of judicial military protections has further removed them from recognition and treatment.[9]

An estimated 320,000-800,000 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are described as having "invisible wounds," which refer to psychological or physiological injuries to the brain as opposed to injuries to visible sites like legs or arms (Tanielian and Jaycox xxi; Glantz, *The War Comes Home* 6). These invisible injuries are most commonly identified as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Incidences of PTSD and TBI are believed to be increasing due to the growing use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by insurgents as well as improved medical care and triage that have saved many troops that would have perished in earlier wars, often with catastrophic, polytraumatic visible and invisible wounds.

The invisible nature of these injuries, however, has problematized their recognition and treatment. For example, a veteran who is traumatized by an event during deployment but not officially diagnosed with PTSD may struggle to get mental health care from the overburdened Veterans Affairs system. In the interim, if that veteran should act out or self medicate with alcohol or drugs--a common numbing response to PTSD--he or she will receive a dishonorable or other-than-honorable

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[9] According to a December 2011 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the number of homeless female veterans more than doubled, from 1,380 in 2006 to 3,328 in 2010 (United States GAO, *Homeless Female Veterans* 3). These figures are calculated from women who have been in contact with the VA. The actual scope of the problem, which includes women who have not contacted the VA, is larger.

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discharge. These discharges make a veteran ineligible for all VA benefits, including access to the very mental health treatments that could have prevented these actions (Philipps, "Other Than Honorable").[10] Even if a servicemember or veteran is willing to and can overlook the social and professional stigma of seeking help, navigate military healthcare's overwhelming bureaucracy,[11] and wait for doctors and psychologists to treat him or her, he or she is facing the very real possibility that the military's interested involvement in treatment could derail the entire process. Military doctors are supposed to treat servicemembers, ideally, in order to get them back into combat. When that is not possible, the economic costs of their health care are often quite high.

To get around these costs, as anthropologist Kenneth T. Macleish has recorded in his study of soldiers at the Army's Fort Hood installation, "A constellation of symptoms can be pronounced PTSD, and therefore worthy of a medical discharge and compensation, but a second (or third, or fifth) diagnosis can rename those same symptoms as an anxiety disorder and thus a preexisting condition" (114). These other diagnoses, such as Adjustment Disorder or Personality Disorder,

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[10] Dave Philipps of *The Gazette* in Colorado Springs—the location of several major military installations—reported that over 76,000 soldiers have been kicked out of the Army for misconduct since 2006 ("Other Than Honorable"). Some committed infractions as small as smoking marijuana, missing appointments, or missing formations. Philipps even found "one two-tour infantry soldier . . . targeted for discharge after missing three doctor appointments because he had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital for being suicidal." The symptoms of PTSD "can include bad decision-making, frayed memory and incendiary anger, all of which can be indistinguishable from misconduct" (Ibid.). As a result, "Commanders struggle to determine which soldiers are badly injured and which are just bad" (Ibid.).
[11] In 2013, Aaron Glantz reported that the average wait time for VA benefits was 273 days, with urban centers taking as long as 642 days.

can make troops ineligible for military disability financial support at best and both disability financial support and VA mental health treatment at worst.

This exact situation was documented in May 2008 by Christopher Lee of the *Washington Post*, who released details of an e-mail from Norma Perez, a Texas-based VA psychologist and PTSD program leader. In this e-mail, Perez instructed other mental health staff to "'refrain from giving a diagnosis of PTSD straight out'" in light of the increase in "'compensation seeking veterans'" and the supposed lack of resources to test for PTSD in the first place. In short, Perez instructed her staff not to diagnose PTSD because this diagnosis would be too expensive and time-consuming. VA psychiatric staff members were not just directed to overlook facts—they were told not to look for them in the first place. This kind of delimiting and even willful neglect, as with the counting of war casualties, serves to minimize the appearance of a serious military mental health problem while ignoring the reality of individual challenges.

While PTSD and TBI are so common as to be described as the "signature wounds" (Tanielian and Jaycox 3) of the War on Terror, seemingly visible injuries are often hidden from view as well. In contrast to previous wars, which relied on men shooting other men, insurgents now favor distance weapons such as IEDs and the even deadlier EFPs (Explosively Formed Penetrators). These weapons are reported to be responsible for at least 33,000 American casualties (Jones, *They Were Soldiers* 44; Zoroya, "How the IED . . .") in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, improvements in battlefield medicine and triage—from teaching basic combat

medicine to all combat troops to a new system of "rolling emergency care consisting of 10, 20, 50, 70, or more distinct surgical operations performed by many different doctors" (Jones, *They Were Soldiers* 38)—have helped many troops to survive who would have perished in earlier wars. The price of surviving an explosion, however, has been an increase in troops with catastrophic, multiple injuries, often described as polytrauma, that may include a combination of amputations, burns, TBIs, PTSD, and damage to vision and hearing.

Some injuries are so bad that no one wants to talk about them. Ann Jones has explained that the explosive blasts that can sever legs would often rise "into the perineal area, where the two legs meet, to smash genitals and into the pelvic cavity to pulverize soft tissue and sever intricate bodily systems" (*They Were Soldiers* 42). One experienced urological surgeon stationed at Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan told Jones that he had never before seen such "'catastrophic'" injuries, which included amputating a young man's shredded penis (Ibid.). Yet while no one wants to imagine, let alone discuss, how a soldier could have his penis or testicles amputated and live, Jones records that these injuries are not uncommon. From 2005-2012, nearly 1900 troops had received wounds to their genitals (Wood); when Jones tried to get updated figures in July 2013, the number had increased to the point that the Pentagon made it difficult to get them by requiring a formal Freedom of Information Act request (44).

These omissions and occlusions have affective and interpretive consequences. Doctors, who see the wounded body, do not need to ask what caused an injury—they

can "read what they need to know on the patient's body" (35) as they see the "pulverized legs that probably will be amputated, shrapnel from the blast, concussion, possible traumatic injury to the brain, and traumatic shock that might haunt an Afghan or be diagnosed in an American as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" (36). They can even distinguish between the kinds of injuries in Iraq versus those in Afghanistan. In Iraq, the wounded were mostly still "'*on the body*'" (italics Jones, *They Were Soldiers* 36), as explosions often hit armored vehicles driving through the urban landscape; Afghanistan, with its mountainous terrain, required soldiers to walk and thus to step directly on an IED, reducing the body to pieces (Ibid.).

As human bodies are reduced to "liquidy remains" (Goodell 52) and cleaned by isolated Mortuary Affairs units, or survive missing arms, legs, eyes, and genitals, then shuttled off to Walter Reed or a Warrior Transition Unit (WTU), both servicemembers and civilians avoid seeing what war does, which limits war's consequences to a distant space and singular time—in military parlance, war is kept safely "over there." Elaine Scarry has argued that wars are literally inscribed on the bodies of those who fought; wounds activate memories, so that what happens in war is never limited to a particular time and place:

> What is remembered in the body is well remembered; the bodies of massive numbers of participants are deeply altered; those new alterations are carried forward into peace. For example, the history of the United States participation in numerous twentieth-century wars may be quietly displayed across the surviving generations of any American family—a grandfather whose distorted feet permanently memorialize the location and landing site of a piece of shrapnel in France…a cousin whose damaged hip & permanent limp announce in each step the inflection of the word "Vietnam," and along with the injuries of thousands of his peers assures that whether or not it is verbally

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memorialized, the record of war survives in the bodies, both alive and buried, of the people who were hurt there. (112-113)

Without seeing wounds, in other words, the effects of war can be more easily ignored, leaving little impression on public consciousness or concern. As these wounds are increasingly invisible, the task of reading war on bodies has become even more difficult.

Beyond the possibility of combat injury or death, however, many servicemembers have been affected by other forms of suffering that transcend the times and spaces of Iraq and Afghanistan as well yet are often unrecognized: deaths and injuries in accidents; suicides; hazing;[12] sexual harassment and assaults; mental

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[12] Pvt. Danny Chen was a Chinese-American teenager who joined the Army after completing high school. Nine months after he joined the Army, he would commit suicide while on deployment to Afghanistan. Following his death in October 2011, details of his life in the Army emerged, which included roughly six weeks of extended hazing by seven higher-ranked enlisted men (including non-commissioned officers) and a lieutenant, the superior officer who most closely interacts with enlisted men (Jones, *They Were Soldiers* 21). Chen was singled out for "brutal physical abuse" (Ibid.), such as crawling on gravel on the ground while the men threw rocks at him (Gonnerman); during the hazings, he was repeatedly called racial epithets such as "gook," "dragon lady," and "chink" (Ibid.).

Although the Army ultimately charged the eight men with involuntary manslaughter and negligent homicide, as Jennifer Gonnerman argues in her profile of Chen following his suicide, "what could be worse than being stuck at a remote outpost, in the middle of a combat zone, tormented by your superiors, the very same people who are supposed to be looking out for you?" In her profile, Gonnerman notes that Asian Americans, who often enlist in the military in lower numbers than African American and Latino populations, are often particularly singled out for abuse.

Like Chen, Marine Lance Corporal Harry Lew committed suicide in 2011 after being severely beaten for following asleep during guard duty in Afghanistan—an admittedly dangerous mistake for all on the outpost, but nonetheless a fatal one only for Lew. As Gonnerman notes, racially motivated hazing is not limited to Asian-American servicemembers. She also tells the story of Brushaun Anderson, an African- American soldier who was singled out for verbal and physical abuse over an

illnesses such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, and depression; physical

illnesses;[13] and substance abuse problems.[14] These losses spiral outward back home,

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extended period of time. Like Lew and Chen, he shot himself in the head during a deployment.

Kirk Semple, in a report on the final case, summarized the results of the eight court-martial cases as follows: the first court-martial in the Danny Chen case resulted in a verdict of assault and maltreatment but a verdict of not-guilty for the most serious charges, which included negligent homicide, hazing, communicating a threat, and reckless endangerment.   The sentence was a mere thirty-days confinement along with a demotion of one rank and the forfeiture of one month's pay. Of the remaining soldiers, the lieutenant reached a plea deal that avoided trial but banned him from the military. Four soldiers received prison sentences and demotions; two received only demotions.

[13] Beginning in 2003, the military burned waste, such as "discarded human body parts, plastics, hazardous medical material, lithium batteries, tires, hydraulic fluids, and vehicles" (Garcia), in "burn pits" in Iraq and Afghanistan.   These pits were lit with jet fuel and ran non-stop; servicemembers in their vicinity wore no protective breathing gear. As of 2010, the Government Accountability Office reported that there were still 22 burn pits in Iraq and an astounding 251 in Afghanistan.   Yet until 2009, the military had no standardized burn pit regulations, even though the levels of toxins or effects on individuals were not understood (31).

Using ambient air samples, the GAO reported that nearly all samples exceeded Military Exposure Guidelines (MEGs) for toxic substances, which included course and the more easily embedded fine particles (United States GAO, *Open Pit Burning* 38) of heavy metals like arsenic, dioxin, carbon monoxide, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), hexachlorobenzene, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. These substances can cause multiple forms of cancer; organ and nervous system damage; irritation to the lungs, eyes, throat, and nose; nausea, dizziness, confusion; and even death during exposure (32).

One burn pit in Balad, Iraq, is believed to have exposed 25,000 servicemembers and many military contractors to toxic air (Garcia; Briggs). The immediate effects of this carcinogenic exposure can be seen in "plume crud," which is the name for the "black goop" that soldiers cough up during deployments (Eisenberg). Long term, the full effects of this exposure on individual servicemembers or their children—in the form of future birth defects—are not known, but Jones cites a number of studies that already have found respiratory effects in returning veterans (*They Were Soldiers* 179). In addition to the toxic fumes from the burn pits, exposure to chemicals and depleted uranium armor in military vehicles is believed to be behind rising rates of cancer,

where growing rates of domestic violence,[15] homicide, substance abuse, sexual

assault, and a "suicide epidemic" follow servicemembers home to their waiting

families and unknowing strangers.

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irreversible lung disease, and neurological issues (Dobbin). A national burn pit registry finally was created in 2013 to try to track the health effects of what has been called "this generation's Agent Orange" in returning troops (Briggs).

[14] In a six-month long study of the post-war deaths of 345 Texas veterans—or the equivalent of close to two-thirds of the state's total combat casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan--an investigative team from the *Austin American-Statesman* found that 47 had died from drug overdoses and 50 had died in motor vehicle collisions, with approximately half of those through reckless driving in the form of speeding or drinking. In total, a third died from a drug overdose, deadly drug interaction, or suicide.

Ann Jones, in analyzing the *Statesman's* results, explains that 40 of the 47 had died from prescription drug overdoses or toxic drug interactions of "perfectly legal drugs—prescribed by doctors in private practice or at VA hospitals" (*They Were Soldiers* 107). Legal drugs such as anti-anxiety medications, tranquilizers, anti-depressants, and sleeping pills are often used to treat the symptoms of PTSD, while painkillers like Oxycodone are prescribed to treat physical pain but also can be addictive and dangerous. To get some sense of the larger scope of this problem within the active-duty military, Aaron Glantz found, using information obtained under a Freedom of Information Act request to the Pentagon, that 11,407 soldiers were kicked out of the military after deployment for substance abuse between September 30, 2001, and September 30, 2007 (*War Comes Home* 87).

[15] After a series of murders by Army soldiers stationed at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, garned national attention, the military began to study connections between service and domestic abuse. Deborah Sontag and Lizette Alvarez of *The New York Times* reported that in a small survey, using military records and news reports, of over 150 fatal cases of military domestic violence or child abuse, one-third of the perpetrators had deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, one-third had never deployed, and the final third could not be determined. But, as they argue, it was apparent that these incidents occurred during the military's efforts to curb domestic violence. The Pentagon's domestic violence task force was ultimately disbanded after announcing its findings on March 20, 2003—the day the invasion of Iraq occurred. While fatality numbers are easier to track, rates of verbal and physical abuse are often difficult to record.

In 2006, Congress commissioned a report on domestic violence from the Government Accountability Office. In a follow-up report in 2010, the GAO reported that the DOD had only implemented, in part, three of seven recommendations (*Military Personnel*

These effects of military service have mostly been born by the silent wives

and mothers, trained to be always cheerful and supportive,[16] as they pick up the

pieces of the men they sent to war, eager to win glory and immortality but returning

home with blank brains, missing limbs, severed penises, empty eye sockets, rage,

alcoholism, heavy hands and violent hearts. Even though we rarely see them, wars

have consequences beyond the battlefield, for soldiers as well as those around them.

One mother terms this expansion of violence and pain a "ripple effect" (Jones, *They*

Were Soldiers 92) that moves outward in ever larger circles of suffering. Most

immediately and intimately, military wives and mothers have become a second

medical force, caring for physically and mentally wounded soldiers when the

Department of Veterans Affairs could not. Wives and girlfriends in particular have

born the brunt of the psychic wounds of war, the victims of skyrocketing rates of

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1). It had ignored the recommendations related to management of reported domestic
violence data, which was necessary to ensure that the full extent of the problem could
be understood, as well as better methods to monitor, evaluate, and implement the
GAO's recommendations (2).   In particular, the inaccurate counting and tracking of
incidences has limited both the desire to intercede and the ability to do so. Howell
and Wool summarized the findings of the report as an index that "the military has
been both unwilling and unable to do what needs to be done when it comes to
domestic violence in the military" (5).

[16] For example, Ann Jones describes attending a Family Readiness Group (FRG)
meeting in which the facilitators told the group of twenty-four women (and only one
man) to support their soldiers. This support includes mantras like, "'Only when your
soldier is happy, can you be truly happy'" (*They Were Soldiers* 119), followed by
directions to always give him his space and submit to his needs. Some examples: stay
with him if he wants, stay away if he wants, have sex if he wants (regardless of the
woman's desire), do not have sex if he wants. Or, as Jones puts it, "the wife is to give
him not his space but her body" (120).

domestic violence, sexual assault, and even homicide by servicemembers and

veterans.[17]

For all the costs for soldiers and their families, the costs of war for Iraqi and

Afghan civilians are doubly elided. Their deaths, injuries, and disappearances are not

counted in American military casualty figures, although the Costs of War Project has

estimated that at least 200,000 civilians have been killed as a result of the wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan. These figures do not account for displacement or deaths due to

disease or malnutrition as a result of interruptions to infrastructure or envirtonmental

damage. Death and injury, as Cynthia Enloe has explained, are not the only ways to

count the costs of war. For Iraqi women, the effects of war are found in missed

schooling, prostitution, loss of husbands and economic sustenance, diaspora and

displacement, loss of agency—the other costs "too rarely entered into the war wagers'

ledgers" (Enloe 12). Unwilling or unable to leave their homes in a war zone, Iraqi

and Afghan civilians have been left to try to survive wars imposed upon them, losing

homes, jobs and loved ones in the process.[18]

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[17] Even less violent reactions have their effects. David Finkel, for example, describes
Saskia Schumann, who is left alone to care for her small children, herself traumatized
by her Iraq War-veteran husband Adam's anger, abuse, and attempted suicide, while
Adam goes to PTSD therapy in California. Torn between fury at Adam and guilt at
her fury, Saskia wonders whether their relationship can be saved.   Public records
show that they divorced in 2013 ("Divorces"), the same year as Finkel's book *Thank
You for Your Service* was published.

[18] Throughout the twentieth century, the numbers of civilian deaths to total deaths in
war has increased, from 15% during World War I to 65% in World War II to 90%
throughout the small-scale wars of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first-centuries
(Macleish 7).

To say that the costs of war are felt only by combat troops, then, is to ignore

the very violent effects of war on intimate relations and even the larger public.[19] The

problem is one of both counting and scale, as homefront stories of suicide and abuse

are difficult to see, as Ann Jones has explained, because they are reported locally, as

individual exceptions when they require large-scale, national tracking to see larger

patterns, let alone to understand them. Yet these stories are also the blood behind the

blood wings, but they are not the stories that fit the dominant military and political

narratives, which emphasize cold, often limited statistics that focus on how few have

actually died in the lonely outposts of the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan, or clearing

houses in Ramadi, Iraq, over the human loss to individual families, in which one

death, one limb, or one rape are the only numbers that matter.

I.

Representing the Global War on Terror

During and after previous modern wars, literature and film have stepped in to

fill the gaps in the official story, which as Casey, Norris, and others have argued,

never captures the full scope of war. These representations have served an important

societal, cultural, and symbolic function by providing the "affective residue" (Norris

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[19] As of January 2008, Deborah Sontag and Lizette Alvarez of the *New York Times* had tracked "121 cases in which veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan committed a killing in [the United States], or were charged with one, following their return from war." Using only reported local sources, from news reports to police and court records, Sontag and Alvarez found that compared to the six years prior to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, military-involved homicides had increased 89 percent increase in killings in the six years between 2001 and 2007.

21) that military and political discourses have neglected.[20] After each major

twentieth century war, a "flood" of books, as Walter Benjamin has explained

following the First World War (84), has appeared about a decade after the war ended.

For example, after the Great War ended in 1918, major novels such as Erich Maria

Remarque's *Im Westen Nichts Neues* (translated as *All Quiet on the Western Front*)

and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* did not appear until 1929. The

"Vietnam chic" era of mid-1980s fiction and film production also occurred more than

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a decade after that war had ended.   Unlike today, however, the realities of war were all too visible and felt in civilian populations, as the presence of wounded men, or the absence of young men of a certain age in a town, were easily noted.

I argue that the delay in representations of these past wars occurred because they were too close and too intimately felt; in contrast, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been both geographically and affectively distant. It is not surprising, then, that in the more than ten years since the War on Terror began, until recently there have been few literary or filmic representations of the war. The majority of this limited body of writing has been non-fictional, with an emphasis on combat over home. In place of novels and poems, and films, we have the "moral artistry" (Dyer 227) of non-fiction writers like Dexter Filkins, David Finkel, Sebastian Junger, and Jake Tapper, for example.[21] Many of these works have analyzed the structural reasons why the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have gone so badly and what the effects have been on American forces. That is, they have explored the politics of the war and the effects of these choices on the troops on the ground. A few, like Ann Jones's *Kabul in Winter: Life Without Peace in Afghanistan* and Carter Malkasian's *War Comes to Garmser*, have reported on the effects of the wars on civilian populations, while Vanessa M. Gezari's *The Tender Soldier* examined the creation and use of the Pentagon's Human Terrain System, which

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[21] While these works are not widely popular, they have received a number of critical plaudits. Finkel was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award for *Thank you For Your Service,* while Junger and Hetherington's film *Restrepo* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary.

deployed anthropologists to help military commanders understand Iraqi and Afghan culture.

Even more limited are the non-fictional works, translated into and published in English, by Iraqi or Afghan civilians. An Iraqi blogger named Riverbend has published two book-length collections of her blogs in *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq*. Iraqi exile Haifa Zangana's *City of Widows: An Iraqi Woman's Account of War and Resistance* goes farther back in a "rewriting of Iraqi modern history" that returns Iraqi voices—and in particular Iraqi women's voices—to thinking and talking about the war. In looking to the past, Zangana explains that she hopes to change Iraq's future.

Although there is still a shortage of non-fictional works that explore the homefront experience in the United States,[22] Iraq, and, especially, Afghanistan, the first wave of writings by veterans has come in the form of numerous military memoirs. These works are often less elegantly written than works by professional writers like Finkel or Junger; they are nonetheless quite powerful, gaining force and authority by dint of their authors' authentic experiences of war.[23] Yet ten years into the longest war in U.S. history, there were so few fictional literary representations that veteran and writer Matt Gallagher—himself the author of one of those memoirs—asked, Where's the Great Novel of the War on Terror?

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[22] David Finkel's 2013 *Thank You For Your Service* followed the troops from his *The Good Soldiers* to see how they fared at home. Much of the book explores the loss, violence, and pain that the wives and girlfriends are experiencing as a result of their men's deployment.

[23] See memoirs by Matt Gallagher, Colby Buzzell, Kayla Williams, Jess Goodell, and Brian Castner.

Possible answers began to appear in 2012, the year in which the wars,

particularly the now-concluded Iraq War, began to impinge on cultural consciousness

in something like Benjamin's Great War literary flood (84).[24] 2012 saw the

publication of multiple novels about the War on Terror: veteran Kevin Powers' *The

Yellow Birds* and civilian Ben Fountain's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, both

finalists for the National Book Award, and David Abrams' *Fobbit* focused on the Iraq

War experience; Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya's *The Watch* and T. Geronimo Jones's

Hold It Till It Hurts explored the war in Afghanistan. These works were followed in

2013 and 2014 by a number of works by women writers, who began to claim the right

to women's voices speaking about war.[25] Roxana Robinson's *Sparta* and Joyce Carol

Oates's *Carthage* both focused on the return of the traumatized veteran, while Lea

Carpenter's 2013 *Eleven Days* explored the super-secretive Naval Special Operations

community as well as a mother's loss.

While novels have received most of the critical attention and commercial

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[24] There are as of this writing almost no novels or films about the far-longer
Afghanistan War. Lea Carpenter's 2013 *Eleven Days* is ostensibly set in Afghanistan
on the night of the Osama Bin Laden raid, but it features almost no details particular
to the Afghanistan War. Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya's 2012 *The Watch* updates and
retells the Antigone story at an Afghan outpost, as a young Afghan woman keeps
watch as she begs for her brother's body to be released to her by the Army
commander. In film, Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty* explores the hunt for and
killing of Osama Bin Laden. Peter Berg's film *Lone Survivor* is based on Navy SEAL
Marcus Luttrell's description of the failed Operation Red Wings.

[25] In fact, it was women who first began publishing stories about the wars. Helen
Benedict's 2011 *The Sand Queen*, which focused on women soldiers in Iraq, was one
of the earliest novel-length works on the Iraq War.   Short stories by Annie Proulx in
2008 and Siobhan Fallon in 2011 also preceded the 2012 eruption of war stories by
and about men.

success—in particular Ben Fountain's *Billy Lynn* and Kevin Powers's *The Yellow Birds*—a great deal of the writing about the Global War on Terror, or GWOT (pronounced hard gee-wot) has been happening in short story form. These collections have emphasized the need for a polyvocal, multiperspectival literary response to the wars. E. Annie Proulx's "Tits Up in a Ditch," published in her 2008 short story collection *Fine Just the Way It Is,* was one of the earliest representations of women soldiers. In 2012, major short story collections by George Saunders and Karen Russell each feature stories about veterans and post-traumatic stress.[26] Other writers have based entire collections or anthologies on war writing. Marine veteran Phil Klay's 2014 *Redeployment* has been called by war reporter Dexter Filkins "the best thing so far on what the war did to people's souls." Military veteran-writers Roy Scranton and Matt Gallagher have collected "short stories from the long war" in their anthology of veterans' fiction *Fire and Forget*. Literary Magazines *ep;phany* and *Prairie Schooner* have also each featured an issue dedicated to contemporary war writing.

While many of the collections focus on the challenges of coming home after combat, a few have explored how the wars have affected and influenced people, both family and civilian, who have remained on the homefront. Katey Schultz's 2013 *Flashes of War* combines the voices of American forces with those of Afghans and Iraqis to create a more dialogic reading of the wars' effects. Siobhan Fallon's 2011

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[26] Three days into 2013, Joel Lovell of *The New York Times* called Saunders's collection *Tenth of December* "the best book you'll read this year."

You Know When the Men are Gone is the first collection to represent the Army wife's

experience.   Away from the military post, Beverly Gologorsky's 2013 *Stop Here* is

set in and around a small-time diner on Long Island. As her characters work through

their losses, economic, personal, and military, the precariousness of their lives is

mirrored in the ways in which war impinges upon them over time, from Vietnam

through the Gulf War through Operation Iraqi Freedom. Saïd Sayrafiezadeh's *Brief*

Encounters With the Enemy, also published in 2013, explores how men encounter

their neighbors, their enemies, and themselves. Most striking so far is the 2014 U.S.

release of Hassan Blasim's *The Corpse Exhibition*. This story collection is the first

literary work about the war in Iraq translated into English by a major Iraqi writer.[27]

You can see from the dates on these novels and short story collections and

anthologies that more than a decade after its onset, the War on Terror has appeared to

reach its Benjaminian moment of legibility. While I have grouped these texts under

the heading "War on Terror," it is important to recognize that the wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan were quite different, with "distinct phases" (Enloe 4) that included

different kinds of weapons, different strategy and tactics, different resource levels,

and varying degrees of public support.   Afghanistan was the smaller, longer war,

more popular through most of its prosecution. It was fought in rural spaces, the small

outposts and valleys and mountains of Afghanistan. Military vehicles could not

operate well in this terrain, so troops were often required to dismount and walk to

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[27] *The Guardian*'s Robin Yassin-Kassab has described Blassim as "perhaps the best writer of Arabic fiction alive" (in a review of an anthology that excluded his work, no less).

seek out insurgents and win hearts and minds in villages under the doctrines of

counterinsurgency. IEDs were particularly deadly for soldiers in Afghanistan, who

would be struck directly on the body, with no vehicle providing any kind of

protection. Tall armored vehicles such as MRAPs (Mine-Resistant Ambush

Protected) or LMTVs (Light Medium Tactical Vehicles) were designed to withstand

IEDs in Iraq, but were useless in the mountains of Afghanistan. Instead, they were a

liability, as their width and height made them unwieldy in the mountainous Afghan

terrain. When they inevitably overturned on high, thin roads, the vehicles killed the

very men they were intended to protect (Tapper 184-185)—a consequence of

ignoring the many differences between the two wars. In contrast, Iraq was fought in

primarily urban spaces, with dense populations and largely flat terrain. Explosives

were hidden in highly prevalent trash (Finkel, *Good Soldiers* 17) that made them

difficult to spot or avoid, requiring vehicles able to withstand explosions. The war

was significantly less popular but much larger than Afghanistan, with higher troops

numbers and more extensive military support.

Over time, each war had its phases as well. For example, sending large

numbers of troops and supplies, such as helicopters, to the 2007 Iraq surge meant that

Afghanistan was undersupplied. This lack of manpower and resources turned the tide

in Afghanistan, with major firefights and overruns of bases for the first time since the

war began.[28] It is important, then, to understand not only the publication dates but the

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[28] In 2007, small outposts in Afghanistan began to see Taliban and Al Qaeda forces
stage large-scale, close-range, direct attacks. On July 13, 2008, the men of Second

period and location in which each text is set in order to understand *which* Iraq or Afghanistan is being called up as well as the affective responses at home and abroad that are invoked at that time. Despite differences in the times and types of war, each war had one thing in common: changes in the strategy, tactics, and weapons of war have eliminated the distinction between the danger of combat and the safety of rear support. American servicemembers can be killed defending an outpost, clearing a house, driving a truck, by mortars at a large-base, or in "green-on-blue attacks" in which Iraqi and Afghan army troops turn on and kill their American allies. Combat is no longer limited, at home or abroad, to the battlefield.

Platoon, Chosen Company, 2-503rd of the 173rd Airborne were constructing an outpost at Wanat just days before redeploying to their home base in Vicenza, Italy. Roughly 200 Taliban forces surrounded the remote base and its even less protected observation post, killing nine soldiers and wounding twenty-seven in what would be one of the bloodiest battles in the war in Afghanistan—so bloody that it would be compared to the infamous 1993 "Black Hawk Down" incident in Mogadishu, Somalia. For more on the Battle of Mogadishu, see Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*. For an account of the Battle of Wanat and the contentions investigation that followed, see Mark Bowden, "Echoes of a Distant Battlefield." Sebastian Junger's *WAR* and "Return to the Valley of Death" contextualize the Battle of Wanat within the larger operations of the 173rd.

Prior to the attack at Wanat, Chosen Company had seen similar attacks the previous August at a base known as Ranch House, in which between sixty and eighty insurgents attempted to overrun the base. Later in the year a patrol of fourteen U.S. soldiers and fourteen Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers were ambushed. Every person in the patrol was dead or wounded—a 100% casualty rate that has not happened to the U.S. military since the Vietnam War (Junger, "Return to the Valley . . ."). Jake Tapper's *The Outpost* traces a similar attack in October 2009 at Combat Outpost (COP) Keating in the Kamdesh valley of eastern Afghanistan. COP Keating was only twenty miles from the outpost at Wanat (Tavernise and Rahimi).

II.

Methodology

In the aftermath of the carnage of the Great War and the rise of German fascism, Walter Benjamin recognized the intimate relationship between storytelling and death. For Benjamin, storytelling was based around oral traditions and the kinesthetic experience of listening. These moments created shared affective experiences, marked by the knowledge that ultimately stories must end and everyone must die. But if death sanctioned the storyteller, the mass death of the First World War began to silence him.[29] A man could no longer go on trip--to the fields of Verdun, say--and bring back wisdom to share with his listeners.   Instead, the men who left for the trenches of France "returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer, but poorer in communicable experience" (84).   With so many men silenced by death or madness or injury and so many communities decimated, there could be little communal knowledge that could accrue over time. The loss of storytellers, for Benjamin, was a function of the growing invisibility of death, particularly in war, as public loss and mourning were shuttled off to private spaces.

A century after the Great War begun, we are perhaps even more affectively

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[29] Benjamin remarked upon the numerousness of Great War writings that appeared beginning in the late 1920s. However, by the time of "The Storyteller" in 1936, with the rise of the Nazi party, it had become clear that no wisdom had been gleaned from the Great War or its representations.

disconnected to war.   Whereas the German and European populations to whom

Benjamin was speaking had lost millions of men and were still living in the ruins of

what would be the First World War, for Americans the War on Terror has been

fought in distant lands, by an ever smaller and more isolated segment of the

population and by shadow mercenary armies and drones.[30] The wounds of war today

are now largely invisible, while those individuals with visible wounds have been

isolated and hidden in separate Warrior Transition Units that do not interact with

other troops or with the civilian population. Many of war's victims continue to

remain unseen and unknown even as they feel the ripples of violence that explode in

Haditha, Iraq,[31] and Fort Carson, Colorado.[32] In past times, as Benjamin noted,

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[30] Jeremy Scahill has reported extensively on the use of private military contractors
and the growing use of drones in his books *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most
Powerful Mercenary Army* and *Dirty Wars: The World is a Battlefield.* In 2007, the
Los Angeles Times reported that the number of private military contractors (which
included American, Iraqi, and other non-American individuals) outnumbered the U.S.
military force, with 180,000 contractors to 160,000 troops (Miller)--although that
number may not in fact account for all contractors. The number of contractors
required indicated that the war had been "undermanned" (qtd. in Miller) all along; it
also allowed the extent of the war to be hidden, as contractor numbers are not counted
publically by the military in either deployment or, more significantly, casualty
numbers.

[31] The name "Haditha" has become "popular shorthand for massacre" (Enloe 72). On
November 19, 2005, a U.S. Marine convoy was hit by a roadside bomb while driving
through Haditha, a city in the volatile Anbar province. A well liked young Marine
died in the bombing, and the men in his unit, who would later say they believed they
were being fired at, spent the next few hours "clearing" houses (73)—by killing the
people in them. Four of the Marines would go on to kill twenty-four Iraqis, all of
whom turned out to be civilians (Ibid.). As with the My Lai massacre during the
Vietnam War, the details of the killings would only come out much later. Cynthia
Enloe has provided details of an investigator's interview with Safah, a young Iraqi
girl who survived the killings of her family that day by pretending to be dead. Enloe
explains that Safah's testimony is striking and significant because it is "rare to hear—
even if secondhand—an Iraqi girl's account of a U.S. military house raid" (77).

storytelling has come to fill the gaps that official histories have left out, articulating experiences that can be shared, passed on, and that gain strength as they are shared (87, 90). Literary critic Margot Norris has similarly described that the arts can fill the occlusions and omissions of official discourses—the mere information that Benjamin so deplored—by voicing the unspoken "human remainder" (21) of war that helps those at home to understand the costs and effects of war.

The generation born since the end of the draft has largely experienced war through filmic, televisual, and literary representations (Yuknavitch vii). Yet during the longest wars in U.S. history, representations of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were scarce even as human connections to the wars were increasingly rare. As a result of this gap in direct experience of or vicarious personal connections to war as well as a lack of aesthetic representations of the wars, our ability to respond intellectually as well as affectively has been limited. Going further, however, the limited connection to and interest in war have neglected the other ways in which war is experienced, at home as well as abroad. What is needed are stories that capture what war feels like, at home and abroad, in private spaces and public domains, in

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[32] In 2009, Dave Philipps of the Colorado Springs *Gazette* and Lizette Alvarez and Dan Frosch of the *New York Times* reported that between 2006 and 2009, ten members of Fort Carson's notoriously combat-heavy Army Fourth Infantry Division Fourth Brigade Combat Team had killed or been charged with homicide following their return home, while reports of domestic violence, sexual assault, fights, suicides, stabbings, and other fights had also increased. The unit had notoriously seen some of the worst fighting in Iraq and had taken the greatest number of casualties of any Carson-based unit to that point (Philipps, "Casualties of War, Part 1"). Philipps explains that in the stress of combat, at least some of the men became torturers and indiscriminate killers. When they returned home, as Philipps elliptically explains, "some kept killing."

intimacies and histories—in short, what is needed is a more capacious and expansive

way of thinking about and feeling war that addresses the social, cultural, and

symbolic dimensions. A more capacious approach to what counts as war experience

would allow both broader and deeper connections to war. In turn, I hope that

thinking more about what and how we represent wars, we might be more politically

invested in how both soldiers and civilians experience war—and how they can work

through war's aftereffects.

In literature, the lack of texts about the wars has thus far limited analysis of

the literary production of the GWOT. Because the majority of texts and films about

the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have only been released since 2012 (after Iraq had

ended and Afghanistan was drawing down), literary criticism is still catching up.[33] A

standout is Stacey Peebles's 2011 *Welcome to the Suck: the American Soldier's*

Experience in Iraq, the first scholarly book to analyze writing and film on the first

and second Iraq Wars.[34] Peebles usefully examines a variety of texts—memoirs,

blogs, novels, poetry, documentaries, and commercial films—and argues that the

defining feature of the contemporary soldier's experience is a sense of being "in-

between" identities, as war "enforces categorization even as it forces encounters

across the boundaries of media, gender, nation, and body" (2). Peebles, however,

argues that the "new twist" in the stories of war is a "desire to transcend

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[33] A 2009 issue of *PMLA* focused on war across space and time, with several articles
on the contemporary wars and representations of them.
[34] One of the articles in the 2009 *PMLA* was an earlier version of a chapter of
Peebles's book, which analyzes representations of both the first and second American
wars with Iraq but does not deal with the war in Afghanistan.

categorization" (21)—to not only be "in-between" but to want to be there.

Yet for many servicemembers, being in-between is ugly, painful, and unavoidable. In his ethnography of the U.S. Army base at Fort Hood, Texas—the largest deployment site for Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom—anthropologist Kenneth T. Macleish reported

> for the soldier, there is no neat division between what gore might mean for a perpetrator and what it might mean for a victim, because he is both at once. He is stuck in the middle of this relation, because this relation is the empty, undetermined center of the play of sovereign violence: sometimes the terror is meant for the soldier, sometimes he is merely an incidental witness to it, and sometimes he, or his side, is the one responsible for it. (85)

As "at once the agent, instrument, and object of state violence" (12), the soldier both injures and can be injured. It is this relationality that makes the soldier's body a "relay" of power (13), as the affective condition of war moves both ways, connecting people and things and then separating them, disciplining and shaping bodies in order to injure others' bodies, causing excitement as well as numbing as these disciplined bodies try to respond physically, instinctively, and affectively to "circumstances beyond their control" (13-14).[35] Understood this way, the soldier's body and mind

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[35] Macleish avoids invoking "trauma" as a way of understanding modern warfare, which is marked by moments of ordinary and extraordinary suffering. Instead, trauma focuses on the singular moment that triggers a response. Yet for many servicemembers, the experience of military service is chronically injurious. Psychiatrist Judith Herman, though thinking of, as Ann Jones summarizes, "battered women under threat of death" (*They Were Soldiers* 154) usefully proposed the term "complex post-traumatic stress disorder" to address

are not just "in between" war and peace—they are a kind of node that both gives and

receives violence, acting upon and being acted upon. Macleish's approach, then,

emphasizes the mobility of affective responses to war as he invokes a broader

network of affective connections to describe the experiences of soldiers.

I have outlined a number of non-fictional as well as fictional texts about the

GWOT, as well as some of the thus-far limited critical responses to them. As I have

explained, most of the stories about the War on Terror have focused on the

traumatized, guilt-ridden veteran trying to return home to and integrate into a civilian

world that is affectively disconnected from and uninterested in his—and it is almost

always his--experiences. These narratives almost unanimously privilege the upper-

middle class white male veteran's experience of war as the fundamental war

experience, to the exclusion of other soldierly positions and other war experiences—

in other words, these stories, while important to understanding contemporary warfare,

also give an incomplete picture of war that excludes, for example, women (as wives

and, increasingly, combat-active soldiers), individuals of lower economic status (the

main targets of military recruiting), and especially civilians (the primary targets when

> the more profound suffering of those who endure not a single catastrophic
> event but repeated traumatic events over an extended period of time. Some
> people, she said, are trapped in situations where they are made to face that
> terrible sense of powerlessness and the paralyzing fear of imminent death over
> and over again. Such a relentless assault upon the self should be recognized
> in a different category of damage (Jones, *They Were Soldiers* 154).

While "complex post-traumatic stress disorder" points to the chronic and slowly
injurious effects of violence, like Macleish I turn to "affect" to address the
constellation of feelings—not always negative--that modern warfare provokes and
evokes.

mistakes are made or military discipline fails).[36]

Through reliance on the authority and significance of the returning male soldier's story, these novels utilize forms of realism both outside and inside the text. The author is either a war authority, as we see with veteran-writers like Kevin Powers, Brian Van Reet, and Phil Klay, or he or she has created a simulacrum of the soldier's experience by dealing heavily with the content of war (PTSD, war guilt, and moral injury) and the forms of jargon-filled language unique to the military community, as we see in texts by non-veteran writers like Roxana Robinson and Ben Fountain. Through an appeal to both factual biographical experiences and fictional realist details, these texts emphasize the need for affective responses to war that move in that transformative space between fact and fiction. These works utilize the kinds of realist details that look and sound like they have been written by a combat veteran as a way to claim authority for their messages.

To make war affectively approachable and comprehensible, it is not enough, in my mind, to describe PTSD and its effects or to rely on the author's authority and positionality as one who has seen battle. This continuing emphasis on the importance of the male combat soldier's experience of war suggests that other perspectives are not essential to understanding modern warfare. Instead, we need stories that make us feel something more diverse in orientation, giving equal weight to the feelings of

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[36] See Lynne Hanley for a discussion of the canonization of white male soldier stories following Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory.*

soldiers, parents, wives, and civilians. Because most of the films and novels thus far

have focused on PTSD as content, using the soldier's experience of wartime trauma

to argue that we should be more aware of his sacrifice, the private hell of invisible

injury has been subsumed beneath its ideological function. Politics in these works

have been subsumed beneath military notions of honor and sacrifice, while the

violence these men do to others is often neglected. In order to acknowledge the

soldier's suffering, that of civilians at home and abroad has been and continues to be

occluded.

In contrast, I argue that in order to understand what contemporary war does to

bodies and psyches and human connections, we need a war literature that recognizes

that war is made up of multiple realities that transgress boundaries of fact and fiction.

While much discussion of war's realities, as we see with Elaine Scarry or Susan

Sontag, explores what is unspeakable about war, my interest is in how we might

bridge the gap between combat experience and civilian ignorance, using forms that

both create and appeal to multiple affective states. We need an approach similar to

what W.G. Sebald advocates in his 1999 *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (Air War and

Literature), translated into English in 2003 by Anthea Bell as "On the Natural History

of Destruction." *Luftkrieg* developed from a series of lectures given by Sebald in

Zürich in which he analyzed the absence of German writing about the Allied

firebombings of German cities during World War II.   The firebombing campaigns, as

Sebald explains, targeted a total of 131 German cities, including Dresden and

Hamburg, and were responsible for killing an estimated 600,000 civilians ("Natural

History" 3). A combination of guilt and trauma has, in Sebald's view, resulted in an

absence of representations of the bombings, as German writers have largely failed to

represent the air wars, choosing to look forward by forgetting the past.[37] Sebald

recognized that in the face of massive destruction, regular language is and should be

impaired. Eyewitness accounts of suffering are often limited by what they can see,

their intimate connections to experience, and the forms of language they can use to

describe what they have seen, while large-scale historical records are too distant to

capture the affective dimensions of pain and loss. Instead, he argues for a "synoptic

and artificial view" (26) that brings together both the intimate and the remote.

This dissertation, then, begins from this point at which fact and fiction, or

experience and imagination, converge. While there may be things in war that are

unspeakable, or nearly so—things that are so shameful, hard to hear, inconvenient, or

difficult to articulate—that does not mean that they are unfeelable. By bringing

together these different scales of representation and affective resonance, we can see

the war stories that are often hidden from the frame as well as how those shadows of

war resonate beyond the spaces and times of war. Like Macleish, I recognize that

war is not just strategy and tactics: it is an affective state, with real lived experiences

of weight, longing, excitement, fear, and love. Affects are, in my reading, feelings

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[37] Sebald was critiqued at the time for calling attention to the air wars, but notably the
piece ends by acknowledging that the Germans began the bombing campaign first, in
a Stalingrad full—like Dresden—of civilian refugees, as German forces cheered
while 40,000 people burned to death (104). For Sebald, who was born at the end of
the Second World War, imagining and representing the past, in all its forms, is critical
to telling the "real conditions" (ix) of war rather than merely consolidate a
"retrospective improvement of self-image" (x). He was, as he notes in the preface,
not completely understood in his task.

that are felt in the here and now, that circulate privately and publically, that move and can be moved.[38] If trauma is a symptomatic response to a singular past event based on fear (Macleish 16), affect can cover a broader range of emotional conditions experienced in war, from boredom to excitement to nervousness to shame. Affects are felt in the present and allow us to look toward the future. They can be activated by ordinary life on a military post as well as the explosion of an IED. Affects, then, capture the chronic and persistent nature of contemporary war, helping us to move beyond the trauma of the battlefield to look at the other stories and spaces in which war is present.

This dissertation looks for the traces of war not only in the content but also in the form of texts, analyzing how these forms generate war's affective conditions

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[38] My approach to affect is inflected by the work of anthropologist Kathleen Stewart, who describes the "ordinary affects" of daily life as

> varied, surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergencies. They're things that happen. They happen in impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating, in strategies and their failures, in forms of persuasion, contagion, and compulsion, in modes of attention, attachment, and agency, and in publics and social worlds of all kinds that catch people up in something that feels like *some*thing. (1-2)

Affects, for Stewart, are things that move and can be moved (4), and thus require thinking about in a more mobile way that recognizes and honors different scales of experience, from tiny moments to major events (12). Thinking about representations of war in this way, then, allows me to bring together the surging affects of combat, the boredom of home life, the apathy of civilians, and moments of fear and love that punctuate and cut through the ordinary. This more capacious approach to war treats the "open, emergent, vulnerable, jumpy" (55) nature of war by recognizing that these affects are not limited to the times and spaces of combat.

within the fictional textual world and in the real audiences who read or watch them. While these works do try to give voice to war's many stories, they also attend to affects, the surging connections between bodies and minds, individuals and groups, moving beyond war as singular trauma to more complex ways of understanding war. Using rhetorical, syntactic, and narrative features, these works try not only to speak about war but also to make us *feel* what war is like, even for a moment. They capture the affective nature of war as both form and content by attending to the multiple realities of war and multiple realisms of its representation as both characters and readers experience war affectively.

In order to consider these different ways of representing the realities of war, I focus not just on texts about the War on Terror but also on texts about war produced during the War on Terror. I wager that traces of the recent wars can be found in texts since 2001 that deal with war, even if they deal with earlier wars. Since recognition is central to my project, I argue that in the absence of personal connections to war, our aesthetic representations are forced to fill the gap. In keeping with my emphasis on recognizability, my selection focuses on contemporary works but flashes back, in a kind of critical index of post-traumatic stress, to earlier war representations and issues that have been either unspoken or unnoticed. Although these texts do not directly address the current wars, they engage with earlier wars and instruct us on ways to respond affectively to war in our own moment. They thus register the affective persistence of the current wars, which seem to go on without end and whose effects will continue to haunt everyone they touch.

The persistence and expansion of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has also required choosing texts that stage similarly persistent encounters. Because my argument relies on the disconnect between military and civilian experiences, I chose texts that stage lengthy encounters—novels, films, and video games, as opposed to forms like poems or short stories. These longer works force readers, viewers, and players to live in the worlds of war for an extended stay. And, as modern warfare increasingly relies upon speed, they force us to slow down in order to experience the latency of war's eruptions.

I emphasize the persistence of war that exceeds the moment of combat as I consider the ways in which these works emplot their stories. In this approach I am again influenced by W.G. Sebald, whose novels and critical writings elide the difference between modes, genres, media, and the factual and fictional. Jumping off from Hayden White's argument that even facts are recounted according to the techniques of fiction, I argue that we can look for the affective dimension in the intersection of fact and fiction, or what Stewart might describe as an affective "contact zone" (3). I thus trace and account for the literary and filmic techniques that generate affects in order to better understand current approaches to war. These works move between fact and fiction, as I read the wounds of war both literally and figuratively. These stories function as a kind of *punctum*—what Barthes describes as the unexpected element that breaks through the everyday by pricking, marking, or wounding (26-27). Put differently, they are like a blood wing, puncturing through to

provide us with "the wounding, personally touching detail that establishes a direct contact" (Stewart 6).

Chapter 1 explores how Toni Morrison's 2012 novel *Home* emplots and enacts Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, the invisible and "signature" wound of the current wars. Morrison uses formal narration strategies, such as narratorial disconnect and confusion, to make us experience PTSD's state of affective latency and eruption, the sense of ontological and epistemological confusion that indexes post-war trauma. Morrison goes back to the Korean War—often described, like the Afghanistan war is now, as the "Forgotten War"--to describe a kind of national amnesia in which the teller and the text index the soldier's wound. Morrison tries to replicate the trauma of PTSD and what is called moral injury[39] as a narrative principle, locating readers as both victim and perpetrator. At the same time, she offers a way through, suggesting the possibility of reintegrating into the community while articulating the many challenges in doing so. In short, this chapter explores the challenges of transition for returning soldiers.

After focusing on invisible injuries, Chapter 2 opens outward into an analysis of realities of war that do not depend on the observation of combat. Building on

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[39] In his books *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*, psychiatrist Jonathan Shay describes the concept of "moral injury," or a sense of "betrayal of 'what's right'" (*Achilles* 3) by soldiers in combat. Through his work with Vietnam veterans, Shay learned that many were struggling not with clinically specific trauma, which requires that a person believed that the self or others were in serious danger, but rather with abandoning societal moral principles of cohesion, grieving, and treatment of other people—soldiers, civilians, and even the enemy—as human.

Brecht's theory of theatrical alienation and Sebald's discussion of hybrid storytelling, this chapter describes the transitional nature of women's experience of war and representation in war texts. I analyze innovative forms in the documentary film *Lioness* and in novels such as Lea Carpenter's *Eleven Days* and Ha Jin's *Nanjing Requiem* in order to highlight other invisible wounds of war. These works focus on how women experience wars as fighters, mothers, and civilians through a kind of realism that does not depend on the observer—that is, these stories do not require the death-sanction of the soldier-writer, although increasingly, women are present in that capacity as well. Through an analysis of how texts can capture this moment of transition, I argue for a war literature that includes women's experiences as critical to understanding the affective transformative power and ethical stakes of modern war.

Chapter 3 moves from women's experiences of war, often on the homefront, to how the homefront supports and (mis)understands the soldier's combat experience—and how that lack of knowledge makes us all culpable in what happens on and off the battlefield. In contrast to the many War on Terror texts that explicitly deal with trauma and moral injury, Ian McEwan's 2001 *Atonement* and Ben Fountain's 2012 *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* focus on the affective conditions generated by a soldier's precarious relation to chance, which is connected in both works to individual and collective guilt. Both texts invoke the space between what Tim O'Brien has described as "story-truth" and "happening-truth," or between affective realities and factual ones. While Kenneth T. Macleish and Tim O'Brien note the weightiness—literal and metaphoric—of warfighting, McEwan and Fountain

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turn to the weightlessness of war experiences at home. They thus turn to the distance and intangibility of post-cinematic representations and their transmission in order to convey how feelings of chance, precariousness, and non-closure that marks the contemporary servicemember's experience of war.

While Morrison, Jin, McEwan, and Fountain in particular have received widespread critical acclaim and readership of their war novels, most people now encounter war through visual media—and post-cinematic media in particular. Although films about war produced before 2001 have been quite popular, movies about the current wars have rarely been critically or commercially recognized. The medium that has involved the largest number of people for the greatest length of time in representations of war is, in fact, video games. Chapter 4 analyzes the changing representational, affective, and ethical stakes of three works lauded for their "realism" and "authenticity." In Steven Spielberg's 1998 film *Saving Private Ryan* and Kathryn Bigelow's 2008 film *The Hurt Locker*, realist details are utilized to achieve specific affective states and ethical considerations. For Spielberg, making audiences feel the costs of war promotes an ethics of individual sacrifice in service of communal and national good. *The Hurt Locker*, by contrast, is the first widely recognized film about the War on Terror. As Bigelow shows, soldiers in modern war are increasingly required to have highly specialized skills and contend with a pace of war that is becoming ever faster.

This combination of specialization and speed has limited the spaces and times for moral and ethical considerations. Soldiers are instead left with their skills and the

affective charge of war. Video games are paradigmatic of this approach to war in which ethics are subsumed beneath the addictive nature of highly skilled killing and affective excitement. The re-presentation of war is finally replaced by the embodied, immersive presence of war in gaming. In the end, the affective weight and ethical responsibility for what happens in war—to soldiers and, especially, to civilians—is lost to this addictive new way of feeling war. Bookending trauma's latency and affective numbness I described in the first chapter, this chapter explores the unpredictable, hyper-charged, eruptive nature of PTSD, looking at the consequences as this kind of aroused killing is increasingly valorized in battle and at home.

Chapter One

Writing Invisible Wounds: Toni Morrison's *Home*

In 2012, eleven years into the Global War on Terror, 349 U.S. troops committed suicide—fifty-four more than died in combat that year.[40] More soldiers have died by suicide since 2001 than in the war in Afghanistan, despite the military withdrawing from Iraq, shortening the length and tempo of deployments, and instituting a military "battle plan" aimed at reducing this "suicide epidemic."[41] Yet these numbers do not tell the full story, as they exclude the number of suicides among reservists and veterans, for which the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has no definite figures, but estimates twenty-two suicides per day (Kemp and Bossarte 15). Because these figures rely on death certificates, which are only as good as the information reported on them, many individuals are not counted, including many homeless, female, and unregistered veterans (Kemp and Bossarte 14, Basu).

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[40] As of June 2012, there were 154 suicides in 155 days, while there were 124 U.S. military deaths in Afghanistan during that same period. See Williams and Thompson & Gibbs. By the end of the year, a total of 349 servicemembers had committed suicide, compared to 295 servicemembers killed in combat in Afghanistan in 2012. These numbers exclude 110 "pending" suicides reported in 2012 that are still being investigated by the Department of Defense (Briggs). The Army had the highest number of suicides, with 182 soldiers lost. The number of suicides among active-duty troops increased 80% between 2004 and 2008 and 18% between 2011 and 2012 alone (Thompson and Gibbs).

[41] The military's anti-suicide "battle plan" aims to prevent suicides through a number of community-building and -sustaining recommendations, from maintaining unit cohesion, improved mental health screening, and better collection and sharing of data between the services and active-duty and reserve units (Dao, "Report Hashes Out Battle Plan"). In 2013, the Pentagon said that the suicide rates had declined to 296 active-duty troops, from a high of 351 in 2012 (Kime).

The scope of the problem is even larger than the suicide numbers indicate, as the VA cannot track non-reported "suicide events" such as "non-fatal attempts, serious suicide ideation, [and] suicide plan[s]" (Kempt and Bossarte 7). The VA's suicide crisis hotline has received over 1.1 million calls, 160,000 chats, and 37,000 rescues of suicidal individuals since its creation in 2007 ("Veterans Crisis Line"). Likewise excluded from these counts are suicides and suicide events among military and veterans' families, who are counted by the Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs in their suicide statistics and whose mental and physical health and wellbeing also are not tracked as they live with servicemembers' mental and physical injuries before having to live without them at all. Perhaps most surprising, though most of the suicides were committed by Army soldiers and Marines—those most frequently and heavily involved in combat operations--only 7-8.5% of the suicides from 2005 to 2010 were committed by veterans of multiple combat deployments (Mastroianni and Scott; Thompson and Gibbs). While clearly vast and disturbing, the suicide epidemic is only one facet of a larger American military mental health crisis, indexed by rising rates of homicide, domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, alcohol and drug abuse, and depression by current and former servicemembers (Olson).[42] As Ann Jones explains, war's violence does not end but rather retreats from public to private spaces (*They Were Soldiers* 5). Home has become a front, one in which battle memories are deadlier than bullets and explosives.

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[42] For accounts of these phenomena, see Glantz, Jones, and Finkel.

Recognizing, understanding, and treating this mass psychic trauma depends on

what counts as injured and whose injuries count.[43] Servicemembers experience the

invisible wound of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) more than ten times more

frequently than they receive visible combat injuries, but they are not yet eligible for

the Purple Heart, the oldest American military medal and the only one to recognize

war injury.   The struggles of female troops are doubly neglected, as women

experience more than twice men's rates of PTSD, largely as a result of unofficial—

and unrecognized—combat experience coupled with high rates of sexual assault

(Corbett; Benedict, "The Scandal of Military Rape"). Female veterans, as I shall

discuss in further detail in Chapter 2, have greater difficulty accessing VA benefits

for PTSD, since they were not officially in combat, while military sexual assault,

according to the ruling in a recent lawsuit against two former Secretaries of Defense,

is recognized as an acceptable risk of military service--one experienced by more than

26,000 individuals in 2012. The counts also overlook how the psychological effects

of combat extend to family members, whose silent suffering is ignored as they cope

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[43] As I explore later, PTSD numbers rely on self-reporting, with serious professional
consequences, such as limited promotion, amid a military culture that stigmatizes
weakness. As a result, the number of active-duty servicemembers diagnosed with
PTSD is believed to be significantly lower than the actual numbers. While the
experiences of active-duty servicemembers are to some extent tracked as part of
ongoing military readiness efforts, the challenges of veterans and family members are
often ignored. This silence is both structural—the system of military mental health
diagnosis discourages seeking and obtaining treatment—and symptomatic, as Post-
Traumatic Stress Disorder and related mental injuries involve psychological and even
physiological symptoms that block the speaking of trauma. With over two million
veterans involved in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the potential for unseen,
unspoken injury is vast, the need to address and redress these omissions critical for
servicemembers, their families, and even the civilian world.

with servicemembers' absences, abuse, and physical and mental injuries.[44] Finally, these counts ignore civilian suffering, from the estimated 130,000 civilian casualties during the Iraq War to the loss of homes, businesses, and economic and social mobility (Enloe).

As the military, medical, and political communities struggle to manage wounded warriors and military families, I argue for the use of narrative to recognize and respond to these silences. Historian Steven Casey has argued that casualties have the power to shape military and political policy in powerful and sometimes awful ways, yet the losses of war are "not just numbers or images to be manipulated at will" (248). What is needed to capture the scope of this tragedy is a literature of the personal and intimate, which locates individual suffering within a larger communal context. As Margot Norris has suggested, literature can capture the "affective residue" (21) that military and political discourses omit. In contrast to Norris's approach, which uses literature as a kind of supplement or counter-discourse, my interest in speaking war trauma is both practical and theoretical.

Following a long tradition of medical narrative ethics, I view narrative as a bridge between military trauma and increasing civilian affective and experiential ignorance—what has been termed the growing civilian-military divide. Because it is difficult for injured individuals to seek—and fight for—diagnosis and treatment, literature can be used to draw attention to and even treat these multiple forms of war trauma. By capturing the traumas left behind, I provide one model of how literature

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[44] For an account of the effects of war on families, see Alison Howell and Zoë H. Wool.

can affect the futures of servicemembers, their families, and even the larger
community.

I argue that the new literature of war captures affective dimensions that are often
left out of military discourses, or subsumed by military terms that occlude the reality
of war beneath the reality of warmaking. We thus see military suicides reclassified as
"unexpected death" (Jones, *They Were Soldiers* 23), for example. Yet while many of
the recent War on Terror novels have focused on the personal costs of PTSD, I argue
that in order to make PTSD more affectively real for civilians back home, it needs to
be both a form and a content. That is, what would would a narrative look and feel
like if the lived affects of PTSD were captured in the text itself?

My case study for this approach is *Home,* Toni Morrison's newest novel and her
first to feature a traumatized veteran as its protagonist. In her fictional and critical
writing, Toni Morrison has called attention how narrative can capture the unspeakable
unspokens—the hidden traumas that literary, political, and military discourses have
occluded. *Home* attends to the uneven impact of different forms of violence—
physical, psychological, and sexual. Acknowledging these differences, Morrison
argues that silenced stories should count as meaningful experience. My approach
considers narrative as Morrison does, placing forms of violence in uneven
relationships between bodies as a way to make stories count and be counted. That is,
narrative offers an account of suffering that can ultimately make individual stories
count—and counting not only points to the scope of the problem but also is central to

the epidemiological study and medical treatment of post-war military mental health.[45]

Morrison utilizes post-war suffering as subject throughout her novels and as form in *Home* in order to point to the need for epidemiological and clinical study and medical treatment of military mental health today.

      Home comes at a time in which the effects of trauma and isolation are destroying the nation's military faster than combat is. Through her protagonist Frank Money, an African-American man who goes to Korea to escape the Jim Crow South, Morrison calls attention to the effects of PTSD on its sufferers and those around them. The narration mimics PTSD's blocking and eruptions of affect, staging literarily what PTSD does literally. PTSD becomes what Morrison has elsewhere described as an unspeakable unspoken, as Morrison never names the thing but makes its presence known as it destroys Frank's ability to connect with others. Narrative draws us to the content—what PTSD looks and feels like—while using formal techniques to point to the challenges of dealing with and recognizing post-war mental health conditions. Just as Morrison argues that "invisible things are not necessarily 'not-there'" ("Unspeakable Things" 136), Frank's PTSD is an unseen, unspoken, and unnamed force that destroys his relationships. Through formal techniques, *Home*

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[45] This approach to narrative as a way to count is etymologically sustained, as Ross Chambers and Rita Charon, via Chambers, argue. The word "narrative" is connected to the notion of counting, as "the word *narrate* itself combines roots meaning 'to count' and 'to tell" (Charon 60). According to Ross Chambers, who has traced this connection, the act of narrating involves "the counting out, item by item, of the contents of accumulated wisdom" (101). Chambers traces the word narrative to the "German *erzählen,* to relate, and *Zahl*, a number" and the "Latin *computare* (e.g. French *compter, conter, conte*, or English account, recount, count) [which] show considerable semantic overlap between narrating and counting" (101).

registers the diverse challenges of post-war mental injury for both veterans and their families.

By combining the formal confusion of PTSD with a narrative telos, Morrison utilizes what Arthur Franks calls "the wounded storyteller": an individual who experiences visible and invisible wounds and therefore can speak *through* the wounded body rather than just talk *about* the wounded body (3). Franks, a sociologist, is interested in the institutions that study chronic illness and how the narratives about illness shape treatment; Morrison's literary approach explores how individuals engage with the individual and systemic violence around them. *Home* captures the residue of this violence as the narration itself becomes the wound, forcing us to experience the violence of its making.

With PTSD, the times and spaces of war extend beyond the battlefield, as the protagonist Frank Money's body and mind are as affected by his experiences at war as they are by the violence and ignorance that mark his home. As space, home in Morrison's book is the location of the unseen and unspoken, where radical invisibility and radical silence are conjoined. The time of combat is extended from beyond the battlefront to the homefront as Frank cannot escape the effects of war.   Home in Morrison's novel is marked by multiple forms of violence, from the lynchings that open the text to the memories of military violence that follow Frank back and are enacted in his own moments of violence against others.   Yet home is also the space of healing, where reborn communal connections allow Frank to lessen the weight of his individual trauma by sharing his pain with others. At once both site of violence

and healing, the concept of home articulates the healing power of narrative for the sick, wounded, and traumatized and links it to the sympathetic power of hearing for all those who are excluded from war and its stories. By letting Frank's invisibly wounded body speak itself and marking the limits of that speech, Morrison asserts the need for and challenges of treating traumas of violence committed, witnessed, and felt.   Narrative, for Morrison, is the space in which both the wound and the cure can coexist. Past, present, and future live in an uncertain, unstable, and unequal relationship, as healing begins with describing the wound.[46]

I.

Causes and Consequences

Treating the psychic wound of military trauma begins with recognizing its causes. It is thus an epidemiological question before it is a clinical one. A number of excellent studies have tracked the growing number of suicides and discovered that the causes of military mental health injury are not assignable to combat stress alone, with possible causes believed to include physical, mental, and moral injury, or the betrayal of a sense of what is right; familial, social, and professional stress; guilt; and a lack of structure and cohesion in postwar life.[47]   Without clear epidemiological data,

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[46] Narration speaks to a population that did not care about or understand Frank's "Forgotten War" in Korea then any more than it cares about or understands Iraq and Afghanistan now.

[47] Although the causes of military suicides are believed to include combat stress and injury, lowering of garrison standards, lowering of recruiting standards (Mastroianni and Scott 7), and even racial hazing, one known factor is the co-presence of both Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), and

treatment continues to be a guessing game as military planners and health officials examine the traumas done to and done by soldiers as possible causes of suicides and related mental health concerns.

The Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs base their PTSD-diagnosis criteria on the 2000 revised edition of the American Psychological Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (*DSM IV). According to the DSM IV, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is diagnosed when an individual has received exposure to a specific traumatic event that involved or could involve death, injury, or threat to the physical person or others, causing the patient to experience "fear, helplessness, or horror" that affect normal functioning. As a result of this exposure, the person will begin to show chronic and persistent symptoms up to six months or more afterwards of the following symptoms: intrusive recollection (repeated recollections, dreams, recurrences, either or both psychologically and physically experienced), avoidance/numbing (avoiding thoughts, people, places; memory-loss; disinterest, detachment, limited affect range; disbelief in possibility of future events), and hyper-arousal (trouble falling or staying asleep, irritability or anger, difficulty concentrating, hyper-vigilance, and exaggerated responses). While many servicemembers experience some of these symptoms, PTSD is diagnosed when a medical professional can determine a primary traumatic event that causes all of these symptoms for an extended period of time.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) make a soldier significantly more likely to commit suicide (Tanielian and Jaycox 129).

Whereas PTSD refers to a spectrum of psychological causes and effects, Traumatic Brain Injury is caused by physical damage to the brain, often caused in servicemembers by the concussive blasts of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPGs), distance weapons used by Anti-Coalition Militia (ACM) and insurgents to compensate for a lack of numerical and technological superiority. Damage--which accrues as troops experience multiple concussive events during one or more deployments--leads to bodily symptoms that may include vomiting, speech loss, and headaches, as well as psychic effects such as aggression. Although PTSD and TBI are distinct conditions, the current wars have complicated their distinction as the explosive events that cause TBIs can also trigger PTSD. Not surprisingly, being blown up is traumatic. Further, TBI has been found to "prime" the brain for PTSD (Drummond), so that the brain damage caused by explosions can make the brain less able to process psychic trauma.

With a smaller fighting force and larger, longer wars, troops have been required to deploy longer, more frequently, and with less time between deployments than ever before, as the Army, the largest branch of the U.S. military, has been sending soldiers overseas for twelve to fifteen month deployments once every other year for more than a decade—in ideal circumstances. This schedule, however, is a unit schedule; units are made up of individuals, who move to new units. In less than perfect circumstances, then, soldiers deploy, return to their duty station long enough to complete a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) to a new unit, and deploy for another year almost immediately. Others were caught up in the seven years of the

"back door draft" known as the stop-loss, which compelled deployed soldiers to stay in the military past their Expiration Term of Service (ETS) or End Active Service (EAS) date. As a result of these more frequent, lengthier terms in Iraq and Afghanistan, troops have been exposed to more traumatic events, more concussive blasts, and more home strain as relationships fray under the distance and extreme stress that is understood by an ever-smaller percentage of the U.S. population.[48] While many have recognized the stress that these bureaucratic and organizational arrangements have caused to the individual and collective military readiness, military culture itself has problematized diagnosis and treatment of mental health injuries, as admission of injury—particularly mental—goes against a culture that valorizes fortitude, strength, and bravery at all costs.

II.

Treating the Unseen and Unspoken

While military and political leaders increasingly recognize the damage caused by PTSD and TBI, at least in terms of their effects on military readiness, the invisible, unquantifiable nature of trauma is limiting efforts to prevent, diagnose, and treat these injuries. Army psychiatrist Elspeth Cameron Ritchie has noted that the same doctors who diagnose and treat PTSD and TBI are themselves military members. They thus

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[48] This gap between civilian knowledge and military experience is nowhere more marked than in the use of acronyms, which themselves point to the unspeakability of war. The acronym, both efficient and opaque, points to an insider subculture that makes talking about war both unspeakable and unknowable to those outside of the military.

answer to at least four masters, as they must weight their own Hippocratic oath, the best interest of the patient, the needs of the military, and their answerability to Congress and the American people while determining diagnosis and treatment (Ibid.). In some cases, these mental health professionals are themselves traumatized, sent to war zones and then forced to hear never-ending stories of trauma. For example, Ritchie describes Dr. Peter Linnerooth, an Army psychologist who received the Bronze Star for his efforts at preventing veterans' suicides, suffered from burnout, depression, and PTSD. Frustrated by the military mental health cuts that the Army used to function financially in wartime, or less charitably, to hide the scope of the war—from overusing the 350 clinical psychologists to serve a half a million troops to cutting therapy session times by more than half to raising the standards of PTSD diagnosis—Linnerooth was finally discharged from the Army with 100% PTSD disability. This story becomes personal for me, as Linnerooth settled in Santa Cruz in 2009, where he tried to treat other traumatized vets before he relocated, first to Reno and then to Oregon. His work with the VA was terminated, and he began to spiral out of control, unable to keep himself going by keeping other vets going. In 2013, he ate his gun.

For the American civilian population, these individual tragedies are rarely seen or felt, as PTSD becomes most visible in extreme cases. Ann Jones has explained that many of the suicides and other acts of violence are reported locally, with few reporters assembling the information to see a larger national trend. These local cases

occasionally erupt in spectacular fashion, from the two separate Ft. Hood shootings[49]

to the PTSD defense proposed by Robert Bales' attorney after he allegedly killed

sixteen Afghan civilians (Dao, "At Home . . . "). The quieter and more numerous

personal tragedies are occluded, from the surprising rates of PTSD in combat bomb-

sniffing dogs[50] to the story of men like Major Ben Richards, a "brilliant" soldier

whose combat-caused PTSD and TBI destroyed his health, career, and personal

relationships. In a shocking admission, Major Richards wishes he had lost a leg over

his mind so that people would recognize the reality of his wound (Kristof, "War

Wounds"). Those living with PTSD and TBI—and all those who interact with

them—must balance the affective loss and latency of these conditions with sudden

eruptions of violence directed against the self and others.

　　While the conditions themselves are invisible in their measurement, their extreme

effects certainly are not, as the media, military planners, politicians, and even

employers are ironically registering increasing rates of suicide, murder, domestic

violence, sexual assault, armed robbery, and alcohol and drug abuse.[51] Given these

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[49] In November 2009, an Army major shot up a deployment medical processing
center, killing twelve and wounding at least thirty (McFadden).

In April 2014, another veteran killed three people, wounded sixteen, and then killed
himself at Ft. Hood (Montgomery, et al.).
[50] Over five percent of 650 military dogs have been diagnosed with the newly
recognized canine PTSD (Dao, "After Duty . . .").
[51] Alcohol use is believed to be at an all-time high in the current military. A 2010
Walter Reed study found more than 25% of the troops surveyed "screened positive
for alcohol misuse." More than a third of all criminal prosecutions in Iraq and
Afghanistan involved alcohol or drug use (Reno). Military members drink on- and
off-duty, drive drunk, and have increased rates of sexual assault while under the
influence (Ibid.).

increases in socially- and self-destructive behaviors, the DOD and VA have commissioned a number of studies to improve overall battle readiness and post-war adjustment, but as of this writing the military, psychological, and medical communities have more questions than answers.[52]

This conflict between recognition and denial is key. As Morrison argues, "invisible things are not necessarily 'not-there'; that a void may be empty but not be a vacuum" (136). In the context of military mental health, the same people who are supposed to diagnose and treat PTSD and related mental health disorders also choose to ignore its sufferers in the allocation of resources. This paradox in which those who repress knowledge are also those who collect and report it is mirrored in the debate over PTSD's name. Would calling it Post-Traumatic Stress Injury, as has been recently suggested, alter how we treat it by de-stigmatizing the condition (Jaffe)?

Regardless of how PTSD and TBI are identified, treating these conditions is difficult for several reasons. Servicemembers are supposed to complete a 90-day reintegration period following a deployment, for which they can request a waiver. PTSD symptoms, however, can take six months or more to appear. Exiting servicemembers are thus screened for PTSD--via self-evaluative questionnaires--months before symptoms may ever appear. Nor does military culture encourage recognizing the need and asking for help, which is seen as a sign of weakness, with a number of professional consequences that may include limited promotion or dishonorable discharge. Should a servicemember overcome the stigma against

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[52] See Sagalyn; Thompson and Gibbs.

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seeking mental health assistance, he or she would have to rely on the overburdened

military and veterans' health systems (Zoroya & Overberg). Like most

bureaucracies, the VA and active-duty Tricare health program are slow, inefficient,

and require organization, drive, and focus to obtain help—qualities that a

servicemember with PTSD or TBI is almost certain to lack. As Kayla Williams has

described in her memoir of her time in Iraq and her boyfriend's struggle to get

treatment for his military injuries, "Does the Army expect a man with a traumatic

brain injury to advocate on his own behalf for the care and treatment he deserves?"

(286).

This bureaucratic problem stems from several miscalculations in the early

days of the Iraq war, as the Department of realized that too many people were

surviving, leaving a future health burden that the VA had neither the funding nor

bureaucratic and medical resources to handle.[53] The VA calculated the 2005 budget

based on 2002 actuarial tables for morbidity and injury among veterans. Eager to

keep political and popular support as the war in Iraq began in March 2003, the DOD

and VA did not revise the numbers to reflect increased numbers of injured

servicemembers, many of whom had survived wounds that would have killed them in

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[53] The Department of Defense calculates war costs on a "cash basis," meaning they
account for the everyday expenses without looking at the costs—like care for
wounded veterans--that will "accrue" in the future (Stiglitz and Bilmes, "$3
Trillion"). Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, and Bilmes, a government
finance expert, also note that cash accounting encourages short-term cost savings,
such as replacing IED-sensitive Humvees only after 1500 casualties had occurred.
They argue, "The short-term savings have resulted in a great deal of long-term human
suffering and have brought on higher-than-anticipated costs for medical care" (Ibid.).

previous wars due to improvements in battlefield medicine.[54] By July 2005,

Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Nicholson testified before Congress that the

growth in veterans seeking treatment was nearly double the projected figures—5.2%

compared to 2.3% (Nicholson). The VA had budgeted for 23,553 patients, which

would cost $81 million for the year. Instead, they treated 103,000 veterans in 2005 at

a cost of $273 million more than the VA had anticipated. By that time, the DOD was

already in trouble with Congress for understating the human and economic costs of

the war in Iraq.[55] The full scope of the problem would not become apparent until

later, as the effects of repeated, increasingly dangerous deployments, improved

battlefield triage, and new numbers of Vietnam vets reliving their own traumas

(Jones, *They Were Soldiers* 103) increased the number of veterans seeking economic

and medical assistance.[56]

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[54] Even now, the Pentagon calculates casualties based on servicemembers killed or
wounded in combat, which in turn influences the VA's figures (Zoroya and
Overberg).   These figures do not reflect those wounded outside of combat or the
scope of invisible injuries among servicemembers and subsequently make it difficult
if not impossible to accurately calculate and allocate resources for treatment.
[55] In February 2003, General Eric K. Shinseki, at the time the Army Chief of Staff,
testified before Congress that the Iraq invasion would require hundreds of thousands
of troops. He was harshly criticized by the Pentagon and retired in June 2003.
During the 2007 surge, Shinseki's predictions were proven out (Shanker, "New
Strategy Vindicates . . ."). He would later go on to lead the Department of Veterans
Affairs.
[56] In their book *The Three Trillion Dollar War*, Stiglitz and Bilmes argue that "the
total cost of the [Iraq] war is higher than the official number used by the
administration because there are so many costs that it does not count" (17). They
came to their figure through the following calculations: calculating the total
expenditures and appropriations up to their 2008 publication date for military
operations; adding 'operational expenditures' and savings, such as overall defense
budget increases, hidden in the defense budget; correcting figures for inflation;
adding future operational expenditures, such as projected future operating costs for

As of September 2012, the VA had more than 860,000 backlogged disability claims, of which 228,000 had been pending for over a year (Kaye and Bronstein). This resource problem was further aggravated by the way in which the Department of Defense counts those wounded in war—the official tally includes only those wounded in combat, with the military as the arbiter of what counts and what does not count as combat. The use of separate tallies to track the wounded—along with the growing use of private military contractors, whose death and injury numbers are excluded from official tallies--allows the economic and individual costs of the war to be occluded, as those with and without invisible wounds quite literally do not count: not in the tallies that allocate resources and not in the consciousness of the U.S. military, politicians, or civilian populations.

During the current wars, the question of invisibility moves beyond what is easily quantified, as epidemiological statistics belie a lack of underlying clarity about what PTSD and TBI are and what they should count for. For example, the VA disability benefits for PTSD were not initially counted in the VA budget and allocation of

the war, contingent upon troop levels and withdrawal date; adding current and future costs for disability and veterans' health care; adding future costs to restore the military to its prewar strength and repair and replace armaments and equipment; adding budgetary costs to other government agencies, such as Social Security disability compensation or subsidized veterans' loans; adding interest; estimating the cost to the economy in dead or disabled troops, who are valued at a $500,000 insurance death benefit but represent a much larger cost in future earnings they can no longer contribute, as well as the costs to family members who must leave their jobs to care for disabled veterans; and estimating the macroeconomic impact on higher oil prices and government funding for schools and roads that has been redirected to defense costs. Their estimate comes to between $2.7 trillion and $5 trillion in total economic costs, depending on troop levels, withdrawal dates, and number and severity of injured troops (17-31). Their figures, however, do not take into account the costs of the war to other nations and, in particular, to Iraq.

resources. In practice, while headcounts and suicide counts index the extent of the

problem, what counts as wounded has been harder to measure and easier to ignore.

This unwillingness to recognize the extent of individual and collective suffering

caused by PTSD resulted in early denial of benefits and, finally, an overwhelming

number of cases that has led to benefits delays for all applicants.[57]

These delays have been so severe that the VA is currently under investigation at

forty-two hospitals for forging wait lists, moving veterans off the list to hide wait

times and denying them much-needed care (Carter).   At least 1700 veterans were

found to have been unlisted at the Phoenix location, with a minimum of twenty-three

deaths caused by these waits (cited in Carter). An independent report by the

Inspector General found that veterans waited an average of 115 days for care at the

Phoenix hospital (cited in Josh Hicks). Before the Phoenix scandal, CNN had

reported that of eighty-two veterans believed to have suffered complications from

diagnosis and treatment delays, at least nineteen have died of diseases like cancer

while waiting for "simple medical screenings like colonoscopies and endoscopies"

(Bronstein, Black, and Griffin). As a result of ongoing miscalculation of resources

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[57] Aaron Glantz of the Center for Investigative Reporting in March 2013 published
his research, verified by the VA, that the average wait time for all disability claims
was 273 days. This public figure is belied by Glantz's access to internal data, which
suggests that new claims from Iraq and Afghanistan may take on average 316-327
days. Urban centers such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York experience even
longer delays: from 542-642 days for new claims. Since 2009, the number of
veterans waiting more than a year for benefits has risen 2000 percent, from 11,000 in
2009 to 245,000 in 2012. VA spokesman Johnathan Taylor told Glantz that the
delays were caused by a 50 percent increase in benefits applications in the wake of
reduced standards for PTSD and TBI benefits and increasing claims for Vietnam-era
illnesses caused by Agent Orange.

and outright lies, veterans are dying of treatable diseases waiting for treatment guaranteed by their military service.

The poor planning by the DOD and VA—from undersupplying troops to Iraq and Afghanistan to underestimating the economic costs and medical and bureaucratic requirements for treating survivors--came to a head in 2007, when Walter Reed Hospital, the primary site for treating veterans located minutes away from the White House, was revealed by *Washington Post* reporters Dana Priest and Anne Hull to be moldy, roach-infested, and incapable of responding to veterans' needs (Priest and Hull; Luo). This dehumanizing arithmetic, which has equated individual lives with their economic cost,[58] has had devastating effects on the individuals who need help.[59]

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[58] Ironically, the cost, human and economic, of not treating these conditions is even higher, for individual service members, their families, society at large, and the military. Even one soldier represents a significant investment, as training is expensive and time-consuming, while the human expense is immeasurable. In 2008, a RAND Corporation study of invisible injuries of war estimated that in the two years following a deployment PTSD cases will cost taxpayers between $4 and $6.2 billion in treatment, lost productivity, and suicide (Tanielian and Jaycox xxiii).

[59] A recent article in the *Army Times* has addressed the use of anti-malarial chemoprophylactic drugs in U.S. troops, with increased incidences of psychosis, suicide, domestic violence, and murder by those who have used them. The drug in question, mefloquine (brand name Lariam), is an antimalarial drug developed after the Vietnam War, "when at one stage 1% of U.S. combat troops were succumbing to malaria each day" (Croft) because they had developed a resistance to chloroquine. Croft associates mefloquine with the worst of the "military-industrial complex," as the drug was pushed through without adequate trials in order to make it available for military and general public use. She further argues, "Effectively, all users of Lariam and Halfan, from the point of licensing onwards, have been involved in a natural experiment to determine the true safety margin, at current dosages, of these two poorly understood antimalaria drugs. Consumers have been unwitting recruits to this longitudinal study, rather than informed partners."

In the 1990s, mefloquine was found to cause neurotoxicity and psychological effects, including suicide (Croft). The CDC argues that the drug's "Neuropsychiatric side

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Beyond these bureaucratic challenges and exclusions, however, some progress

has been made as doctors are trying to treat PTSD and TBI as connected rather than

distinct conditions. Drug treatments are likewise showing promise (Lavine), though

as of now talk therapy is the preferred treatment for PTSD. Indeed, many of the

current approaches to treating PTSD rely on narration to work through trauma by

shaping the insanity of war into a comprehensible structure. Veteran and writer Karl

Marlantes argues, "The more psychic structure or framing that is brought to the

experience of combat, the easier it will be to cope with the experience afterward"

(Marlantes, *What It is Like To Go to War* 17). A number of programs help veterans

work through their experiences through narrative: these include Benjamin Patton's

(grandson of the famed general) *I Was There* filmmaking project, writing workshops

such as the Wounded Warriors Writers' Program and the Veterans Writing Project,

and psychiatrist Jonathan Shay's application of Greek myths to understand Vietnam

veterans. In writing workshops in VAs, college courses, and private group sessions,

veterans are using writing to work through and communicate their thoughts about

war. All of these approaches assume that narration can help traumatized individuals

effects may confound the diagnosis and management of posttraumatic stress disorder
and traumatic brain injury" (Magill, et. al.). Despite these findings, Mefloquine is
currently used to prevent malaria because it is cheap and need not be taken daily—
and for a time, troops were required to take it. The alternative, doxycycline, is since
September 2009 more commonly prescribed but are less desirable for Military Force
Health Protection (CDC. Doxycycline must be taken daily and can cause skin
sensitivity to sun—a major problem in sunny Iraq and highly elevated Afghanistan--
while Malarone costs ten times more than Mefloquine. But as one Naval Commander
medically retired after taking Mefloquine has argued, a single .50 caliber round costs
$5, while Malarone costs $4 per pill (Kime). This arithmetic, in which military
expediency is weighed against potential brain damage, is the kind of cost reckoning
that has led to a lack of PTSD and TBI treatment.

to moderate between affective shut downs and extremes while allowing those who are outside of the traumatic experience to access, connect with, and assist sufferers. Narrative offers a solution to engaging with and treating PTSD because it captures the stories that political and military discourses often elide. The leftover psychosomatic effects can surface in narrative, as servicemembers try to speak their unspeakable truths. As a locus in which fact and fiction can and do intersect, narrative—and literature in particular--offers a discursive space to explore what it means to come home from war, as individuals and a country.

III.

Writing Wars

Morrison's famous articulation of unspeakability was motivated by her intervention in the canon wars of the 1980s. Thinking about the connections between the "cannon fodder" of young minority men sent to Vietnam and the canon wars of literary study, Morrison argued that literature was one way to represent unacknowledged traumas—the "unspeakable things, unspoken" that continued to haunt African American lives (123). Morrison's use of military metaphors that focused on the African American voices that were always present but inadequately acknowledged in American literature and literary study show that the stakes of discursive violence are no less than life and death.

Numbers are not cold statistics for her. By counting voices and experiences, as she famously does in her dedication to *Beloved*, Morrison addresses the quantity

and quality of African-American representations in the American literary and critical conscious. Though not the first to explore the effects of war on post-war psyches, *Home* is the first of Morrison's novels to focus on a male veteran as its protagonist. Although her interest is in African American presence, Morrison's use of military metaphors shows that the stakes of discursive violence are high. "Canon Fodder," her original title for the "Unspeakable Things, Unspoken" lectures, hints at the disposability of minorities and minority voices in military and literary wars.   She describes:

> At first they reminded me of that host of young men—black or 'ethnics' or poor or working-class—who left high school for the war in Vietnam and were perceived by war resisters as 'fodder.' Indeed many of those who went, as well as those who returned, were treated as one of that word's definitions: 'coarse food for livestock,' or, in the context of my thoughts about the subject of this paper, a more applicable definition: 'people considered as readily available and of little value.' Rude feed to feed the war machine. (123)

This recognition of value—and its corollary term, counting—appears in the dedication to the "60 million and more" in her novel *Beloved*. In comparing the losses under slavery to those of the Holocaust, Morrison addresses both quantitative and qualitative counting. Victims must be counted, and through counting the numbers, Morrison suggests that the scale of this violence will be counted as an experience.   Morrison's interest in voicing unspoken, unremembered stories is a way to make "race-inflected, race-clotted topics" ("Home" 9) count in the American literary and critical conscious.

Her efforts to bring out the intersection of violence, race, class, and gender continue in *Home*, Morrison's first novel to deal with the "Forgotten" Korean War.

Home depicts a traumatized veteran trying to sift through the violent fragments of his past in order to reclaim a home he never really had. Yet her response to these traumas is not limited to her protagonist Frank Money, as Morrison addresses the still unnamed and undiagnosed issue of PTSD through the experiences of Frank and the reader. The novel produces the same set of interlocutors that operate to treat forms of physical and psychological trauma, as she creates those who narrate (Frank) and those who listen (the reader). While both Frank and we as readers experience the effects of PTSD, the thing itself remains unnamed—a void always already unread and unspoken.

Frank joins the newly integrated U.S. Army and goes to Korea to escape Lotus, Georgia—"the worst place in the world" (83) by Frank's account. His experiences in war have left him with symptoms of what we now consider PTSD: numbing in the form of excessive drinking, a lack of affect and engagement, amnesia, depression, flashbacks, and anxiety. Early in the novel, Frank has a public panic attack. In a state of "free-floating rage" and anxiety (15) he is taken to a mental institution. He claims that he tries to recall the events that led to his institutionalization, but "he couldn't explain it to himself" (14) and "he truly could not remember" (15).[60] Frank's memory loss is paired with horrifying flashbacks to

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[60] The haziness of PTSD extends to Frank's ability to see the world, as his attacks begin with a draining or excess of color from his vision. At times, Frank can see nothing but saturated, bloody colors; at others, "All color disappeared and the world became a black-and-white movie screen" (23), as if Frank is a spectator disengaged from his own life. The colors index Frank's affective state as he narratively negotiates his place in the world. Yet while Frank recognizes that how he sees the

his time in Korea. When he is "alone and sober, whatever the surroundings, he saw a boy pushing his entrails back in . . . or he heard a boy with only the bottom half of his face intact, the lips calling mama" (20).   Alcohol numbs his memories of killing civilians and losing friends, but even alcohol cannot stop him from sitting "on occasion for hours in the quiet—numb, unwilling to talk" (21). After the war, he is disconnected from almost everyone, with no living friends and no contact with his sister. Finally, Frank's girlfriend Lily—the only person to whom he feels connected—rejects him in the face of his panic attacks, public eruptions of violence, alcoholism, and lack of motivation.

Frank's disconnect is captured in the novel's brevity, lack of Morrisonian lyricism, and unsympathetic characters, which have caused critics to describe *Home* as affectively "distant" (Ulin). This distance, however, is central to the novel's handling of the affective structure of PTSD. The novel is structured unevenly, as short italicized first-person addresses to an unidentified interlocutor are alternated with lengthier third-person accounts that span Frank's journey to save his sister, his sister's involvement with a traitorous black man and white eugenicist doctor, and his girlfriend's love for and frustration with Frank. Frank's interpolated narrative operates as a kind of post-traumatic interruption, intruding upon the omniscient narrator and forcing the text to move forward and back in time and across characters. This alternation of voices, perspectives, and temporalities enacts the challenges of

world is symptomatic of how he feels, the text presents us with a number of narrative omissions and occlusions that problematize Frank's self-awareness and reflexivity.

PTSD, forcing us as readers to sift through the narrative for the story beneath the story as a way to understand and respond to post-traumatic affective blocks. Morrison forces the reader to deal with the reality of the syndrome through an unreliable narrator who cannot anticipate the suddenness of his own violence.

There are details in the text that make us doubt the validity of reading the omniscient narrator as merely a corrective to the words of the traumatized Frank. From the opening of the novel, Morrison raises questions about Frank's reliability as a narrator: he says he does not remember witnessing the burial of a lynching victim, even though he has just described it; his story is being transcribed by an unknown person; he admits lies or changes his story on several occasions; and we learn he is in a mental institution. Details are put forth and then corrected as Frank's constantly shifting stories render not only the facts of events but even his thoughts about and interpretations of events dubious. For example, during his train journey to Georgia, Frank sees a black couple beaten after the man tries to buy coffee. He decides that the man is going to beat the woman when they get home for coming to his defense and being a witness to his humiliation (26). The third-person narrator first describes Frank's response to the beating, but Frank's italicized monologue later corrects that story:

> *Earlier you wrote about how sure I was that the beat-up man on the train to Chicago would turn around when they got home and whip the wife who tried to help him. Not true. I didn't think any such thing. What I thought was that he was proud of her but didn't want to show how proud he was to the other men on the train* (69).

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The existence of two distinct versions of what Frank thought suggests a dialogic relationship between the two narrators--one that makes it impossible to locate any kind of truth or know where to stand ethically and affectively. With no narrator to trust and no clear space to position ourselves ethically or emotionally, we experience the "ugly feelings"[61] (Ngai) of paranoia and irritation that are among the affective markers of PTSD.

Beginning with Frank's escape, which was "so easy, effortless almost, that we wonder how it could have ever been in doubt" (Ulin), Morrison gives a number of clues to the essential unreality of the third-person narrative. Just after the narrator spends considerable time describing why different methods of escape from the "nuthouse" (11) would fail, Frank is suddenly able to loosen his cuffs and escape unimpeded. Despite fleeing in winter with no money or shoes, Frank is able to cross the country in a reversal of the Great Migration just in time to save his sister. Inverting the old racist trope of the white man who saves white women from black male rapists, *Home* presents a black man who saves his black sister from a white rapist doctor, with no retribution--a fantasy, surely.

Rather than understanding Frank's italicized narration as conversations with an unknown interlocutor, I propose that we read these sections as related to his treatment in the hospital—perhaps the transcription of his therapy sessions. In a more provocative reading, Frank never escapes from the mental hospital. If the ostensible

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[61] According to Ngai, "ugly feelings" are politically non-effective, negative emotions. In contrast to the "classical political passions" (5), such as anger or lust, Ngai is interested in more ambiguous feelings.

interior monologue actually records his conversations with a therapist, then I propose we read the third-person omniscient narrator as Frank himself, who has dissociated as he tries to come to terms with the trauma of his past.[62] In place of the italicized interior monologue, we have an interior dialogue between the traumatized, dissociated parts of Frank.

This dissociation gestures toward the essential problem of guilt for Frank and, increasingly, veterans of the current wars. In an article in *The New Yorker*, Dexter Filkins addresses the psychic damage experienced by an Iraq war veteran who mistakenly killed a civilian family. The Iraq war in particular, which was fought in everyday urban spaces, elided the visible difference between insurgents and civilians as men, women, and children used everyday objects like cell phones to detonate explosives. The Rules of Engagement encouraged soldiers to shoot first, choosing instantaneously between possibly killing a civilian or risking their own and their friends' lives (Filkins, "Atonement"). In the face of this impossible choice, Clint Romesha, recent winner of the Medal of Honor, explained that it is "better to be judged by twelve than carried out by six" (Tapper 553). Dying blameless, in other words, is still dying. Judgment, however, can come in many forms, including self-recrimination for choices made and even just for surviving. The sense of shame and betrayal that come with these choices, known as moral injury, is believed to be one of the factors behind increased rates of mental injuries. Whereas PTSD is motivated by fear—for oneself or others—moral injury and its correlate condition "traumatic loss"

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[62] The italics, which are often used typographically to distinguish interior monologues, also suggest that Frank's interlocutor is himself.

are activated by guilt (Dokoupil) and can complicate the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD.

Frank's traumatic loss and moral injury stem from separate but related events: survivor's guilt when he returns from Korea after the combat deaths of his best friends, his murder of a Korean girl after he felt sexually tempted by her, and his sense of helplessness as a black man who cannot save his beloved sister from a series of black and white men who sexually use and abuse her. A lifetime watching the powerful displace and murder the disenfranchised motivates his attempt to regain power, sexual and otherwise, through killing the Korean girl.[63] Trying to access his manhood in the racist, emasculating Jim Crow South, Frank is faced with the results of his violence—his murder of the sexually desirable and abject young girl paired with the white eugenicist doctor's violation of his sister Cee, who is made infertile by his experiments. In a place and time in which Cee's future cannot redeem Frank's past, Frank finally chooses—or imagines he would choose—to reject violence, striking but not killing the doctor as he tries to find a mode of masculinity that relies on controlled power over unchecked aggression. The novel ends with Frank digging

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[63]In his first description of the killing, Frank distances himself syntactically from the act itself while hinting at his connection to it: "*As soon as I look away from her hand to her face, see the two missing teeth, the fall of the black hair above eager eyes, he blows her away*" (95). Locating himself as looking away, and filling the space between the passive avoidance and active killing, Frank connects the two through repeating the syntactic structure "I look away . . . he blows her away." He later says, "*Thinking back on it now, I think the guard felt more than disgust. I think he felt tempted and that is what he had to kill*" (97). Frank registers his uncertainty through repeating what he thinks three times, marking his reflection as well as his interest in abjection and desire to kill his own abjection by killing the girl.

up the body of the lynched man and burying him in Cee's quilt, memorializing him with an anonymous tombstone that declares, "Here stands a man." Frank's manhood is reconstituted in this act of memorialization and tenderness, as he is able to affirm what it means to be a man not only through suffering (the man died by lynching) but through how Frank encounters, remembers, and overcomes suffering.[64] On the other hand, the graveside visit suggests that to be a man is always to be imbricated with violence.[65]

Home is the first of Morrison's novels to focus on a male veteran as its protagonist, though not the first to explore the effects of war on post-war psyches.[66]

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[64] From the opening pages, *Home* positions race in relation to other forms of violence. After he describes a murder he witnessed as a child—notably, he never describes the murder as a lynching--Frank says that he forgot about the burial of the victim (5). This omission and act of willful forgetting points to Morrison's interest in race and the violence done to the raced as the thing that remains unspoken. The word "lynching," like the term PTSD, never appears, despite two notable lynchings in the opening chapters of the novel. Race instead becomes a background to a number of forms of violence. Unlike in Morrison's other novels, which foreground race as the locus of violence, in *Home* race is located—though not always equally—alongside gender, economic, and military violence and oppression. Race remains the unspeakable unspoken background, the catalyst for Frank's own actions. We never know whether Frank actually forgot the lynching, as he claims after describing it, or is merely attempting to do so, but we know that this moment shapes Frank's own masculinity as he later uses military violence to combat his racial emasculation.

[65] It is worth noting in this scene that Frank "insisted" (143) that Cee give him the first quilt she has ever made against her wishes.

[66] Tuire Valkeakari traces war as the "dominant metaphor" of Morrison's fiction. *The Bluest Eye* opens with a reference 1941, and the presence of World War II hovers over the novel. *Sula,* likewise and more explicitly references the war in its opening line: "Except for World War II nothing ever interfered with National Suicide Day." The novel, though focused on the friendship of two young black girls, also traces the fortunes of Plum Peace and Shadrack, two shell-shocked veterans of the Great War. *Song of Solomon* also examines World War II and, with *Beloved,* explores the aftermath of the Civil War. *Tar Baby* and *Paradise* deal with the effects of the Vietnam War. The metaphors of wars military and racial come to the fore in *Jazz*,

The status of the traumatized soldier come home is not only a frequent trope in Morrison's novels--I argue that *Home* is a response to one of the biggest controversies in Morrison's career. In 1987, Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* a fictional account of an escaped slave who killed her own child based on the life of Margaret Garner, was widely favored to win the National Book Award. Morrison had arranged several tables of supporters at the ceremony (English 237), only to be stunned when virtual unknown Larry Heinemann's *Paco's Story* took home the award. This act of "oversight and harmful whimsy," paired with Morrison's loss of the National Book Critics Circle Award to Philip Roth that same year and lack of a Pulitzer Prize,[67] was deemed so egregious that forty-eight prominent black intellectuals and writers (including Maya Angelou, Amiri Baraka, Hortense Spillers, Angela Davis, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Alice Walker) published a tribute to Toni Morrison in the January 24, 1988, New York Times Book Review as a way to remedy the "the failure of national recognition that her five major works of fiction entirely deserve" ("Black Writers"),.

The fury over Morrison's loss was in my view at least partially related to the relatively unknown novel that won in *Beloved*'s place. In Larry Heinemann's *Paco's Story,* Paco Sullivan is the emotionally and physically wounded lone survivor of a friendly-fire massacre at his Vietnam firebase. As the ghosts of the men killed at Firebase Harriette narrate, we learn that all of them—including Paco—participated in

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which describes the 1917 East St. Louis race riots using military metaphors (Valkeakari 150).
[67] Morrison would later that year win the Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved* and, in 1993, win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

the gang rape of a female Vietnamese sniper. *Beloved*, in contrast, depicts a black

female rape victim whose love for her children is "too thick" (193): so thick that she

kills her daughter to stop their return to the plantation Sweet Home. As in *Paco's*

Story, in *Beloved* the ghosts of the past—the dead daughter and all those who

experienced actual and what Orlando Patterson describes as "social death" under

slavery—come back to haunt the present. Both texts elide the difference between

killers and victims, but Heinemann's win posited the experience of the violating and

violent white male soldier as more worthy of recognition and remembrance than the

story of centuries of violated black, and particularly black female, experience.[68] In an

America willing to come to terms with its recent violence abroad before considering

its legacy of violence at home, the triumph of *Paco's Story* undercut Morrison's

efforts to excavate the hidden voices in American history, literature, and literary

criticism.

 Home replaces Paco, the diminutive of the Spanish Francisco, with Frank, the

diminutive of the English cognate Francis.   Morrison, writing in the midst of the

recent prevalence of and interest in invisible wounds, focuses on Frank's return to

everyday life and the effects of his psychic trauma on his reintegration. In contrast,

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[68]Philip Caputo described the sudden popularity of Vietnam films and novels as
"Vietnam chic," with critical and commercial success for films such as *Platoon*, *Full
Metal Jacket*, *Casualties of War, First Blood, Rambo: First Blood, Part II*, and texts
by Tim O'Brien, Robert Olen Butler, Larry Heinemann, Bobbie Ann Mason, Philip
Caputo, and Robert Stone ("Writers Try to Make Sense of the Vietnam Book
Boom"). According to Susan Jeffords, 1985 brought special issues of *Time, The New
Republic, The New York Times Magazine* and *Newsweek* to commemorate the ten-
year anniversary of the fall of Saigon (1). Even television began to explore Vietnam,
with *China Beach* and *Tour of Duty* the first shows set in the war and veteran
characters in popular shows such as *Miami Vice* and *Magnum P.I.* (1-2).

Heinemann was writing and publishing in the midst of a mid-1980s Vietnam War renaissance, as the national trauma of military and political defeat was displaced onto the bodies of soldiers. Popular films like *First Blood* and *Platoon* appeared just as the U.S. military was first acknowledging the existence of PTSD and its possible effects on Vietnam veterans, who received no therapy or disability assistance for more than thirteen years after the war ended.   National injury was healed through novels and films that, in the words of Susan Jeffords, remasculinized America by aestheticizing hardened male soldier bodies.[69] As the hard body came to save the softened mind, Paco's exterior wounds register his damaged interiority. For Frank in *Home,* the invisibility of his wounds denies sympathetic affective responses from others.[70]

This distinction between visible and invisible wounds in *Home* and *Paco's Story* is thrown into relief against the representations of the guilt-traumas that mark both Frank's and Paco's exterior and interior injuries. Haunted by the ghosts of their dead friends, both Paco and Frank are problematized as sympathetic protagonists by their involvement in war atrocities. Paco's participation in a gang rape and Frank's murder of the Korean girl are hidden traumas that bubble beneath the surface of the stories, openly addressed late in both narratives as the multiple causes of their mental anguish are initially occluded. Their emplotments, however, are distinct.

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[69] Vietnam was often described as a syndrome, which implied that it was a sickness that could be overcome.

[70] It is important to note that while Frank's wounds are invisible, both Frank and Paco are visibly marked in ways that stigmatize them—Frank as a black man, and Paco as a burn victim.

In a scene that lasts for ten of the book's 208 pages, the ghost narrators of

Paco's Story describe the gang rape of a teenage Vietnamese female sniper who has

killed two of their men. Susan Jeffords has rightly called it "one of the harshest

scenes of all Vietnam narrative" (70). The length and brutality of the scene and its

emplotment within a larger voyeuristic, consensual rape fantasy sequence

problematizes and aestheticizes the status of rape violence.[71] This scene initially

appears to dehumanize the girl as the narrators describe her "eyes . . . bigger than a

deer's" (180) and "eyes like a fretted dog" (175). These comparisons, however,

register the tension in the narrative between the girl's dehumanization through the

rape and the inhuman capacity of the soldiers who participate. Although the men try

to distance themselves from their actions by viewing and describing the girl in animal

terms, her human voice keeps asserting itself as she screams at the men in

Vietnamese. Her sounds—whose screams and use of language index her humanity

while crossing linguistic barriers--testify to the reality of her pain. At the same time,

Heinemann uses her status as just a body to the men to batter us with her suffering.

As "half the fucking company was standing in line and commenced to fuck her

ragged," she bites her cheek to keep from vomiting, "her nostrils flared and teeth

clenched and eyes squinted, tearing at the sheer humiliating, grinding pain of it"

(180). The narrators are the perpetrators, but they also allow us access to the full

[71] Jeffords has further argued, "For Heinemann, rape is the figure of the violence of
the war. But in a novel where everyone is guilty rape loses its gendered force and
seems to achieve status as a collective metaphor of American involvement in the
Vietnam War" (71).

extent of her physical and emotional suffering—and, significantly, to their recognition of her suffering, both in the moment and later.

Heinemann addresses a number of ethical issue in this scene, from the gender disparity in which a captured male sniper would not have been raped to the lack of conscience on the part of the educated, cultured lieutenant, "the English major from Dartmouth" who does not participate in but also does not stop the rape.[72] The scene opens with an explanation of why the men rape her—she killed their men, she is a woman, they haven't had sex for months—but ends with a recognition that they know they had done something evil, as nothing can justify their actions. By making the girl a killer and the men recognize their guilt, Heinemann muddles the difference between victims and victimizers, forcing us to see everyone and no one as human. The gang rape is the affective and narrative center of Paco's story, the trauma that alters everything that we have read to this point as it becomes impossible to view the burned Paco or his dead narrator-friends as only victims. The scene, with its aesthetic of brutality and structural and lexical links to earlier moments in the narrative, is not about the forward-movement of plot. If anything, the trauma forces us to flash back and reexamine everything we know about Paco and the narrators.[73]

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[72] Notably, gratification in this scene is similarly sexualized, as the death of the imagined male sniper is described in "spurts" of blood (177), suggesting a link between the use of violence and sexual power.

[73] Lydia Yuknavitch has argued that this scene is further complicated by its lexical connections to descriptions of Paco's wounded body and a rape imagined by Cathy, a young woman who lives near him at the Geronimo Hotel. In Yuknavitch's reading, Heinemann foregrounds the instability of victim and victimizer and, through the aestheticization of the rape scene, makes the reader complicit in the text's violence.

In contrast, *Home* denies us this sort of complex affective experience, as Frank's guilt occurs as a plot device to make Frank guilty of something more than survival. Frank tells us that a soldier shot a starving Korean girl because he was sexually tempted by her—and it is clear that he feels the fault is on the soldier's side, as it is apparently his temptation rather than her seduction that motivates him. He later admits that he was the soldier, but he says he does not know why he killed her.[74] When Frank kills the girl he does so from an affective response he does not fully understand and therefore cannot and does not articulate, and as a result we as readers are also given no access. The girl's thoughts, actions, and feelings are given no voice, so that she is never established as fully human in the way the Vietnamese sniper girl is in *Paco's Story*. We never know what she was thinking or doing as she muttered something that sounded to Frank like "yum yum" while digging through garbage, and unlike the ghost narrators in *Paco's Story*, Frank never tries to empathize by imagining her subjectivity. In contrast to the "unspeakable things unspoken" that Morrison has consistently given voice to in her fictional and critical writing, the girl's voice—and by extension her humanity—is noticeably absent. Surprisingly for Morrison, who is interested in issues of race and gender throughout

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[74] The trope of the child-killing soldier is frequently used in war texts and films to suggest the dirtiness and loss of innocence experienced in war. Whereas rape was the primary symbolic trauma of Vietnam War literature and films, "A central trope is emerging from the stories about the Iraq War as well, one that also emphasizes considerations of agency and trauma in the midst of war. These more recent stories repeatedly show the accidental killing of a child. In each instance, the bodies of these children call out as totems of the guilt, helplessness, and frustration felt by soldiers fighting a war in which choices are impossible—not because they are morally ambiguous, but because often there is very little time or leeway to make a choice in the first place" (Peebles 164).

her fiction and critical work and deals extensively with their intersection in the 1950s United States of *Home*, we learn nothing about—and subsequently feel nothing for-- the girl or the people of Korea who are affected by the war. She becomes what Morrison describes as canon fodder, "'people considered as readily available and of little value.' Rude feed to feed the war machine" (123). The Korean girl, invoking Ha Jin's notion of war trash as she literally digs through garbage looking for food, is in Morrison's text no more than a cipher—a person "readily available" for Frank's sexual and our textual consumption, and of "little value" to him, the text, or us.

IV.

Forgotten Wars, Then and Now

If invisibility and silence challenge diagnosis of and treatments for PTSD and TBI, the Korean War—like the current war in Afghanistan—is symptomatic of these occlusions.[75] Korea in Morrison's *Home* operates as a historical analogue for the unspoken and unremembered as well as a large-scale representation of collective traumatic amnesia in which the latent and inconclusive nature of that particular war is replicated in Morrison's text. Setting the novel in the aftermath of an earlier "forgotten war" draws attention to its importance in American history as the first integrated war—Morrison describes an integrated Army in *Home* as "integrated misery" (18)--and a violent precursor to Vietnam. Beyond this brief description,

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[75] As Deb Riechmann of the Associated Press has noted, "Not since the Korean War of the early 1950s — a much shorter but more intense fight — has an armed conflict involving America's sons and daughters captured so little public attention."

Morrison says almost nothing about the conditions that make an integrated Army so miserable—again a surprising omission in a novel so focused on race and violence.[76] The Korea of *Home* is likewise indistinct and even generic. Morrison is operating with nearly a blank affective slate, as unlike Vietnam, which was literally brought home to the American public as it entered living rooms via nightly television reports, Korea "is remembered very little, except when a television company decides to put on 'M*A*S*H' again" (Lessing 32). No one in the novel seems to know or care what Korea was about or why it matters, and Morrison does not contextualize, historicize, or individualize the war for her readers, who with historical distance are likely to know even less. Her descriptions of Korea are similarly generic, with brief and occasional mentions of the coldness cliché: "Korea. You can't imagine it because you weren't there. You can't describe the bleak landscape because you never saw it.

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[76] The Korean War has been underrepresented compared to the novels, films, poems, short stories, and anthologies on World War II and Vietnam despite "rivaling in ferocity and futility if not in size the trench warfare along the Western Front during the Great War" (Ehrhart xiv). W.D. Ehrhart, in the first and one of the only short story anthologies of the Korean "police action," has described the scope of the three-year war as follows:

> By the time the truce was finally signed on July 27th, 1953, somewhere over a million Americans had fought in Korea, with peak strength reaching 440,000 in the spring of 1953. Fifty-four thousand Americans died there, and twice that many were wounded. By way of comparison, the Korean War lasted twice as long as American engagement in World War I and only seven months less than American engagement in World War II. Almost as many soldiers died in Korea as would die later in Vietnam (54,000 to 58,000), though the Korean War lasted only one-third as long. (xiv)

The end result of the war was politically and geographically negligible, as the 38th parallel, which was crossed by North Korea on June 25th, 1950, in the opening of the war, became the basic dividing line after the peace was concluded.

First let me tell you about cold. I mean cold. More than freezing, Korea cold hurts, clings like a kind of glue you can't peel off" (93).[77] For Frank (and for us), Korea is an epistemological gap that cannot—and will not—be filled by narration.

If Vietnam films and novels foreground PTSD as the paradigmatic symptom of the war, the Korean War—or, more accurately, police action--is oddly situated in the twentieth-century military canon as a form of national PTSD that vacillates between latency and eruption. Korea, coming only five years after the exhilaration that marked the end of World War II, was the first of the Cold War-era proxy hot wars. The lack of clear-cut victory made Korea "a backwater war that possessed neither grand scale nor apparent nobility and that ended not with a bang but a whimper" (Ehrhart xix). Rather than remember how "the most powerful nation on earth had been frustrated (and nearly defeated not once but twice) by a bunch of unsophisticated Asian peasants in sneakers" (xix), Americans chose narratives about the still-recent "grand and global crusade to save the world itself" in World War II. During the 1950s, few literary works outside of James Michener's 1953 *The Bridges of Toko-Ri* received the level of critical and commercial recognition of World War II novels by Norman Mailer, James Jones, and Joseph Heller (xix). By the 1960s,

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[77]The trope of indescribable cold is connected to its inverse, heat, elsewhere in the text. Describing his family fleeing Texas in the summer heat, Frank says, "You don't know what heat is until you cross the border from Texas to Louisiana in the summer. You can't come up with words that catch it" (41). Through references to temperature and indescribability, Frank connects the forgotten war zone of Korea to the forgotten war zone of the Jim Crow South. Morrison describes the cold as related to skin—the glue-like, unpeelable cold becomes like skin color. Rather than excavate a hidden history of what has been called "The Forgotten War," as Ha Jin did in his 2004 novel *War Trash*, Morrison seems to be using Korea as a generic analogue to the South in *Home.*

attention was focused on the escalating war in Vietnam. For the next twenty years, writers—many of whom were drafted and fought in Vietnam—and the American populace dealt with the consequences of that longer and, through the rise of television, more visible war. Korea became "The Forgotten War," one whose most popular representation, *M*A*S*H*, is widely believed to be an allegory for Vietnam. The Korean War did not receive attention until the 1990s, after critics, writers, and filmmakers had exhausted themselves with Vietnam in the late 1980s.[78]

Paradoxically, while Korea was given little attention from the 1950s onward, it is also one of the most popularly represented wars of all time. In 1983, the series finale of the TV series M*A*S*H was watched by 125 million viewers—the largest number for a single-episode television show ever. Although the TV show, film, and novel of M*A*S*H were set in a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) in Korea, they feature little that distinguishes Korea from Vietnam, the jungle war ongoing during their production (1968 for the novel, 1970 for the film, and 1972-83 for the TV show). In other words, M*A*S*H is a mash-up of Korea and Vietnam, modulating between Korean War amnesia and Vietnam War confusion.

The 1970 film version of M*A*S*H, produced and released during the Vietnam War, uses dark humor to deal with the insanity and bloodshed that the film foregrounds in its opening sequence, in which the M*A*S*H helicopters ferry anonymous, bleeding young men from the theater of battle to the theater of surgery

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[78] The Korean War has recently been the subject of several English-language novels, including Ha Jin's *War Trash* (2004), Chang-Rae Lee's *The Surrendered* (2010) and Robert Olmstead's *The Coldest Night: A Novel of Love & War* (2012).

(to the film theater). This opening scene, devoid of combat but full of its

consequences, is accompanied by the ironic song "Suicide is Painless." The song

posits suicide as a way to reclaim agency in a world in which men are drafted and

forced to participate in what one character describes as an "insane asylum."[79] Under

this system, the possibility of death or non-death in war is subsumed beneath a desire

to choose the time, place, and manner of death—a desire later mocked and subverted

in the infamous Last Supper scene, in which "Painless Pole" Waldowski, a well-

endowed military dentist, tells his fellow soldiers that his inability to perform with a

woman has led him to believe he is gay. The other doctors, valorized in the film for

their willingness to give the finger to the system, stage a mock Last Supper, feed him

a "black pill" that will ostensibly kill him but merely puts him to sleep, and convince

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[79] This song, written by Johnny Mandel and director Robert Altman's teenage son,
Mike Altman, recurs during the darkly comic Last Supper sequence. The lyrics to the
song are excerpted below:

Through early morning fog I see
visions of the things to be
the pains that are withheld for me
I realize and I can see...

That suicide is painless
It brings on many changes
and I can take or leave it if I please. . . .

The game of life is hard to play
I'm gonna lose it anyway
The losing card I'll someday lay
so this is all I have to say. . . .

'Cause suicide is painless
it brings on many changes
and I can take or leave it if I please.
...and you can do the same thing if you choose.

a nurse to screw him straight. Waldowski's crack-up was more likely a response to

stress (the film does not seem to take seriously that he might actually be interested in

men), but *M*A*S*H* inscribes his trauma within a larger system of anti-authority and

male agency, as the psychic effects of treating wounded men are not addressed

directly.

The protagonists, Benjamin Franklin "Hawkeye" Pierce, Augustus Bedford

"Duke" Pierce, and "Trapper John" McIntyre, are in their names and attitudes in

keeping with the American tradition of political, economic, and literary individualism

and exceptionalism. They are not warriors, but they are heroes who demonstrate a

Thoreauvian unwillingness to be cogs in the machine. They do right by their patients

and do not care whom they infuriate along the way. Those who follow the rules, in

contrast, are physically, verbally, professionally, and even sexually punished.[80] In a

darkly comic prefigurement of the gang rape scene in *Paco's Story*, Hawkeye, Duke,

and Trapper John hold on to their agency and, ironically, maintain their humanity by

dehumanizing those who are inhuman to the suffering they see. They rid themselves

of the cruel and incompetent Major Frank Burns and break the by-the-book nurse

Major Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan through a series of sexual and professional

mortifications, broadcasting the sounds of their lovemaking through the camp and

revealing a naked showering Major Houlihan to a crowd of laughing spectators.

Hawkeye's, Trapper John's, and Duke's insanity responds to the insanity around

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[80] The film was also noted for its first-ever use of the word "fuck" in an American
motion picture. Norman Mailer's World War II novel *The Naked and the Dead*
(1948) notably replaced "fuck" with "fug" because the former was deemed
inappropriate.

them, as politicians negotiate for the status quo and Army rules are shown to end up costing lives instead of saving them. Just as the film makes us believe in the levity and fun that the characters are having—the film climaxes with a triumphant football game—we finally and very briefly see what repairing bodies does to the mind, as the jokers who seem to take nothing seriously nearly walk out of surgery when they find out they are about to be sent home.[81]

The 1970 film M*A*S*H addresses the invisible wounds of war tangentially, hinting at the eruptions bubbling to the surface without foregrounding them. In a film about trauma surgeons, the physical wounds of war are always on display. We never see the men before the war nor do we see the post-war physical and psychological consequences for the doctors or their patients. It is unclear to what extent the war has changed any of the men, which limits war and its effects to the combat zone. This popular representation of Vietnam via Korea subverts the reasons for and prosecution of both wars, but it also denies the long-term costs to the men and their families. Morrison, more interested in what happens to soldiers when wars are over, does not correct the affective disconnect that modern readers have about Korea. Instead, the epistemological gap is indicative of the current disjuncture between soldiers and civilians. The idea of the Korean War, like traumatic conditions and symptoms, operates along a spectrum of knowledge and effects that encompass complex military, geopolitical, racial, literary and filmic, and psychosomatic histories. Like Frank's

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[81] Richard Hooker's 1968 novel *MASH: A Novel about Three Army Doctors* more clearly foregrounds the psychological effects of the war on the doctors, who in several episodes run off from the base for days as they try to process their experiences.

attacks, Korea was absent from public consciousness until it erupted--in the longer violence of Vietnam.

V.

Conclusion

The growing lack of civilian affective connection to war and its costs has had profound effects for soldiers, from the "forgotten war" in Korea through the increasingly isolated wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are fought by an ever-smaller percentage of the American population, and by shadow mercenary forces and drones. Morrison's approach to counting, in which unspeakable unspokens appear in both the form and content of stories, particularly resonates in today's wars. Compared to the estimated 130 million casualties in wars of the last century (Norris 2), contemporary military and civilian casualty numbers are significantly smaller. But many are still uncounted and unspoken for: veterans, family members, and, most disturbingly, civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, for which the Pentagon's numbers have never matched those of independent trackers. That is, as Judith Butler has argued, not all lives have been deemed worthy of being counted in the sense of recognized and grieved. Although Butler was describing civilian losses in war, it is worth noting that the effects of war are felt at home and abroad, as soldiers with forms of physiological and psychological trauma often commit excessive violence abroad and bring that violence home as well. Toni Morrison's work has sought to bridge the gap, making both numbers and narratives visible and voiced.

Home is a good case study for thinking about PTSD and related military injuries because the novel captures the epidemiological and clinical scope of the problem. Through both content and form, *Home* forces us to encounter and experience the affective confusion that marks traumatic disorders. Morrison's focus on different wars, races, genders, classes, and spaces of inclusion and exclusion capture the clinical extremes, showing PTSD to be a problem that affects individuals and communities within as well as beyond the military. PTSD points to a range of problems, from the inability and even refusal to speak the horrors of war to an ironic system in which those who repress diagnosis and treatment also study the effects of non-treatment. As Morrison depicts, PTSD is an isolating injury that severs affective ties. Her hybrid narration, which on the surface barely locates Frank within a community, ultimately mimics not only the operation of PTSD but also the VA's handing of PTSD to this point. That is, the VA has used studying and talking about mental and neurological trauma to hide the non-recognition that marks accessibility of resources. Rather than solve the problem, the VA studies it, silencing multiple voices of suffering beneath the monologism of scientific and bureaucratic inquiry. If we look beneath what *Home*'s mixed first-person/third-person narration, we find only one voice, striving to be recognized and fitted into a cohesive social world.

This dream of a community as the means to healing appears as Frank imagines Cee, sexually violated and physically and mentally damaged, embraced by the group of African American women in Lotus. Morrison's long-standing recognition of the communal and communicative structures found in African

American female communities intersects with a recent finding that black women have

the lowest suicide rates in the United States.[82] In response to the growing military

suicide epidemic, in which over 80% of active-duty suicides are committed by whites

and 95% are committed by men (Thompson and Gibbs), the Department of Veterans

Affairs is searching for approaches that emphasize community over isolation—a way

to move from the old notion of "An Army of One" to a conversant space between the

home front and the battlefront.[83]

Morrison's ongoing commitment to excavating traumatic memories in her

fiction is apparent in this "long fetch" (Lipsitz vii) that sets the unnoticed violence of

home alongside that of combat. While *Paco's Story* ends with the wounded Paco

wandering from place to place, seemingly unwilling and unable to ever return home,

Home offers the possibility of homecoming and reconciliation for Frank. Frank, like

Paco, tries to escape the violence he commits as much as the violence committed

against him. But violence in *Home* is individual as well as collective, as Frank's own

act of murder is juxtaposed to collective violence in the extralegal lynch mobs and the

sanctioned violence of the military. He comes to terms with his acts by reframing

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[82] The Centers for Disease Control has noted that from 2005-2009 white men
committed suicide at a rate of 25.96 per 100,000, whereas black women committed
suicide at a rate of three per 100,000. This finding is particularly remarkable
considering that women have substantially higher rates of PTSD across the military
than men, even among those who have been in combat (Czekalinski).   Tanielian and
Jaycox also report that male veterans have been found to be more likely to commit
suicide than female veterans; white veterans have been found to be more likely to
commit suicide than non-White veterans (130).
[83] In recognition that the previous slogan, "An Army of One," emphasized the
individual over the community, the U.S. Army adopted "Army Strong" as its new
recruiting slogan in 2006 (Associated Press, "Army Launching . . .").

collective action, which in the text is posited as the locus of social (though not always

legal) acceptability for violence, as the power of the group makes everyone and no

one guilty. Frank accesses his individual agency—his manhood in the novel—

through facing his home and the pain he has inflicted and received, translating his

individual guilt and suffering into an imagined narrative for the larger community.

Morrison bridges individual and collective guilt, telling a story of injury and healing

that perhaps can only occur in and through narrative. The events of the text may be

the workings of Frank's institutionalized imaginings, but I like to think that, imagined

or enacted, Frank's story offers us a window into a man talking through his demons

and on his way home.

Chapter Two

"The Days of Rambo are Over": Women and War in Meg McLagan and Daria

Sommers' *Lioness*, Lea Carpenter's *Eleven Days*, and Ha Jin's *Nanjing Requiem*

> "All we have to protect us are the laws that are put in place, and when they are neglected, women not only die but are left with lifelong scars that may or may not heal."
>
> --Laura Sandler
> (qtd. in Herdy and Moffeit)

On January 4, 2013, now former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta ordered the end of the U.S military's ban on women in combat—the last exclusion in the U.S. Armed Forces after racial integration in 1948 and the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, the ban on openly gay military members, in 2011.   By 2016 American women will be allowed in all combat units (Bumiller and Shanker), including infantry, artillery, and even potentially Special Forces (Brook). Panetta's decision reflects the official recognition that women have been in direct combat throughout the Global War on Terror, with, for example, up to 21,000 Army women stationed in Iraq each year and more than 1700 of those women receiving the Combat Action Badge (CAB), the

award for active combat engagement for non-infantry troops (Harrell, et al. 144-149).[84]

Despite these contributions, and a long literary and historical record of fighting in wars, from the Amazons of Greek myth to cross-dressing female soldiers in the U.S. Civil War, American women have been precluded from official combat service on grounds that they are not physically strong enough to serve and men are not emotionally or, more disturbing, morally strong enough to serve with them. While more than 138 American women have died in Iraq and Afghanistan in the twelve years since September 11th and thousands more have been wounded, 12,000 were sexually assaulted in 2012 alone. A female servicemember is more likely to be raped by her fellow servicemembers than be injured or killed in battle. Yet while they have been serving in a limited—through increasingly dangerous--capacity on the battlefront, women have long served on the homefront, maintaining and supporting families and taking care of mentally and physically injured soldiers.

Both at home and abroad, in combat and afterwards, women are essential to the functioning of the armed forces. When military conscription ended in 1973, female servicemembers increasingly supplemented the loss of drafted men. The growing inclusion and integration of women into the armed forces allowed the volunteer military to continue to work as women took over formerly male support

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[84] While the largest numbers were in military police or motor transport operations—driving trucks—eighty-seven were in food supply.

roles (Bailey 136, Mathers 131-2).[85] They now comprise nearly 15% of the U.S

military[86]—a significant number in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, which have

stretched the all-volunteer force to its limit, requiring multiple, lengthy deployments,

lowering of recruitment standards to include convicted felons, and the back-door draft

known as the stop-loss. Even with several hundred thousand female troops adding to

the overall deployment numbers, the U.S. military has seen the effects of these

policies in high rates of military mental illness, suicide, domestic violence, and

substance abuse.

As the number of American women in war has increased, the conditions in

which they "support" combat troops have changed as well. The War on Terror, as

many have argued, is tactically, strategically, and technologically unlike previous

wars, with a nonlinear, porous, ill-defined "front" and no safe "rear";[87] asymmetrical

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[85] Despite these important contributions after Vietnam and, in particular, during the Gulf War, a January 13, 1994, memo by then Secretary of Defense Len Aspin affirmed that while more military jobs should be opened to women, they should continue to be barred from "direct ground combat." The memo defined "direct ground combat" as assignment to "units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground" and to "engage an enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force's personnel" (cited in Harrell, et al. 72-73).

[86] These numbers are not evenly distributed across the branches. For example, only 7% of servicemembers in the Marines are female (Department of Defense, "2012 Demographics" 21).

[87] A "nonlinear" battlefield assumes a more circular movement within a 360-degree Area of Operations (Harrell, et al. 167). Brian Castner, a former Explosives Ordinance Disposal (EOD) technician, explains, "We had no front line in our war. A front line only exists when two standing armies look over a field at one another. Our army didn't do much standing, and we were fighting the ever-changing sea we swam in" (194).

tactics that make predicting and responding to threats difficult;[88] a counterinsurgency strategy that involves small, vulnerable forward-operating bases and frequent interactions with civilian populations; and growing use of indirect distance weapons such as drones and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) that eliminate the distinction between combat and non-combat status and allow both men and women to both target with and be targeted by them. Due to the high need for support troops, women began serving in unofficial—and often unrecognized--combat roles, accompanying combat troops as truck drivers, linguists, and cultural ambassadors, and performing important security functions by isolating and checking Iraqi and Afghan women for weapons since men were not allowed to touch them.[89] They were even trained as snipers (Burke 220).

However, the price of equality has been high for female servicemembers. Despite restrictions on combat participation, women have higher rates of PTSD than their male counterparts--nearly double that of combat troops (Corbett)--and significantly lower rates of treatment.[90] They increasingly are found to be homeless

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[88] An "asymmetric threat" is one in which enemy forces do not use similar strategies, weapons, and tactics to those of U.S. forces but rather "attempt to harm U.S. assets without going up against the 'teeth' of U.S. defenses," such as by attacking civilian or unarmored targets (Harrell, et al. 6). As a result, predicting direct contact locations is more difficult (138-139)

[89] Cynthia Enloe has described the need for female security as the military saw rising numbers of female suicide bombers in Iraq (116).

[90] Ruth SoRelle summarizes one study of female veterans from 1996-1998—i.e. before the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—that found that they were likely to report "more psychiatric problems, more issues with substance abuse, and more lifetime exposure to domestic violence. They also had more physical health problems including obesity, smoking, irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, chronic pelvic pain, polycystic ovarian disease, asthma, cervical cancer, and stroke." SoRelle also

after their deployments.[91]   And as even the Pentagon acknowledges, women are

raped in the military at shockingly high rates, with an estimated jump of nearly 40%

jump in assaults just between 2010 and 2012 (cited in Steinhauer). Strictly speaking,

more men are raped—approximately 14,000 men to 12,000 women in 2012—but

because of the smaller numbers of women in the military, female assaults are

disproportionately higher.[92]

Yet while they are becoming more publically recognized for their part in

contemporary war fighting, women have in fact been supporting the U.S military in

numerous less visible ways that are essential to the function of the modern military.

Jennifer G. Mathers has described how women "

> not only provide the soldier with emotional and practical support, but are also
> expected to create and sustain a stable home life for the family and to accept
> with good grace the soldier's absence when his unit deploys. This in turn
> enables the soldier to devote his full attention to his military duties without
> being distracted by domestic concerns. (128)

While this emotional support and stability is critical to the soldier's ability to focus,

women are also serving in a variety of practical and necessary capacities related to

military service.

Changes in modern battlefield medicine and rapid access to care have

notes that the treatment of PTSD, which is already not particularly systematized, is
further complicated in women as there is less research on women's PTSD.
[91] Women veterans are currently the most rapidly increasing homeless group, due to a
combination of combat and Military Sexual Trauma, difficulty finding jobs, high
rates of single parenthood, and security and privacy risks in available housing
(Brown). The VA will provide care for veterans but not for their families, which has
left women veterans with children unable to accept VA housing (Ibid.)
[92] This lack of proportion has led many male servicemembers to believe that their
sexual assaults have been largely ignored (Dao, "In Debate Over Military Sexual
Assault . . .").

resulted, as I have described in Chapter 1, in an influx of visibly and invisibly wounded troops coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan, many with catastrophic polytraumatic injuries such as burns; leg, arm, and even penis and testicle amputations; and blindness. The Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs have been overwhelmed by the number and severity of these injuries, resulting in limited care and difficult bureaucratic procedures that severely wounded troops could not hope to navigate. Military families have stepped in, with major financial, physical, and emotional effects on the primarily female caretakers. At home, they may lose out on professional or educational opportunities; those who accompany their wounded soldier to the hospitals at Walter Reed or Brooke Army Medical Center must leave their jobs and homes to process paperwork, change wound dressings, manage prescriptions, and bathe, feed, and help their soldier use the toilet—usually with little to no financial support from the government. These tasks are not without their costs, as military caretakers have been seen to have higher rates of heart disease, double the rate of alcohol and substance abuse, and triple the rate of depression compared to the civilian population.[93] It is important to note that when we talk about military caretakers, we are primarily talking about women. This inequality is largely the result of the military's make up, which currently totals roughly 1.2 million men and 200,000 women. Because more men are married in the military than women are, 93% of all military spouses are women (cited in Howell and Wool 17).

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[93] Howell and Wool have collected the findings of several studies that track the emotional costs to women, with 37% of the wives diagnosed with one or more mental health issues, nearly triple the rate of depression, and a 50% higher rate of alcohol and substance abuse than is found in the female civilian population (18).

As Howell and Wool have argued, "When the military discusses the importance of 'family support' for returning soldiers, it is primarily asking for support from women" (17).

For example, Brian and Jennifer Jergens married two weeks before Brian's 2011 deployment to Afghanistan.   Like many spouses, Jennifer assumed that Brian would either live or die—the possibility of an "in-between" did not register for either of them. Instead, Brian's Humvee ran over an IED, leaving him alive with a Traumatic Brain Injury and the loss of his "legs, a finger, his spleen, and much of his hearing" (Drew).[94] Jennifer, like most post-war caregivers, has sacrificed much of her own time and energy to manage Brian's mental and physical health and wellbeing.   Under this system of care, in which military and veterans hospitals are understaffed and underfunded, spouses and parents of wounded servicemembers support the troops by giving up their jobs, education, travel plans, and financial security; increasingly the stress of care leads to health complications for the caregivers themselves, from depression to heart-trouble (Drew; Wool).

Other costs remain similarly unaccounted for. Journalist Ann Jones has explained that unless beatings and homicides cluster around a post or are notable in some other way, they are often reported locally—that is to say, no one is putting the pieces together on a larger scale. A few notable examples that received coverage: Ft.

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[94] Because of the nature of explosive warfare, contemporary military members can experience multiple physical and mental injuries, which modern medicine describes as polytrauma.

Bragg, North Carolina, 2002: four soldiers killed their wives in six weeks. One was strangled to death with her bra and then dumped in the woods; another was stabbed more than fifty times and then set on fire still alive.[95] Ft. Carson, Colorado, 2009: the number of reported rapes and domestic violence calls tripled between 2006 and 2009;[96] nine soldiers of the Fourth Brigade Combat Team were charged with homicide, including one who raped and killed Judilianna Lawrence, a developmentally disabled teenage girl he had met through the internet. Macdill Air Force Base, Florida, 2002: nineteen-year old Jessica Hine is strangled to death by her boyfriend, Marine Master Sergeant James Coleman, who sets her body up on the couch and then proceeds to go to work during the day and watch TV at night with her corpse for almost two weeks, heat turned off to preserve her body. Coleman also smothered his girlfriend's infant child and stuffed him in the freezer before disposing of him.[97] In 2012, this violence appeared in my hometown of Gilroy, California, when National Guardsman and Iraq war vet Abel Gutierrez killed his 11-year old sister, his mother, and himself (Ho).

As horrific as these circumstances are, in most cases, being a military wife or mother usually involves difficult but significantly less violent forms of sacrifice.

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[95] SFC Rigoberto Nieves shot his wife Teresa and then killed himself; Master Sergeant William Wright strangled his wife Jennifer with her bra and dumped her body in the woods; Sergeant Cedric Ramon Griffin stabbed his wife Marilyn more than 50 times and burned her body in their bed; and SFC Brandon Floyd shot his wife Andrea and then killed himself. For an account of these murders, see Tanya Biank's *Army Wives*.

[96] Domestic Violence reports went from 57 in 2006 to 146 in 2009; Sexual Assault reports increased from 10 in 2006 to 38 in 2009 (Frosch and Alvarez).

[97] Ann Jones provides a description and analysis of the Coleman killing (*They Were Soldiers,* 135-137).

Reporter Tanya Biank, who first broke the story on the Ft. Bragg Army Wife murders in the *Fayetteville Observer*, has noted that military wives are a critical source of military preparation and readiness. In a 2006 *New York Times* opinion piece, Biank has described that nearly 30% of Army wives volunteer on base as liaisons, running quality-of-life programs, finding and sending families to needed resources, and helping other families to deal with any difficult situations that may arise.   In total, Biank notes that in just fiscal year 2005, the Army used 635, 897 hours of volunteer service at an estimated savings of $11 million. These efforts, primarily by women, have spared the Department of Defense from hiring "consultants, accountants, social workers, publicists, counselors, fundraisers, program managers, administrative assistants, advisers, class instructors and event coordinators."

With these kinds of financial benefits, it is not surprising that wives like Kim Gorski, whose husband Mike was deployed to Iraq in 2003 with the National Guard, made phone trees that "were deemed by American war strategists to be integral to waging war in Iraq. Kim thereby became part of the marital history of American warfare" (Enloe 180). And the lived costs of marrying the military are high for wives, with growing problems with domestic violence, divorce, and financial instability. As a de facto support for the other suddenly active-duty wives, Kim noted the growing rates of these problems as early as 2003 (181)—in the early and less deadly days of the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, before servicemembers had begun to experience multiple, lengthy deployments and their emotional consequences.   The deployment immediately affected Kim's finances as Mike's

military salary was less than his civilian one, and his civilian employer did not choose to make up the difference. Kim had to rely on credit cards to survive on his military pay; the stress affected Kim's ability to study for her real estate license, hampering her future earnings as well. She unwillingly became "an eyes-wide-open wartime accountant. She could keep track on a daily basis of the true costs of the war" (181)

Wartime widows, in both the United States and Iraq, have also been silenced. In the U.S., these Gold Star Wives are symbolic reminders of male sacrifice. But their "lived realities" (Enloe 1) are often forgotten, as they are "left to cope on their own with their own grief, their impending impoverishment, and their multiplying responsibilities" (Enloe 63). Amanda Doster, for example, describes how she is emotionally and geographically stuck, unable to move forward with her life after her husband dies (Finkel, *Thank You* 26).

The situation is even worse for Iraqi and Afghan civilian women. In Iraq, four years of war had left an estimated more than one million women alone, either through divorce or the death or kidnapping of their husbands (Enloe 66). As political scientist Cynthia Enloe has noted, these women became the primary wage earners in a culture that had come to look down upon female workers. Many became refugees or resorted to prostitution to support their families, as male workers disappeared and it became too dangerous for women to engage in previously acceptable areas of employment, including working at the newly deadly target of the beauty parlor. As the war invaded women's spaces and lives, the challenges of their survival have remained largely ignored.

With VA disability claims backlogged by more than two years and a million

claims (Glantz, "VA's Ability . . ."), women overwhelmingly have picked up

caretaking responsibilities at great personal and often unrecognized cost, while wives

of visibly uninjured troops have put their lives on hold at best and suffered from

verbal, physical, and sexual abuse at worst in order to contribute to military

"readiness."[98] These contributions, though often unnoted, explains why military

families are now included as part of the military's "total force" (Wool 2), or the sum

total of military resources.[99] In the post-9/11-era, without women the already

stretched volunteer military would have broken.

This combination of medical assistance, volunteer work, and domestic

management has made the "Army Family" an essential, though often unmentioned,

part of warmaking. While the military has added a number of programs to support

families, the old saw still holds true that if the Army wanted you to have a wife,

they'd have issued you one. What is forgotten, then, is not so much the existence of

the military wife or mother but rather what kinds of lived realities those subject

positions entail. Ethnographer Kenneth T. Macleish has described this vulnerability

of the military family member in terms of "lived affect[s]" (153)—that is, the Army

family can be both a web of dense and necessary interconnections but also, less

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[98] See Ann Jones, *They Were Soldiers*, for a collection of local domestic violence cases since 2001. Amy Herdy and Miles Moffeit of the *Denver Post* gave one of the fullest accounts of sexual assault and domestic violence cases in Colorado Springs, home of the Army's notoriously combat-active Fourth Brigade Combat Team.
[99] "Total Force concept" was articulated in 1970 by then-Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird in response to lack of use of reserve forces in Vietnam. "Total Force" refers to the integration of all active and reserve military resources (Cronin 1).

charitably, interchangeable and under the Army's institutional control.   It is clear,

however, that the structural conditions of being married to the military and the

affective weight of living with or without their soldiers make wives and mothers

vulnerable—vulnerable to forces and contingencies they cannot ever hope to control,

vulnerable to violence on the battlefield, and vulnerable to the violence that may

come home.

Despite these important roles on and off the battlefield, women's stories have

been largely absent from the discourses surrounding the wars. Literature and film,

the place where we might go to find this "affective residue" (Norris 21) of war that

other discourses neglect, has in the past decade surprisingly avoided representing

women and war, either on the homefront or the battlefront.   Of the limited literature

and films that engage with the War on Terror in any capacity, most focus on

traumatized soldiers returning home from battle.[100] That is, they engage heavily with

PTSD but avoid other issues, registers, and perspectives—including how PTSD and

TBIs affect parents, spouses, and children, or how war and post-war are experienced

differently in female troops. In a marked contrast to the 1990s, which saw women

mobilize on television in the Gulf War and in popular cinematic representations of

and responses to "hardbodied killer women" (Baumgold) like *Terminator* 2's Sarah

Connors or *G.I. Jane*, the few contemporary representations of women and war that

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[100] The critical analysis of these texts is similarly absent, with recent work by Stacey
Peebles on memoirs by Iraq War soldiers as one of the few critical responses.
Political scientists and women's studies critics, unlike literary critics, have written
more widely on women and contemporary war, with notable work by Cynthia Enloe
and folklorist Carol Burke.

prominently feature female characters are mostly found in science fiction or fantasy works.[101] As men's voices and stories have predominated, the arts have been complicit in ignoring the effects of war on women, as caregivers as well as servicemembers. Cutting women out of these literary, historical, medical, legal, political, and military discourse communities has had major effects on women's physical and emotional health, financial wellbeing, and political agency.

This chapter responds to this neglect of women's experiences of and feelings about war by analyzing three recent texts that do explore women and warfare. For military women, changes in the nature of combat have created a number of complex professional and affective possibilities as they opened new opportunities for service, subjected them to increased violence by both insurgents and fellow servicemembers, and allowed them to serve as men by capitalizing on their status as women. Families have benefited from significant improvements in rapid evacuation and battlefield medicine that have saved many troops with grievous injuries that would have previously died. Survival, however, has placed difficult burdens on primarily female

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[101] A few exceptions would be recent short fictional works by Karen Russell and Siobhan Fallon and, although she focuses on male soldiers, Kathryn Bigelow in film. Bigelow, whom I deal with in my final chapter, is right now probably second only to Steven Spielberg as the premier portrayer of war in this country. Roxana Robinson's *Sparta* mostly focuses on a male Marine officer who returns with PTSD, although his interactions with his family are prominent. Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya's *The Watch*, a retelling of the Antigone story, is unique in that it focuses one chapter of the novel on the plight of an Afghan woman who comes to claim her dead brother's body from an American Army outpost. Although her voice is only present for a 1/8 of the story, the woman is a powerful agent who influences all of the men around her, Afghan and American. Perhaps more important, Roy-Bhattacharya's novel is the first to my knowledge to seriously consider how the current war affects civilians in general and female civilians in particular. However, only one of the eight chapters is narrated from the female character's perspective.

caregivers. For women in war zones, the possibility of telling what war feels like has been circumscribed by violence, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq, while the indeterminacy of the War on Terror has created the conditions of possibility for the changing, mixed nature of women's experiences in war. This chapter analyzes three works that capture this moment of transition as they try, as Cynthia Enloe proposes, to take seriously women's experiences in and narratives about war. My approach focuses on formal features of these works, which point to the indeterminacy of women's status in war as well as the transitional nature of their experiences.

While analyses of war representations have increasingly focused on soldiers' affective responses—to the fear that triggers PTSD and the guilt and shame of moral injury—what has not often been discussed is the vulnerability of military families as a real, lived, affective state. Their fears are, according to Macleish, "as constant a preoccupation as the durability of a Kevlar helmet or the white-hot kinesis of an EFP" (95). As wives and mothers focus on their soldiers' needs, their own lived realities—their stories—have been neglected. What is needed, then, is a more capacious consideration of the stories of war, one that moves away from a realism based on the observation of combat to a realism that acknowledges the intimate and affective nature of war as it resonates for those who have not borne the battle but have nonetheless come away utterly changed. We need a kind of Benjaminian communal shared wisdom that connects the small community of military families, bringing them out of the margins of the soldier's story and into bigger conversations about how war's effects ripple outward.

To do so, I argue that we consider Brecht's approach to the Chinese theater. Brecht argues that the Chinese theater, unlike European Aristotelian theatrical approaches, does not depend on empathy and cathartic release. Instead, actors are in-between themselves and their characters, which means that the audience cannot subconsciously connect to or reject the actor's performance. They are required, then, to think rather than merely to feel. This hybrid representation evokes different intellectual and affective responses in both actors and audiences, allowing different ways of experiencing the performance.

We see this hybrid approach in one of the earliest representations of women soldiers in the War on Terror, Meg McLagan and Daria Sommers' 2008 documentary film *Lioness* follows a group of female Army engineers deployed to Iraq in 2003 and 2004, where they became the first women in U.S. history to be intentionally and openly placed in combat operations.[102] Poorly trained because not technically allowed in combat, all of the women nonetheless engage with Iraqi insurgents. *Lioness* is a major contribution to representations of the Global War on Terror because it not only depicts American women at war; it also uses formal features to register the transitional nature of women in warmaking. In the first section, I will specifically examine how *Lioness* uses fictional techniques that position the film as a docudrama rather than a documentary. The film features the real Lionesses and real combat footage, but it uses fiction-based distancing techniques, such as staged

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[102] Team Lioness members represent a small number of the 15,000-21,000 Army women stationed each year in Iraq (Harrell, et al. 103)—10-11.5% of the total Army personnel in Iraq

enactments and empathetic perspectives, that visually and affectively blur the

distinction between documentary and docudrama, to the point that the women are

described as "Characters" on the film's website.

If, as folklorist Carol Burke has argued, everything in the military—from the

theater of operations to military uniforms—is rehearsed, performed, and staged, then

Lioness recreates this staging in intercut scenes that visually call attention to their

own performance. We are located as both like and unlike the Lionesses, caught, as

Stacey Peebles suggests, in the "in-between" (2) that is a defining feature of the

contemporary soldier's experience. Peebles describes how in contemporary

American war both male and female servicemembers are caught in a desire "to break

down and transcend the cultural and social categories that have traditionally defined

identity." However, servicemembers are left in an "in-between" state, as war

"enforces categorization even as it forces encounters across the boundaries of media,

gender, nation, and the body" (2).[103] What Peebles diagnoses on the level of content,

gender identity, and genre I want to extend to the hybridized formal features of the

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[103]Although Peebles does not mention military terminology in these categorizations,
we might think here of both official and unofficial military discourses that include the
connection of rank to power or the 2001 controversy over Army beret colors as a
synechdoche for masculine power and identity. Up to 2001, only three elite units
were allowed to wear berets for their non-combat headgear: The Special Forces
(SF)/Green Berets wore green, the Rangers work black, and the Airborne wore
maroon. To boost morale and esprit de corps, the Army decided that all soldiers
outside of Airborne and SF would wear black, prompting a massive outcry from the
elite Ranger units (Minor). Ultimately, the Rangers switched to tan berets in order to
distinguish themselves visually. In 2011, Martin Dempsey, the Army's Chief of
Staff, ordered all units to wear patrol caps with their combat uniforms, while SF, the
Rangers, and Airborne kept their visually and symbolically distinctive berets
(Shaugnessy).

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film. By combining docudrama's use of reenactment with documentary's use of real events and people—though always, *pace* Susan Sontag, with a recognition of the framing and exclusions implicit in any act of representation—*Lioness* utilizes a new and hybrid visual and narrative style that points to the transitional nature of the current situation, in which women are both in and out of combat.

In Lea Carpenter's 2013 novel *Eleven Days*, the mother of an elite Navy SEAL waits for word on her son, who goes missing during a raid in Afghanistan This text, one of few novels at least partially set in Afghanistan, seems very conservative in its depiction of Sara, a mother always waiting while all the men in her life act and even make decisions on her behalf. Despite her apparent lack of agency, Sara responds to multiple emotionally devastating decisions by refusing to let the men tell her story. Sara reclaims her power through storytelling--which the text claims is as powerful as warmaking--by excavating a long history of war stories and putting them in service of her own. This emphasis on the constructedness of war stories calls attention to while breaking our empathic connection with Sara, as the text insists on the specificity of her loss as well as the possibilities for communal recuperation.

Unfortunately, the words of civilian women in Iraq and Afghanistan have not yet been translated into English-language novels or films, although short story writer Katey Schultz's *Flashes of War* features both male and female American, Iraqi, and Afghan perspectives. Important work by journalists like Ann Jones and Sabrina Tavernise and political scientist Cynthia Enloe have begun to record and analyze the experiences of Afghan and Iraqi women. For example, in May 2003, journalist

Sabrina Tavernise visited the women of the Nimo Beauty Salon in Baghdad to uncover their own political wariness and suspicion. Ann Jones has written extensively about women in Afghanistan, but by and large the voices of Afghan women have been even more difficult to find. As a result of this silence, I turn to Ha Jin's 2011 novel *Nanjing Requiem,* which goes back to 1937 to explore how a civilian woman lives through and writes about a war zone. Jin's excavation of one forgotten moment in war will illuminate approaches to what I hope will be new, as yet unseen and unheard civilian women's stories. Jin uses the "Forgotten Holocaust" of the Rape of Nanjing, in which an estimated 80,000 women were raped and more than 260,000 civilians killed, to emphasize the role of aesthetics in historical memory.[104]

Jin constructs an affectively muted character whose function is to be a witness to the atrocities. Through this affective numbness, he allows details to puncture through the overwhelming horror and create an intimate contact between readers and characters. These details create an "involuntary and powerful learning and participation" (Stewart 40) that cuts across the horror, making us complicit in past, present, and future silences as well as their consequences. While the novel does not deal with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Jin provides a template for thinking more generally about how militaries treat civilians, and particularly civilian women, in war.

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[104] In 2013, the USC Shoah Foundation, following testimony collection from survivors of the Holocaust and genocides in Rwanda and Cambodia, in collaboration with the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, began to collect and preserve the testimony of the remaining survivors of Nanjing. These testimonies would be "full-life histories" that include the survivors' "social and cultural life before and after the Nanjing Massacre" ("USC Shoah Foundation . . ."). In 2014, the testimonies were made available through the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive as well as the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall ("Nanjing Massacre Collection Integrated . . .").

By exploring the importance of art to memory—then and now—Jin's approach brings together Brecht's alienation with what W.G. Sebald would describe as a "synoptic and artificial" approach to war, bringing together fact and fiction, intimate details and large-scale understanding in the service of sympathy and care. Examining Jin's text will offer a way to think about civilians in a war zone and how to emplot their experiences. By exploring analytical tools for emplotting civilian war experiences now, I hope that when texts by and about Afghani and Iraqi women begin to appear, we will have a starting point to understand them.

I.

Women on the Battlefront

Although thousands of women have fought, been injured, or died in the War on Terror, their stories are surprisingly absent in literary and filmic works. Science fiction and fantasy genres have continued to represent strong, violent, complex women—to great popular and critical effect. For example, Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* book trilogy and films have provided a model in Katniss Everdeen, a young woman who embodies the best of the military ethos as she values loyalty, self-sacrifice, love, and courage. She kills when she has to, but she goes no farther than necessary and shows remorse and even mercy—traits valorized by veteran Karl Marlantes, who explains that if he could go back in time, he would still kill but would feel a "terrible sadness" and "respect" for what it means to take a human life (*What It is Like to Go To War* 42). The book trilogy concludes with a mentally and physically

wounded Katniss finally going to war in order to stop tyranny, but ultimately her

victory allows her to abandon war for peace and choose the more conservative appeal

of motherhood. A variety of female warriors are also found in George R.R. Martin's

highly popular *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and the HBO adaptation *Game of*

Thrones. Although the show has been criticized for misogyny in its depictions of a

misogynist world (Meslow) in which real powerless and unknown actresses are

required to appear naked, both the books and television show feature highly powerful

women, knights and rulers, who are physical and intellectual equals to the men.

Yet while fantasy and science fiction have been willing to imagine women

warriors, more realist representations have lagged far behind, as the best-known

representation of a woman in the War on Terror is known for being a victim.[105]   On

March 23, 2003, Pvt. Jessica Lynch, a unit supply specialist in the Army, was

captured when her convoy was ambushed in the early days of the Iraq War. Although

she was only one of six captured soldiers and eleven dead ones, Lynch became the

public face of women in the War on Terror.[106] Her story, retold with the aid of writer

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[105] Lynndie England, the second-best known female soldier in the War on Terror,
gained recognition for her participation in torture photographs at the Abu Ghraib
prison. England attributed her participation to romantic and professional pressure
from her lover and boss, Charles Graner. Although England certainly participated in
the torture at Abu Ghraib, her depiction as a frightened mother manipulated by her
older, professionally superior boyfriend served to mitigate her agency in these acts.
[106] Shoshanna Johnson, a young black woman, was also captured during the firefight.
However, her story has largely been excluded from the rescue narrative. For
example, when Lynch and Johnson came together to attend a memorial event in
Arizona honoring their comrade Lori Ann Piestewa, the first Native American women
to be killed in combat while serving in the U.S. military, photographers present at the
event edited their photographs so that only Lynch was in the frame: 'It hurts, you

Rick Bragg in the 2003 biography *I am a Soldier Too: The Jessica Lynch Story* and

the semi-fictional television movie *Saving Jessica Lynch*, ultimately became one of

several contested stories in the Pentagon's propaganda campaigns. Lynch became

famous after initial reports depicted her as a "female teenage Rambo" (qtd. in Oliver

40) who fought to the death before she was allegedly shot, stabbed, and captured by

insurgents.   After her rescue, she returned home to parades, magazines covers, a

million dollar book deal, and television movies before it was later revealed that Lynch

was neither shot nor stabbed, never fired her weapon in the firefight (possibly due to a

gun jam), and was rescued from an unguarded Iraqi hospital (Burke 222-5). Despite

her lack of heroic acts—either as agent or injured soldier—Lynch became the face of

the Iraq War, and women in the Iraq War, for a distinct reason.[107]   As military

historian John A. Lynn has argued, "We want to fight wars but we don't want any of

our people to die and we don't really want to hurt anybody else. So Pvt. Lynch, who

suffers, is a hero even if she doesn't do much. She suffered for us" (qtd. in Eig). Put

differently, Lynch is a hero because she performs the female domestic work of war by

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know,' Shoshana explained. "I made a contribution to my government and to my
country, and it's hard when your contribution is ignored'" (Enloe 168)
[107] Despite the fame of Lynch and England, Army veteran Kayla Williams argues that
the female servicemember's story of war has not been written (although her memoir
aims to remedy that absence). She defiantly declares of these stories, "Don't count
Jessica Lynch. Her story meant nothing to us. The same goes for Lynndie England.
I'm not either of them, and neither are any of the real women I know in the service"
(15). One of the Lionesses echoed Williams's statement: "[Lynch] fell asleep on a
convoy, didn't shoot her weapon and then got a million-dollar movie deal" (Lubold).

suffering, allowing strong men to save the captured woman in a scene reminiscent of 17th-century early American captivity narratives.[108]

In the War on Terror, women have had to fight insurgents, their fellow soldiers, and the DOD and VA for their benefits[109]—a phenomenon that has led Sarah Corbett to describe the War in Iraq as "the women's war." The 2008 RAND Corporation study on invisible wounds of war found that lack of access to VA and DOD physical and mental health services due to bureaucratic challenges and provider shortages, difficulty getting time off, stigmatization, fear of access by command to health records, and professional retaliation limited both reporting and attempts to receive support services (Tanielian and Jaycox 245-275). In the absence of medical and legal recourse, other voices have drawn attention to women's suffering in the military in order to advance structural political, legal, and military changes. Helen Benedict's 2011 novel *The Sand Queen* and 2009 nonfictional book *The Lonely Soldier* and Kirby Dick's 2011 documentary *The Invisible War*, for example, have drawn attention to the plight of female military sexual assault victims.[110] Although he interviewed and included clips by numerous female and even male victims of sexual

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[108] This emphasis on saving innocent white women resembles what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in reference to the paternalism of British colonial rule in India, has described as "white men, seeking to save brown women from brown men" (303).
[109] Because many women did not report, or did report but were rebuffed, they could not seek benefits for PTSD caused by sexual assault.
[110] While a higher percentage of military women are sexually assaulted, a higher number of men are. Brian K. Lewis has been active in calling attention to this aspect of the military sexual assault crisis (Maze). In 2013, the documentary *Justice Denied* focused specifically on male-on-male and female-on-male rape in the military. The film, however, has not received the media coverage that *The Invisible War* did.

assault, Dick focused on a small group involved in a lawsuit against Robert Gates and

Donald Rumsfeld, the former Secretaries of Defense.[111]

Because of a military culture that, as Helen Benedict, Kirby Dick, and others

have noted, interrogates, punishes, and frightens rape victims into silence, few of

these stories of service have been told.   Helen Benedict's work in particular has tried

to give voice to the experience of women in the contemporary military—an

experience that is marked by fear, hazing, violence, and misogyny. In her memoir of

her time in Iraq, Army veteran Kayla Williams describes frequent, vitriolic, and

violent verbal and even sexual abuse (about which she notably hints at but never

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[111] In 2011, twenty-eight former U.S. servicemembers filed a class-action lawsuit
against former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and then-current Secretary of
Defense Robert Gates. The plaintiffs, who had been raped while serving in the
military, argued that their inability to seek justice—after the military did not
investigate or prosecute their assaults—violated their constitutional rights. These
twenty-five women and three men represented a small section of the epidemic rape
culture in the U.S. military due to underreporting. Of the reported rapes, only 20%
were prosecuted and 10% received any form of judicial punishment (Jordan).
Civilian prosecutors, in contrast, try roughly forty percent of reported sexual assaults
(Ibid.).

The lawsuit cited the 1971 *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Federal Bureau
of Narcotics* and argued that the inability to seek and obtain justice violated First,
Fifth and Fourteenth Amendment Rights. In late 2011, the defense in *Cioca v.
Rumsfeld* successfully used the 1950 Supreme Court ruling that constitutes the Feres
Doctrine. Feres established that current and former servicemembers cannot sue the
military for any injuries they incur during their service. The plaintiffs had argued that
Rumsfeld and Gates had "foster[ed] a military atmosphere and environment that
resulted in the Plaintiffs becoming victims of sexual assault" (Kori Cioca, et al.). In
the Opinion, US District Judge Liam O'Grady found that despite the "egregious
allegations" the "unique disciplinary structure of the military establishment"
constituted a "special factor" that limited judicial intervention. Instead, the branches
of government concerned with the military should be responsible for addressing
sexual assault.

confirms) during her time in service. Williams is particularly upset by what she

perceives as physically or emotionally weak women in the Army. Her own emphasis

on strength is juxtaposed to her inability to avoid or fend off repeated sexual

harassment and assault by the men with whom she works. Ultimately, Williams

begins to experience symptoms of PTSD and even considers suicide. Similarly,

Marine Mortuary Affairs member Jess Goodell describes the misogynistic culture of

the Corps, from sexist cadences to scissor kicks in shorts to public beatings by the

largest male Marines. Some women refused to use the unlit women's latrines at night

for fear of being raped; they stopped drinking water in the early afternoon, despite the

120+ degree heat and lack of air conditioning, and several were found dead of

dehydration in their beds (Glantz 19-21).[112] Most extreme, Benedict describes

LaVena Johnson, a young woman who the military determined had committed

suicide, even though her body was found with a bruised face and broken nose, shot,

burned, and re-clothed and dragged across the ground after her death ("Scandal of

Military Rape"). Williams, Benedict, and others have tried to combat this culture of

masculine power through sexual violence by calling attention to it—a move that may

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[112] See "Rape Fears Lead Women Soldiers to Suicide, Death" and Glantz, *The War Comes Home* for a fuller account of these deaths and their cover-up. According to Glantz, Brigadier General Janis Karpinski—who would later become notorious as the commanding officer at the Abu Ghraib prison—reported that she was shut down when she reported the situation to higher-ups, while surgeons were told not to openly acknowledge that the dead soldiers were female.

result in a widespread culture change as congressional outrage has motivated

attempted changes to the system of military justice.[113]

The official integration of women into combat, many hope, will alter a

military culture that valorizes masculinity, strength, and hardness—the same

characteristics, we may note, that Klaus Theweleit records in the buildup to Nazism

in Germany. By excluding women from combat, military promotions at the highest

levels are often equally exclusive, allowing the military to continue to ignore

women's issues by ignoring women.[114] While the military, politicians, the legal

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[113] As a result of the lawsuit and *The Invisible War*, an Academy Award-nominated documentary about rape in the military, the dirty secret of pandemic sexual assault began to circulate publically. Secretary of Defense Panetta organized several programs to prevent rape, improve reporting rates, and allow victims to seek justice (Dao, "Panetta Proposes New Sexual Assault Rules . . . "). In May 2013, the military was rocked by a number of near-simultaneous shocks, as the Fiscal Year 2012 Pentagon report found that the number of sexual assaults had in fact increased to 26,000 per year (cited in Steinhauer).

Within days of this finding, Lt. Col. Jeff Krusinski, the head of the Air Force sexual assault prevention programs, was arrested and charged with sexual assault (Dao, "Assault Prevention Officer . . ."). Krusinski was later acquitted ("Virginia: Air Force Officer is Cleared . . ."). The Army also arrested a sergeant in charge of sexual assault prevention programs for sexual assault (Whitlock), while an instructor at West Point was arrested for filming female cadets in the showers (Shanker, "Women Were Secretly Filmed . . ."). This combination of increasing rates of sexual assault, considered in a context in which those designed to prevent sexual assault are themselves predators, has provoked a radical discussion within the military and legislative communities about how to change what can only be described as a military rape culture. As of this writing, no legislation dealing with military sexual assault has been passed.

[114] See Mathers on the connection between combat and promotion: "Combat is regarded as the central activity of militaries, the place where real war happens and the core of a soldier's duty. This view underlies the practice, which is widespread among state militaries, of restricting promotion to the highest ranks to those who have served in a combat role; it also effectively prevents women from occupying the top leadership positions in many state militaries" (137).

system, and now nonfiction writers and documentary filmmakers seek to address and

combat sexual assault, my own interest is in how literature can supplement and

expand this conversation.

This section addresses the depiction of American women in war in the 2008

documentary film *Lioness*. In the early days of the Iraq war, twenty-five women in

the U.S. Army's 1st Engineer Battalion,[115] an Army support unit, were assigned to the

combat-active 2-4 Marines[116] when it became clear that females—and sometimes

only females--could complete certain tasks (Harrell, et al. 52-53). The women

initially served to calm women and children and win hearts and minds—to be a

"'kinder, gentler' face" (Mathers 135) of the war--but ultimately they engaged in

body searches of females (who were not allowed to be handled by male

servicemembers), guarded interpreters, and participated in house searches and

firefights. They even gained valuable intelligence from talking to the women—

information that would most likely not have been provided to male troops and tried to

influence male members of the Al Qaeda recruiting pools by appealing to their

mothers and wives.[117] The twenty-five women who completed these missions were

called "Team Lioness" and became the first women in U.S. history to openly engage

in combat operations.

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[115] 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, out of Ft. Riley, Kansas.
[116] 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, 1st Marine Division
[117] In a summary of an internal Marine report on "Female Engagement Teams" (FETs) in Afghanistan, Thomas E. Ricks of *Foreign Policy* has noted that the women were not only given access to but developed influence with civilian women, who in turn influenced their "husbands, brothers, and especially their adolescent sons"—the young men who form the Taliban and Al Qaeda recruiting pools.

While completing these necessary support and combat functions, the women were in great danger, as they had not been trained to work in a combat environment beyond their ten weeks of Basic Training. As Specialist Shannon Morgan explains, she was trained to be a track vehicle mechanic; she never expected to have to fire her gun. Shannon ultimately accompanies the Marines into firefights, serving as the SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon) gunner, which means she was responsible for one of the heaviest and most powerful weapons in a squad and carried a total load of more than 80 pounds. Yet as many of the women note, their lack of training placed them in jeopardy. Captain Anastasia Breslow describes asking the Marines how to shoot the TOW (Tube-launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-guided) anti-armor missile, the most powerful weapon on the Humvee, in case the other Marines were injured or killed. She also realizes that she does not know the route to get back to the FOB (Forward Operating Base) if she has to evacuate wounded Marines—a serious possibility as they were in the Al Anbar province, the same province in which the volatile city of Fallujah was located. In a last woman standing scenario, Breslow realizes she could neither save herself nor aid the Marines.

Coordinating actions in combat was also a problem. Major Kate Guttormsen, one of the leaders of the Lionesses, notes that the Army's terminology is different from that of the Marines, causing confusion during battle. Tactical differences on the ground—such as the Army's circular formations as opposed to the Marines' more fluid tactics—nearly get Shannon killed when she is left behind by the Marines and eventually is unable to shoot back at a firing insurgent because a Marine is running

near him. Although the women are not trained for combat operations, they

nonetheless engage with the Iraqi insurgents because, as Kate notes, "the enemy does

not care what gender you are."

The film, notably, focuses only on their competence and tactical challenges—

it ignores the very likely possibility of sexual harassment and assault and hazing by

the male troops that we see in veterans Kayla Williams's and Jess Goodell's memoirs.

Instead, they emphasize what the women achieved and how they should be

remembered rather than on the very real ways their work could be undermined and

persons endangered beyond combat in a military culture that is suspicious of women

at best and violently misogynistic at worst. For example, folklorist Carol Burke has

recorded the unofficial military chant the "The S&M Man," sung to tune of "The

Candy Man," that opens

> Who can take a chainsaw
> Cut the bitch in two
> Fuck the bottom half
> And give the upper half to you . . .[118]

The chant goes on like this for several verses, the insouciant melody undercutting the

horrifically misogynistic message. Goodell similarly describes how women are

called at best "Marine-ettes" or, less charitably, bitches, dykes, sluts, and "bags of

nasties" (46, 58). Given what we now know about military sexual assault and its

connection to negative attitudes toward female service, it is surprising that the women

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[118] "The S&M Man" was banned by the military but is nonetheless well known
enough for Burke to record it.

were so focused on proving themselves and not on how they were treated or their

contributions were perceived outside of the Big Army command structure.

When asked, the Lionesses "did what had to be done even though they were

all sent there with other occupations and skills." Their contributions were noted at

the highest levels of military and political office but were largely unknown to or

ignored by the American public. In one scene that indexes this disconnect, several of

the women get together for a Lionesses reunion and sit down to watch a History

Channel documentary on the Battle of Ramadi, "told by the men who were there."

The documentary never mentions the women who were running through the streets

with them, prompting Shannon to sarcastically comment, "it's kind of like they went

out of their way to make sure that they didn't mention us." The women are caught

"in-between" competing stories in which women are unofficially in combat and

officially out of it. *Lioness,* according to the film's directors' statement, attempts to

remedy this public ignorance by calling attention to the new women warriors through

a narrative "powerful enough to create a space in the national cultural dialogue for the

women's voices to be heard."

Lioness points to the transitional nature of the current situation, this in-

between that Peebles diagnoses on the level of content, through formal techniques,

mixing fact and fiction, literary and visual storytelling. The film engenders this

national cultural dialogue by including interviews with the Lionesses, their family

members, members of the "Team Lioness" command structure, and political activists

alongside clips of political leaders discussing the increasing presence and use of

women in combat.[119] Lengthy footage of the women at home with their families is

intercut with planned training sequences and embedded reports and official and

unofficial military footage of Ramadi. This combination of times and styles of film,

which includes the use of long cuts at home and quick, chaotic cuts during the combat

footage, makes *Lioness* occasionally look and feel hybridized and unreal, as the

visually and temporally distinct sequences are linked together.

In a July 2013 e-mail exchange with Meg McLagan, one of the film's

directors, I discussed the sourcing for the training and war footage in the film

("Question"). According to McLagan, the film does not use reenactments except in a

scene back in the United States in which Major Guttormsen has her female troops

demonstrate how the women are trained to search Iraqi women. Some of the footage

is of training exercises at the National Training Center (NTC) in California, which is

where soldiers simulate maneuvers for war, including exercises in mock Iraqi

villages. The scenes of the women training at Fort Stewart and the woman shooting

her rifle at the NTC have a different visual quality than the interviews and Iraq

footage—they give the sense of reenactments although they are not. At the same

time, they are in some sense performed, as these training sequences are rehearsals for

combat.

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[119] Perhaps not surprisingly, the film does not ask lower-ranked Marines what they
thought about serving with the Lionesses or how the women performed in combat.
The commentary about the women from the command is wholly positive, recognizing
what the women had to go through in order to stay alive in Iraq and how their efforts
aided the overall war effort in Ramadi. While focusing on the women is the aim of
the film, excluding potential voices of dissent elides the real distrust and even
misogyny that the women also faced, boiling the struggle down to whether women
could or could not cut it in combat and not to how men treated them while there.

Although a large portion of the film is observational and even realist, as the filmmakers follow the women at home in their everyday lives, doing things like changing diapers, shooting squirrels, or grooming horses, some of the footage was also staged in the sense that it was not spontaneous. For example, McLagan described how a female USAF General, Wilma L. Vaught, invited Shannon to join her at the Women's Memorial at Arlington Cemetery. Although McLagan and Sommers did not instruct either Shannon or General Vaught on how to behave, they encouraged Shannon to go and accompanied her as she visited the monument in order to "connect her experience to the broader national context."

Finally, the footage in Iraq was derived from multiple sources. Most was from mainstream media outlets like CNN and from Marines that accompanied the Lioness teams. Some of the footage, surprisingly, is from the insurgents' perspective, showing material that embedded reporters or Marines could not have accessed. This material came from a small group of people who had contacts with the insurgents and is not commonly seen in documentaries about the war in Iraq. The DVIDS website released 2006 Army Public Affairs footage of the women doing things like "playing cards, and searching women at checkpoints." Again, while this footage was "real," it was also enacted for the benefit for the Public Affairs recordings. The women and their families provided most of the photographs.

The film's editing and cuts help to capture both how the women contributed to the war and how combat has shaped their lives afterward, carefully connecting the war and postwar histories. While the Ramadi sequences are visually violent and

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chaotic, the languor of the home sequences belies incredible internal turmoil. For

example, Shannon speaks poignantly about the first time she killed someone, as well

as her experience throwing bodies into a mass grave. She talks with her uncle, a

Vietnam veteran, as well as General Vaught, about how difficult it is to explain war

to people who were not there. Similarly, Anastasia Breslow is overcome as she reads

from her deployment diary about the suffering she sees around her and her own

conflicted feelings about the mission.

Although most of the film explores what these women have experienced and

how they have tried to reintegrate into their home lives, the filmmakers use

alternating points-of-view to visually and empathetically locate the audience. Most

extreme is the footage of firefights from insurgents' perspectives—a rarity in

documentaries about the Iraq War. We also alternate between a third-person point-

of-view of the women, such as when we watch Shannon driving, and then turn

outward to a first-person perspective to see the road as she sees it. By locating us as

both like and unlike the Lionesses, McLagan and Sommers suggest the empathetic

potential of women in war. These women were meant to bring a human touch to the

warfront, to connect with other women in a "we" of women that creates an affective

"space of shared impact. If only for a minute" (Stewart 39). These bodies,

transmitting feelings, "literally affecting one another and generating intensities"

(129), can connect American women, female servicemembers, and the women of Iraq

and Afghanistan.

Yet while this shift in visual and affective perspective opens up spaces of possibility, the film ultimately does not ask Iraqi women what *they* thought of the Lionesses.[120] And while some see women in combat as an opportunity for equality, others view it as part of the problem, one diagnosed by Virginia Woolf as early as her 1938 *Three Guineas*.   Women in war can "perpetuate rather than undermine the dominant military culture, and . . . their presence legitimates and contributes to militarization" (Mathers 135). Ultimately, their "kinder, gentler" interactions are still held at the business end of a gun. Or, as Tyler Boudreau describes in his analysis of moral injury, real power is the ability to force someone to give you a hug.

The Lionesses nonetheless helped pave the way for the recent change in official military policy regarding women by demonstrating their usefulness and competence in combat—with less training than their male associates.   Up to this point, critics of women warriors had argued that women lacked the physical strength, stamina, and emotional resilience to perform in combat and that their presence might cause sexual distraction and competition that will negatively affect unit cohesion. A recent article has described how the Special Operations Command, which controls all Special Forces groups like the Green Berets and Navy SEALs, has not yet opened any of its 15,497 jobs to women because the possibility of sexual intercourse will affect unit cohesion and, in the words on one former SF sergeant, cause "so much drama"

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[120] Cynthia Enloe's *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq* explores this connection through her representation of eight real women—four Iraqi, four American—who have been affected by the war.

(McDonough).[121] Others have posited that male troops will not be able to function in

combat if they see a female servicemember injured or killed. In his study *On Killing*,

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman has argued

> The presence of women and children can inhibit aggression in combat, but
> only if the women and children are not threatened. If they are present, if they
> become threatened, and if the combatant accepts responsibility for them, then
> the psychology of battle changes from one of carefully constrained ceremonial
> combat among males to the unconstrained ferocity of an animal who is
> defending its den.
>
> Thus the presence of women and children can also increase violence on the
> battlefield. The Israelis have consistently refused to put women in combat
> since their experiences in 1948. I have been told by several Israeli officers
> that this is because in 1948 they experienced recurring incidences of
> uncontrolled violence among male Israeli soldiers who had had their female
> combatants killed or injured in combat, and because the Arabs were extremely
> reluctant to surrender to women. (*On Killing* 175)

Yet while sexual, physical, and emotional responses by both men and women have

been raised as concerns, as Jennifer G. Mathers has pointed out, "The very fact that

states devote so much attention to defining and policing the boundaries of women's

service suggests that women soldiers are far more important than their numbers

would indicate" (125).

These discussions also elide an important issue in contemporary war. Just as

drones and mercenaries, as Jeremy Scahill has argued, have allowed the U.S. military

to fight shadow wars that hide the true scale of violence inflicted and received, Team

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[121] McDonough goes on to argue that the strenuous training for Special Ops will leave
little time or energy for sex and, further, make it unlikely that either men or women
"will jeopardize their careers, their mission and the safety of their unit for a little
romp in the dirt."

Lioness has, as the film's directors recognized, allowed the military to have it both

ways with women in combat. McLagan and Sommers state:

> The practice of attaching women on a temporary basis to all male units is a
> convenient loophole that enables commanders on the ground to reduce
> violence without violating policy. But because it does not create a paper trail,
> it can limit a female soldier's ability to be officially recognized as a
> combatant, which prevents them from advancing up the ranks and assuming
> meaningful leadership roles within the military hierarchy. This in turn inhibits
> their ability to shape national policy. Proof of having served in combat is also
> important for determining benefits available to veterans. Without
> documentation, it is harder for women to get the help they need for combat-
> related trauma. ("Directors' Statement")

While *Lioness* draws attention to these unknown women warriors, much of the film

focuses on their efforts to reintegrate into everyday life without exploring the

institutional or structural flaws that make it difficult for them to access resources to

help them in the first place. The film's emphasis on life after combat suggests the

extent to which the military's policies, official and unofficial, have made coming

home increasingly difficult, as the women have neither access to resources nor public

recognition of their contributions.

The film, like the Lionesses themselves, is caught "in between" documentary

and performance, battlefront and homefront. *Lioness* raises powerful questions about

combat service in the new wars, which increasingly rely upon distance killing,

language skills, and lighter weaponry. These changes prompted at least one 2-Star

Special Operations General to declare, "The days of Rambo are over" [122] for men and

for women. But for the men and, especially, the women returning from war, hard

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[122] Quote by Maj. Gen. Bennet Sacolick of U.S. Special Operations Command (qtd. in
Shanker, "Less 'Rambo' Seen . . .").

bodies cannot save damaged minds. For the Lionesses, whose contributions have been long overlooked and traumas occluded, leading the charge was not without its costs. The days of Rambo are over, and stories about war may never look the same.

II.

Women on the Homefront

What do we mean when we talk about war literature? Typically, we mean combat novels or trench poetry by and about male servicemembers like Ernst Jünger, Tim O'Brien, and Ernest Hemingway.[123]   While we do not commonly associate war writing with writing by or about women in war, homefront literature is not new, as we see Penelope patiently waiting for Odysseus or the "Little Women" perfecting themselves while their father nurses Northern troops. These homefront texts have emphasized women's work as support for the men and, as I described in the first section, support for the war. It is not surprising, then, that Ernst Friedrich's 1924 pacifist work *Krieg dem Kriege!* passionately argued—in four languages--that mothers must stop training their children for war with militaristic toys, songs, and games.[124]

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[123] Lynne Hanley, like Toni Morrison, has argued that "canons" and "cannons" are connected by more than the "accident of sounding alike" (18). For Hanley, Paul Fussell's *The Great War in Modern Memory* (1975) not only established an American canon of Great War writers: in valorizing this particular group, Fussell "has largely determined what we in America call our literature not only of that war but also of all our wars since" (21)—and in which white male writers like Pynchon, Mailer, and Vonnegut are at the center (23).

[124] Burke has more recently described the imbrication of toys and warfighting according to the Hollywood notion of "toyification," which judges "the value of ideas

Friedrich's polemic speaks to mothers', sisters', and wives' symbolic affective function, as they supportively wait for their men to come home, care for their physical and mental wounds, and silently, stoically grieve at their funerals. We see this kind of female affective response in Mel Gibson's 2002 film *We Were Soldiers*, one of the earliest post-9/11 Hollywood movies to represent war. The film primarily focuses on the men of the 7th Cavalry during the Battle of Ia Drang, the opening battle of the Vietnam War, but it features a memorable scene in which Madeline Stowe, Mel Gibson's movie wife, walks from house to house giving death telegrams to the other wives. Each woman silently sobs as a song of patriotic loss plays over a montage of crying women, with flags superimposed over their teary faces. The scene reinforces their losses, but it does so by quite literally replacing their voices of pain with a song of patriotism, reminding all of us that war, past and present, requires necessary sacrifice from servicemembers and their spouses.

This is a scene of pure affect, and a notable contrast to the equally affect-laden scene of female power and agency in the 1997 film *G.I. Jane*. In this scene, Demi Moore's Lt. Jordan O'Neil, the fictional first female Navy SEAL, is shown to outsmart, outgun, and outman her entire SEAL team. O'Neil uses topographical maps to predict where her escaping Command Master Chief will flee during an unplanned firefight, before directing the team in an ambush set-up. When the Chief is

and innovations by their capacity to be turned into toys" (205). Roger Stahl has similarly described toymakers' interest in a "consumable realism" (138) in which toys—and video games—emphasize realist details of war while ignoring war's realities. Video games, as I shall describe in Chapter 4, not only have helped to make war more appealing to young men—they have been used more specifically to recruit, train, and even try to heal them.

shot in the leg, O'Neil races out from cover, guns blazing, in a slow motion, music-laced, single-handed attack on Libyan soldiers while rescuing a wounded Viggo Mortenson. Her superiority and strength is explicitly physical, intellectual, and emotional, as she outsmarts all of the other soldiers and tolerates more danger and physical punishment than any man in the film; in contrast, the women in *We Were Soldiers* are morally powerful as they tolerate loss but generate little but spirited conversation about the laundry and racial politics (and the film does not really distinguish between the two in terms of significance).

Of the television depictions of war, none has been as successful as female-centric network Lifetime's *Army Wives*, a highly popular and long-running series based on Tanya Biank's book that traces a band of sisters—and one brother—at the fictional Army base Ft. Marshall. The show focuses on how a socially, racially, and economically diverse group navigates the demands of the Army. Although characters will often question what the Army demands of them, all ultimately submit. The show thus raises questions about sacrifice in order to supply answers—a good Army wife can be upset, but that frustration must be safely sealed in the domestic space of the home. Like Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock, they "prepare a face to meet the faces that [they] meet" (131) choosing service and self-sacrifice in the name of patriotism.

In writing, Army wife Siobhan Fallon is one of the only writers today to depict the experiences of military families. Her 2011 short story collection *You Know When the Men Are Gone* follows several wives as they live through a deployment and its aftermath. Fallon's work—one of only two by women in the recent War on

Terror anthology *Fire and Forget*—explores how women survive what seems like endless periods of waiting: waiting for men to deploy, waiting for deployments to end, waiting for knocks on the door, waiting for war trauma to surface. While recognized in the small community of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran-writers, Fallon has received some critical and popular recognition, but nowhere near as much as male war writers like Kevin Powers or Ben Fountain. Her work complicates and even problematizes the suffering of Army wives, depicting the emotional, professional, and financial sacrifices and daily strains that are required as not all of the women are willing to wait for knocks on the door from Casualty Assistance or homecomings that never seem to live up to the fantasy.

The affective imaginary of silent female suffering, however, has been recently troubled by women like Cindy Sheehan or Mary Tillman, both mothers who very publicly repudiated the military's responses to their sons' deaths. Pat Tillman was the best known soldier of the War on Terror, a football star for the Arizona Cardinals who famously turned down a more than $3 million contract to enlist in the Army after 9/11, where he ultimately joined one of the elite Ranger units. On April 22, 2004, Tillman was killed in a valley on the Pakistan border by fellow American troops. The Army initially told the Tillman family, which included his brother Kevin, a Ranger also in the valley that day, that he had been killed by enemy combatants; it was later revealed that the killing was a so-called friendly fire incident.

In a May 4, 2005, *Washington Post* article reporter Josh White revealed the extent of the cover up, from orders to soldiers at the scene not to talk to anyone

(including Tillman's brother) to the destruction of evidence such as Tillman's uniform and body armor to lack of punishments for the soldiers involved to awarding a Silver Star to Tillman for "gallantry in action against an armed enemy" that did not exist. As George Vecsey notes, Tillman's death came within the context of "plummeting approval ratings" following the collapse of the Iraq War. Just days after Tillman's death, a *60 Minutes* report and Seymour Hersh in *The New Yorker* magazine released photographs of ongoing torture and abuse by military guards in Abu Ghraib prison. Tillman had been the face of the Army when he enlisted, a golden boy who chose service over self; when he died, his death was refigured not as a friendly fire accident but rather as a story of heroism, a final choice of nation and brotherhood over personal safety. This tragic, politically expedient story Tillman's sacrifice served as the antithesis to troops' behavior at Abu Ghraib. In response to the cover-up and the misuse of Tillman's death, his mother Mary Tillman has become the public face of her son, fighting to keep his death from being used as a symbol of military sacrifice as his life was. In a book, documentary, interviews, and Congressional testimony, Mary Tillman has fought to tell the true story of Pat's death and hold accountable those responsible for lying to her and to the nation (Tillman).

As a mother fighting to find out what happened to her son and punish those responsible for his death and the cover-up of his death, Mary Tillman's efforts have been largely uncontroversial outside of military circles, as her son was killed by American troops and the cover-up has been revealed. Cindy Sheehan's reception, however, has been more problematic. Sheehan's son, Casey, was killed in Iraq in

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April 2004 after reenlisting in the Army. After his death, Cindy Sheehan very publically criticized both the policies and prosecution of the war, leaving her California home and camping in front of President George W. Bush's Texas ranch during his vacation (Enloe 204). Her initial request for an apology, which Bush did not provide, and continued encampment began to attract attention from the media. Sheehan quickly became the controversial public face and voice for anti-war protests around the country.

As publically vocal military mothers of dead sons, Sheehan and Tillman were problems for the military, which had begun to appeal to mothers in its quest to recruit young men and women into an increasingly dangerous wartime military. A Department of Defense survey, according to journalist Damian Cave, found that between August 2003 and November 2004 the number of parents who would support military service for their children fell from 42% to 25%, prompting at least one recruiter to describe parents as "the biggest hurdle" for military recruitment. The military found a work-around, inserting a stipulation in the No Child Left Behind law that required public schools to grant access to military recruiters or lose federal funding (Enloe 132). With the help of professional advertising agencies, the military put out—and continues to put out—ads targeted at "influencers" (137), from parents and coaches to teachers and ministers. In particular the ads focused on mothers, who were found to have tremendous pull over their sons and daughters (Enloe 144-45, Cave, and George).

The most interesting representation so far of a woman dealing with the current wars is Lea Carpenter's 2013 novel *Eleven Days*, which follows the mother of a Navy SEAL as she follows the familiar waiting trope—this time, she waits for word on her son, who has gone missing in action during a raid. Sara, a former CIA worker, has a child with David, a presumed CIA analyst who is later revealed to be a high-level operative who is believed to have died while on a mission. Their child, Jason, grows up without a father but with his mother and a number of "godfathers," all well connected in the political and intelligence communities. After September 11, Jason joins the Naval Academy and ultimately makes it onto an elite Navy SEAL (Sea, Air, Land) team. On May 2, 2011—the same night as the Osama Bin Laden raid--Jason's SEAL team is one of several teams sent out to capture intelligence. On this night, however, something goes wrong, and Jason is separated from his team before he is ultimately captured. The novel alternates between chapters that depict Sarah waiting for news about her missing son and descriptions of Jason's training for and life as a SEAL. This alternating structure calls attention to lives lived in parallel, as Jason never knows what Sara is suffering and Sara is shown to know very little about Jason's life as a SEAL.

The text is profoundly concerned with storytelling and its connection to authority and power. Multiple paratexts, including an epigraph, a prologue, a closing quote, a glossary of literary terms, and a four-page bibliography establish Carpenter's own knowledge of the secretive SEAL community. Both Sara and Jason are voracious readers, sharing a love of literature and, in particular, the war stories of

Greek myth. She envisions herself as Thetis, trying to protect her warrior-son

Achilles, while recognizing that she cannot ever hold—or protect--him completely

(74).   Sara even sends a collection of Shakespeare plays to Jason during his Navy

SEAL training, a choice that gets him teased but ultimately thrills him.   In contrast to

David, whose talent is, in Sara's words, "telling stories" (80) in the most negative

sense, as lies used to manipulate and control others, Sara wants to tell myths—the

"fiction that matters" (241).   Just as David reappears, telling stories about his faked

death and efforts to find Jason, Sara and the text itself refuse to listen, shutting down

his story.

David is a part of the intelligence complex that is so heavily imbricated with

post-9/11 Special Operations. The text, which opens with the founding of the SEALs

after the intelligence failures of World War II, is not on the side of those who keep

secrets and tell lies. We learn that the novel is a response to May 2, 2011, the night

Osama Bin Laden was killed by a SEAL team while eleven other missions, never

known, were occurring.   This silent professionalism, which the novel extols as a

good on the part of the SEALs, nonetheless hints at the depths of suffering that

remain unseen, unheard, and unknown—and gendered.

Myth, on the other hand, is of a different order. Carpenter repeatedly invokes

the storytelling aptitude of ancient Athens against the war-prone Spartans. Stories

made Athens win (239).   Stories about past missions, "wove[n] together to become

legend" (238-9), stories about learning from failures (136), about memories—these

are what give Sara and Jason strength. It is the possibility of legend that allows the

Spartan women to be strong for their men, as Sarah notes, although this strength is also what enables their suffering. In Carpenter's world, stories are not automatic goods, as they can kill or save.[125]

On the one hand, *Eleven Days* is a conventional story about a suffering military mother, excluded from the masculine military community and relying on the men in her life to fill in the blanks. Yet through storytelling, Carpenter reclaims women's agency. Sara alternates activity—her running—with the inactivity of waiting. She cannot look for her son or ultimately save him. Like Tim O'Brien longs to do in his *The Things They Carried*, she can save Jason's life but not his body—and she does so by controlling his story, refusing to let the duplicitous David "claim him as his own" (219). Carpenter repeatedly compares writing to fighting, reminding us that storytelling is itself a military act, as how we remember the past shapes our future. Sarah's acts of war thus are found in her compulsive gathering and telling of stories, as she creates a counternarrative to David's own fictions. She doesn't cry out publically like Cindy Sheehan or Marie Tillman—at least not yet—and the story ends with the isolated, perpetual outsider Sara finding her place in a community, in a way similar to Toni Morrison's emphasis on the healing power of community in *Home*.

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[125] We might consider *Eleven Days* itself in the realm of the mythic, for while Sarah does experience the loss of her son like so many other military mother's, her notification experience is wholly other, as she is flown on a multimillion dollar plane (arranged through David's political connections) to Bagram Air Base, where she encounters her son's body. Most mothers receive no such attention, as they are notified at home by uniformed Casualty Assistance Notification officers. The gruesomeness of death by explosion means that most bodies—or what is left of them—are placed in closed caskets and never seen by the families. Sara's experience, in some sense, reads as a fairy-tale or mythic version of a tragic loss.

Throughout, Sara is the character most marginalized. She is part of the CIA but always on the social and even geographic margins of community. Her home is outside of a major city, out in the middle of the woods. Carpenter's project, then, explores how loss can bind us to others, as Sara becomes both all mother and more than a mother by losing a son. Paradoxically, her identity is fixed as a mother at the moment that she loses her living connection to her child. The novel is concerned with feelings, yet Sarah is not empathetic. When she sees a body arriving at Dover, she does not imagine that she could ever be like the mother waiting to retrieve her dead son's corpse (256).   Jason spends much of his training learning to control and mask his emotions. It is a sad irony in the end when he is found and brought to the Bagram medical base for treatment, breathing but "entirely without affect" (250). He dies shortly thereafter, a mere hour before his mother arrived at his side.

Carpenter's emphasis on telling stories to save a son's life resembles that of Israeli writer David Grossman, whose 2008 novel *Isha Borachat Mi'bsora* (Woman Flees Tidings), translated in 2010 as *To the End of the Land*, follows Ora, the mother of an Israeli soldier, who abandons her Jerusalem apartment in order to avoid what she believes will be an impending death notification. She tries to keep her son alive through stories about his life, carefully told to a friend accompanying her on the hike. The story is especially poignant, as his own son Uri was killed in August 2006 in the Israeli Defense Forces while Grossman was writing the novel (Packer)—hours before the ceasefire in what Israelis call the Second Lebanon War. Although Ora's son's

fate is never made clear, Grossman's own loss comments powerfully on the

possibility of a happy ending and the likelihood of a painful one.

For both Carpenter and Grossman, stories are the only answer to the chance

and cruelty of war.   Journalist Dexter Filkins, in his beautiful introduction to Ashley

Gilbertson's "Bedrooms of the Fallen" photographs ("Lost Soldiers"),[126] describes the

moment when a soldier is killed far away while his family rests, still believing he is

alive:

> And at that moment, you think about how the word of his death will travel;
> how it will depart Iraq or Afghanistan and move across the ocean and into the
> United States and into the town where he lives, Corinth, Miss., say, or
> Benwood, W.Va., and into the houses and the hearts of the people who love
> him most in the world. And at that moment, standing there, looking down on
> the dead man, you can wonder only what the family will do when the terrible
> news finally arrives, how they will resist it and wrestle with it and suffer from
> it, and how they will cope and how they will remember.

III.

At Home in a War Zone

While the previous sections analyzed how hybrid visual and literary forms

could create affective spaces for exploring women and warfare, this section explores

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[126] As Filkins describes in his *The Forever War*, Lance Corporal Billy Miller was
killed protecting Gilbertson, who wanted to get a photograph of insurgents using a
mosque for cover. Gilbertson was so traumatized by his feelings of guilt over
Miller's death that he had to be evacuated from Iraq. After treatment for PTSD,
Gilbertson decided to take a series of photographs of young dead soldiers' bedrooms,
recording their losses through their unchanging rooms. The photographs show a
frozen window into a changing world, as the young men and women who would now
be in their late 20s or 30s have rooms that are shrines to their teenage selves, with
Lord of the Rings posters and other reminders of their young age.

how an affectively distant character and style can effectively capture the experience of civilian women in a war zone.

In December 1937, the Japanese Army invaded Manchuria, China—two years before Germany invaded Poland and four years before the attack on Pearl Harbor. For more than six weeks, the Japanese government and military leaders set their men loose on the remaining citizens of Nanking. Not only were they allowed to kill and rape civilians: as Iris Chang has documented, they were actively encouraged and even trained to do so as a way to break the spirit of the Chinese (6). During the occupation of Nanjing, an estimated 80,000 women were raped and more than 260,000 civilians killed. This event, which arguably opened World War II, has been called the "Forgotten Holocaust" because until the 1990s, historians ignored one of the worst war crimes in history—one in which only a token few military leaders were even tried and even fewer punished. As Chang and others have noted, it was not in the U.S.'s interests to make friends with a newly Communist China. Given a choice between accepting former Japanese war criminals or seeking justice for now-Communist Chinese rape victims, the US military, politicians, and media chose Japan—and then promptly forgot about that choice for the next fifty years.

Iris Chang finally drew attention to this tragedy and the national and international historical amnesia surrounding it in her 1997 book *The Rape of Nanking*. Chang, the daughter of Chinese-American immigrants, responded to neglect in the American scholarly community in one of the first English-language books to integrate Chinese sources as well as the Western diaries by American and German relief

workers in the Nanking safety zone. However, while Chang focuses on historiographical omission, the book does not address the similar the similar neglect by Chinese, Chinese-American, or Japanese artists.   That is, art did not pick up where history left off until more than a decade later—after Chang herself had committed suicide.

In 2011, Chinese-American writer Ha Jin redressed this lack of literary attention to large-scale civilian suffering with his *Nanjing Requiem*, a novel that blurs the literary and historic.   By mixing fact and fiction, public events and private effects, Jin calls up an affective space that asks us to seriously consider not only what happened in Nanjing but also how easily we have forgotten its importance as the opening event of World War II, as a moment of profound and unpunished war crime, and as a commentary on remembrance. Jin's narrator and protagonist is the fictional Anling Gao, a middle-aged Chinese nurse, wife, and mother who is present throughout the invasion and occupation, from the flight of Chinese troops through the invasion by the Japanese, the rapes and killing of civilians, and finally the Japanese stabililization and withdrawal.

As a very recent text, there are as of yet almost no critical responses to *Nanjing Requiem* outside of book reviews. Te-hsing Shan has written about the text as a requiem and an act of counting both the quantity of victims and quality of their suffering. Like writers of the Holocaust before him, Jin is faced with a double bind: should he aestheticize brutality in order to gain recognition? Going further, how does the irrationality of mass murder and rape fit into the logic of a "rationally constructed

story with a beginning, middle, and end?" (Arana). That is, should Jin utilize a model that follows the logic of realism? Formally, Jin addresses these issues through moments of narrative interruption, by interpolating two other narrators and beginning the story mid-occupation. He does this kind of formal work, however, much less extensively than what I describe in the previous chapter on Toni Morrison's *Home*.

Jin catalyzes affective responses in his audience by combining the fictive narrator with real events and people, such as the largely forgotten college principal Minnie Vautrin, who saved thousands of women lodged on her campus.[127] By using a first-person narrator who is directly involved in events but rarely an agent in them, Jin gives us privileged insight into the affective responses of others while problematizing Anling's—and our own—relation to action. Through Anling, we see not only what is happening in Nanjing but also the effects that the events have on Minnie, who is traumatized to the point of institutionalization and suicide. At the same time Anling's muted responses could be read either as signs of trauma or, as I argue, as an aesthetic response to war at its most extreme.

Anling, whom Jin did not create until his thirty-second draft of the novel, has been described as a "restrained, pragmatic woman" (Fiske). She focuses on the task of survival with minimal commentary, letting the facts stand for themselves and focusing on gathering evidence for the future. For example, when a group of refugee women complain that Minnie had shut out their men, leaving their teenage sons to be

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[127] Vautrin is often compared to Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist and Nazi-party member who used his factories to employ and hide more than 1,000 Jews during the Holocaust (Fing).

arrested, Anling tells Minnie to ignore them and reminds the women that every space occupied by a male would have been provided at the expense of a female (93). Anling's reportorial style includes her own detailed observations and records of dialogue but very few of her own emotional responses. Her lack of affective response at times seems like bad writing: when she comes upon a mass execution site, she says only, "The Japanese are savages!" Caught in what Edith Wyschogrod describes as a "death world,"[128] Anling comes up against the limits of language.

I suggest that Jin's strategy calls attention to these limits while attempting to avoid any readerly response that could be read as complicit.[129] Jin's approach is thus critical to handling the novel's conceptual problem, which is not suffering itself but the specific form of suffering: the rape of women. He does not want us to be excited, sympathetic, or angry. He wants us to remember, and in remembering to honor the victims. That is, we should remove feeling from memory, using stories to tell other stories, ones with political potential.

Jin, writing about the "forgotten Holocaust," could be contrasted to the literary sensation of 2011, Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones,* a prize-winning, best-

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[128] Edith Wyschogrod argues that the conditions of man-made mass death have opened a "new horizon" in which individualistic ways of approaching death and dying can no longer be "stretched to accommodate vast numbers" (1). This new way of dying has opened up "death-worlds" (15), such as those of the concentration camps or famine, "in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life simulating imagined conditions of death, conferring upon their inhabitants the status of the living dead" (Ibid.). In short, man-made mass death has made possible a world in which the individual is treated as already dead.

[129] I am thinking here of both James Baldwin's and Lauren Berlant's work on sentimentalism, in which readers feel very good about feeling very bad but do not translate those feelings into action.

selling 1000-page French Holocaust novel from the perspective of a sadistic German

SS officer. Littell turns his character's sadism--and by extension the Holocaust itself

--into a site of titillation as the filth of his protagonist rubs off on readers. Jin, on the

other hand, tries to create a narrative *cordon sanitaire* whose violent breaches are

registered as forms of trauma. We trust Anling because she seems objective and

practical. In place of emotional excess, we have the numbness and disconnect of

trauma as a narrative principle as Anling's reportage comes to stand in for the

corrupted Eastern and Western newspaper reports in the novel, as we see the Chinese

and American media alongside the politicians and military failing to represent one of

the, if not the, biggest mass rapes of all time. As Jin shows that even reporters fail to

report on the atrocity, Anling's practicality and disconnectedness help us to trust her

word. As Minnie argues, "'History should be recorded as it happened so it can be

remembered with little room for doubt or controversy" (96).   Jin's style, and

Anling's seeming objectivity, allows a kind of history that is the opposite of the one

that has been and continues to be constructed around the Japanese in China.[130]

This distant style is not without its critics, but I argue that his use of distancing

techniques is necessary to Jin's project. Jin's prose is "sparse and unadorned," and his

"economy of words feels almost utilitarian: his is a concern with precision, honesty,

and direct description" (Fiske). Despite this emphasis on facticity and distance,

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[130] Even today, that history remains under threat. In May 2013, Mayor of Osaka—
and potential presidential candidate--Toru Hashimoto announced that "comfort
women," who in fact had been captured during World War II and forced into sexual
slavery for Japanese troops, were "necessary" to the Japanese war effort (Davidson;
Tabuchi). It is estimated that tens of thousands—up to as many as 200,000—women
were forced into the comfort women system.

statistics and dates are not enough. Jin uses W.G. Sebald's notion, in his account of the Allied firebombings, of a "synoptic and artificial view" (26) of atrocity that brings together large-scale and small-scale stories, collected from a variety of perspectives that no one person could have possessed (Presner 357).

To understand what Sebald means by a "synoptic and artificial view" of the Allied firebombing, it is worth quoting one passage in full to demonstrate:

> In the summer of 1943, during a long heat wave, the RAF supported by the U.S. Eighth Army Air Force, flew a series of raids on Hamburg. The aim of Operation Gomorrah, as it was called, was to destroy the city and reduce it as completely as possible to ashes. In a raid in early in the morning on July 27, beginning at one A.M., ten thousand tons of high-explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on the densely populated residential area east of the Elbe, comprising the districts of Hammerbrook, Hamm-Nord and Hamm-Süd, Billwerder Ausschlag and parts of St. Georg, Eilbek, Barmbek, and Wandsbek. A now familiar sequence of events occurred: first all the doors and windows were torn from their frames and smashed by high-explosive bombs weighing four thousand pounds, then the attic floors of the buildings were ignited by lightweight incendiary mixtures, and at the same time firebombs weighing up to fifteen kilograms fell into the lower stories. Within a few minutes, huge fires were burning all over the target area, which covered some twenty square kilometers, and they merged so rapidly that only a quarter of an hour after the first bombs had dropped the whole airspace was a sea of flames as far as one could see. Another five minutes later, at one-twenty A.M., a firestorm of an intensity that no one would have ever thought possible arose. The fire, now rising two thousand meters into the sky, snatched oxygen to itself so violently that the air currents reached hurricane force, resonating like mighty organs with all their stops pulled out at once. The fire burned like this for three hours. At its height, the storm lifted gables and roofs from buildings, flung rafters and entire advertising billboards through the air, tore trees from the ground, and drove human beings before it like living torches. Behind collapsing façades, the flames shot up as high as houses, rolled like a tidal wave through the streets at a speed of over a hundred and fifty kilometers an hour, spun across open squares in strange rhythms like rolling cylinders of fire. The water in some of the canals was ablaze. The glass in the tram car windows melted; stocks of sugar boiled in the bakery cellars. Those who had fled from their air-raid shelters sank, with grotesque contortions, in the thick bubbles thrown up by the melting asphalt. No one knows for certain how many lost their lives that night, or how many went mad before they died.

When day broke, the summer dawn could not penetrate the leaden gloom of above the city. The smoke had risen to a height of eight thousand meters, where it spread like a vast, anvil-shaped cumulonimbus cloud. A wavering heat, which the bomber pilots said they had felt through the sides of their planes, continued to rise from the smoking, glowing mounds of stone. Residential districts so large that their total street length amounted to two hundred kilometers were utterly destroyed. Horribly disfigured corpses lay everywhere. Bluish little phosphorous flames still flickered around many of them; others had been roasted brown or purple and reduced to a third of their natural size. They lay doubled up in pools of their own melted fat, which had sometimes already congealed. The central death zone was declared off-limits in the next few days. When punishment labor gangs and camp inmates could begin clearing it in August, after the rubble had cooled down, they found people still sitting at tables or up against walls where they had been overcome by monoxide gas. Elsewhere, clumps of flesh and bone or whole heaps of bodies had cooked in the water gushing from bursting boilers. Other victims had been so badly charred and reduced to ashes by the heat, which had risen to a thousand degrees or more, that the remains of families consisting of several people could be carried away in a single laundry basket. (26-28)

In his analysis of this passage, Todd Samuel Presner has argued that Sebald turns away from realist techniques to describe war to utilize what Hayden White has described as "modernist" approaches to representing extreme events. Presner explains that this description is "synoptic" because it combines

> information and experiences culled from a multiplicity of perspectives: the U.S. Air Force and the RAF, the bomber pilots in the planes, eyewitnesses on the ground, as well as reports made by meteorologists, police, survivors, punishment battalions, and historians. His description oscillates between global and local views, perspectives from above and below, points of view within and external to the bombing and, finally, knowledge gained before, during, and after the catastrophe. (354)

This combination of perspectives and approaches, from historical statistical details to use of literary metaphors, is "artificial," or "künstlich" (*Luftkrieg* 33) because "no eyewitness could have possibly seen it as described. It is an imaginary,

artificially constructed view of a real historical event" (Presner 357).[131] Yet, as

Presner notes, this artificially expansive view, though it abandons realist approaches

to temporality, consistency of perspective, and distinguishability between truth and

fiction, is more real because it is "aware of the artificiality, contingency, and limits of

its present-day perspective" (348). That is, Sebald's description of the bombing does

not rely on realist techniques but has a "realistic effect" (357) that generates real

affective responses as Sebald combines large-scale information—temporal, spatial,

and numeric—with depictions of personal losses.

Combining descriptions of big picture ways of seeing and knowing, from the

visuals of bomber pilots to the quantifiable extent of human and environmental

destruction with deeply intimate and domestic details on the ground, such as the

description of a melted family able to be carried in a laundry basket, to the pairing of

text with photographs of bombed cities and bodies, Sebald has created a narrative that

mediates between fact and fiction to generate affective power—and that does not

privilege any one temporal, spatial, or affective positionality or relationality to the

bombings, as the adult Sebald explains that even though he never witnessed the

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[131] Presner further specifies that Sebald achieves his realist effects using modernist
techniques through a

> multiplicity of intersecting perspectives, (global and local, bomber and victim,
> inside and outside), accelerated temporal shifts (from chronological time to
> historical simultaneity), and precise factual information (flames two thousand
> meters high, speeds of over a hundred and fifty kilometers an hour, smoke
> rising to a height of eight thousand meters) coupled with experiential
> observations ('sank with grotesque contortions into melting asphalt') and the
> variance of modes of description (ranging from the historical and quantitative
> to the metaphorical and reflective). (356)

bombings, he feels "as if those horrors [he] did not experience cast a shadow over me, and one from which I shall never entirely emerge" (71). Although "almost untouched by the catastrophe then unfolding in the German Reich" (vii), Sebald tried to show in his literary texts how the catastrophe had "nonetheless made its mark on [his] mind" (viii) in a way that we also see in Iris Chang's commitment to her historical research and Ha Jin's embellished documentary realism in his excavation of the Korean War in *War Trash* and the Nanjing massacre.

For Sebald, this approach is necessary to overcome the affective limits of large-scale history and the formal limits of eyewitness testimony, which he argues is restricted by what the eyewitness can see and the forms available in which to articulate what has been seen. To combat these limitations, Jin includes testimony from multiple witnesses, mediated through Anling, to provide a more synoptic view of the events in Nanjing. At the same time, Sebald recognizes that eyewitness testimony has its limits. He explains:

> Far be it from me to doubt that witnesses of the time remember a great deal, and that it can be brought to light in interviews. On the other hand, the records of such interviews run along surprisingly stereotyped lines. Among the central problems of 'eyewitness reports' are their inherent inadequacy, notorious unreliability, and curious vacuity: their tendency to follow a set routine and go over and over the same material. (80)

We see this set narrative routine with Ban, who opens the novel with his description of Japanese atrocities he witnessed on his way to retrieve a Safety Zone Committee member. Anling begins with his full story, removed from the chronology of the novel, and then revisits the story at the end of Part I, in its proper chronological

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context. She stresses that though Ban initially refused to talk once he begins he cannot stop, repeating the story "three evenings in a row" (90). Yet while the basic narrative is presumably the same—though Anling notably never specifies—the boy's emotional response varies, as "sometimes, while speaking, Ban would break down, weeping wretched and flailing his thin arms. He would also tremble from time to time . . ." (Ibid.). Even if the wording of his story remains the same, Ban's shifting affective relation to the material points to a different affective response in his listeners, one which the witness Anling does not remark upon.

Listeners' responses are not the only gaps that Anling includes in her testimony. We learn that Anling and Minnie, both of whom have emphasized in their words and deeds the importance of recording and remembering history "as it happened" (96), falsify a report to the head of the college in order to minimize Minnie's unwitting culpability in the kidnapping of twenty-one girls (84-88). They limit their report to the first days of the occupation, up to but not including the day of the kidnapping on December 24th, then picking up after Christmas. Yet while Anling leaves out this detail in her "official" report, she includes it in this account. By drawing our attention to the ways in which gaps intrude into eyewitness testimony from reasons related to trauma, interest, or fear, Jin demonstrates both the importance of witnessing and the limits of individual accounts. Jin emplots Anling's artificial account, in the Sebaldian sense, by bringing facts to bear on affects—using the coldness of numbers alongside the personal and intimate losses of Anling and the many individuals she meets. By writing sometime after the events, Anling is able to

benefit from temporal and spatial distance—in essence to write her own "synoptic and artificial" account of the events from within.

Anling's factual observations are mirrored in her descriptions of the rapes. For example,

> There on the floor a soldier was wiggling and moaning atop a girl, whose head was rocking from side to side while blood dribbled out of her nose. . . . He forgot to pull up his pants; his member was swaying and dripping semen. The girl, eyes shut, began groaning in pain, a blood vessel on her neck pulsating. (75)

This description emphasizes physical details over psychological ones, as Anling does not give her own emotional response nor speculate about the soldier's, the girl's or even Minnie's psychological states. Minnie responds affectively, by screaming at the man, but Anling responds with a practical tug at the man's belt. Presumably, she is trying to physically stop him without turning his rage upon her, but she does not explain why she does what she does. In a surprising act of self-possession and forethought, Anling even picks up a silver flask to later present as evidence to the Japanese embassy (75). The absence of psychologizing in the novel suggests how little reasons matter in this world. Ultimately, what matters to Anling—and to the novel—is evidence.

Anling's narrative, then, becomes a preparation for the testimony she will later render at the post-war trial. The narrative is a collection of dates, times, refugee and rape counts, even the exact items of food stolen by Japanese soldiers. Scenes of atrocity are equally focused, as Courtney Fiske has noted, on "surface details [over] psychic interiors." In a scene in which Anling and Minnie happen upon an execution

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site, Anling "relates the size of the pond, the color of its water, and the appearance of the bodies it contains in exacting detail" (Fiske). After she describes the precise conditions of the bodies, from the wrinkled suede on leather boots to a sixth finger on a dead man's right hand, her response is simply, "The Japanese are savages!" (96)— as if her limited emotional reaction is secondary to describing the event (Fiske) and counting the bodies.   The novel's affective work, achieved through the assembly of evidence rather than calls to sympathy, appeals to discourses of feeling because other discourses—juridical, medical, political, and military—have failed to stop the rapes or obtain recognition, let alone justice, afterwards.

While Fiske argues that this scene points to Anling's own muted affective response, we can read the scene differently.   Descriptions of the sixth finger on the man's hand, the bending of the suede boots, and the woman with a cut-off breast and gun cartridge cases in her nostrils operate according to Barthes' notion of the *punctum*: the unexpected element that breaks through the every day image (26-7). This "wounding, personally touching detail that establishes a direct contact" (Stewart 6) turns a scene of mass atrocity into something intimate, personal, as grotesque details are juxtaposed visually and syntactically, like Sebald's family in the laundry basket, with the simple objects of daily life. For example, Anling describes how "a small boy, stabbed in the tummy and his head smashed in from the side, still held a squashed bamboo basket" (96). By subordinating the details of the gruesome boy's death to the ordinary facts of his life, Anling both attends to the horror while fighting the logic of this death world. If the logic of the Japanese killings was to turn live

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humans into dead things—smashing both bodies and baskets--then Anling is reminding us that these dead things were once human.

Ha Jin's lack of psychologizing also prevents Anling, and the reader, from trying to understand either the perpetrators or victims of rape. This absence is distinctive in the contemporary war literature of rape, as Vietnam War writers like Larry Heinemann largely portrayed their narrators as good men gone bad in a dirty war and, more recently, Littell's narrator gloried in his sadism. Less extreme, in Chapter One we saw how Toni Morrison tries to replicate the trauma of PTSD by placing us in the position of both the perpetrator and the victim. In contrast, Jin refuses to let us sympathize with the perpetrators or experience what the victims go through.

This refusal is made possible by Anling's positionality as a fictive narrator. As a worker at the university, confidante of Minnie, and resident of Nanjing, she in a position to be affectively connected to events that happen to her friends and even her children. Her daughter, Liya, is abandoned by her husband and then miscarries her child; her son, Haowen, a medical student in Japan, is forced into the Japanese Army and then killed by Chinese resistance fighters. Intimate family tragedy is juxtaposed with a larger national one as Anling responds to her son's death by hiding and telling almost no one. Her tragedy, like that of the people Nanjing, is silenced. But even though Anling is connected to and even observes the rapes, she never pretends to know what it is like to be raped or to be a rapist. She, like most of us, is neither a victim nor a perpetrator.

Anling never tells us how it feels to lose her son, as we register her pain through her empty actions, as if not going to work will explain a range of psychological effects and responses. And, as I grapple with in the following chapter, we become complicit too in the sense that Minnie and Anling are complicit. We see, we know, we read, and in the moment of reading we feel powerless to act. But, like Anling in the Epilogue, we can choose to stop the story. The synoptic and artificial view is just that—artifice. As James Dawes argues in his interviews with Japanese soldiers in China, it is ethically dubious to remember, record, and read stories of atrocities, but it is also problematic to allow these stories of silenced lives to remain silenced.

The ending of *Nanjing Requiem* speaks to Jin's interest in stories as a redress for other forms of discourse, as Anling is called to Tokyo to testify in the Japanese war crimes trials—which she notes are a mere show (299). After nearly a decade waiting to meet her dead son's child, she sees him and his mother waiting for her outside the courthouse. Out of respect for the Chinese victims and fear for her grandson's safety if it were known he had a Chinese father, she does not acknowledge them. As a storyteller, Anling speaks of a violent past and is silenced by an impossible future, as the text ends with another loss as Anling reveals that she never sees her grandson again.

Nanjing Requiem is historically localized, yet it speaks to our present moment in which rape continues to be a widespread systematic global weapon of war in countries like Syria, Libya, Bosnia, and Sudan, as well as among and by U.S.

forces.[132] Ha Jin depicts the physical and emotional power of women in war, who fight to protect the weak at tremendous personal cost—without men. He asks us to consider what it would mean to hear forgotten stories, what Susan Sontag described as those "memories that few have cared to claim" (85), to let them affect us, to affect others. For the women of Nanjing, it mattered then that their stories were not heard and it matters now that their voices, their agency, are reclaimed. Storytelling is not always a sufficient response to all traumas, but Ha Jin reminds us that literature can help to heal wounds simply by acknowledging that they exist. Finally, *Nanjing Requiem* is a testament to all civilian victims of war. Wars never really end. Families cannot be unbroken. Some traumas cannot be healed. All we can do is speak, and remember, and grieve, and endure.

IV.

Conclusion

What would happen if the literature of war included women's voices, stories, and perspectives? How would our understanding of the costs of war change? For McLagan, Sommers, and the twenty-five women of Team Lioness, representing the story of the first openly acknowledged women in combat means utilizing a hybrid form that blurs the line between documentary and drama. This hybridity

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[132] For example, Nicholas Kristof describes Kaltouma Ahmed, a Sudanese refugee who fled Darfur after armed men attacked her village, raped her, and murdered her teenage son—ten years after the war in Sudan began. In addition to Kaltouma, Kristof spoke to six additional Sudanese women who are "fighting back" against mass rape by telling their stories ("A Policy of Rape Continues").

acknowledges that women in combat are a reality without a story and opens a space

for those stories to begin. For Carpenter, motherhood is the locus around which wars

are fought. Although Carpenter largely excludes the voices of wives and

girlfriends—worth noting, as Cynthia Enloe describes, because they are often ignored

by the military as well—we do see how military mothers like Sara are positioned as

perpetual outsiders. As readers, we are given access to her son's story in a way that

she never is. And, while she tries to honor her son's death by telling his life, we

know that Sara never really knows much about either his life or his death. Her story

is ultimately supplanted by her need to tell some version of his story. Finally, Ha Jin

focuses on the strength of the female civilians in Nanjing, who are left trying to

support themselves and others when the men are gone.

The reality of women's lived experiences of war is one of constant

presentness. Ruba, an Iraqi woman whose husband was killed in front of her, told the

Red Cross: "'For me, today, there is no past and no future, only a horrible present'"

(Enloe 65). Brian Castner, a former Air Force Explosive Ordinance Technician

(EOD) who disarmed IEDs during two deployments to Iraq, similarly notes what

families deal with after deployments—past and present. In his memoir *The Long*

Walk: A Story of War and the Life That Follows, Castner discusses how his apparent

TBI and PTSD have affected his wife:

> My wife is alone in our full bed, too. Her husband, the father of her children,
> never came back from Iraq. When I deployed the first time she asked her
> grandmother for advice. Her grandfather served in Africa and Europe in
> World War II. Her grandmother would know what to do.
> 'How do you live with him being gone? How do I help him when he comes
> home,' my wife asked.

'He won't come home,' her grandmother answered.
'The war will kill him one way or the other. I hope for you that he dies while he is there,' her grandmother continued, 'otherwise the war will kill him at home. With you. (89-90)

A few days after the September 11 attacks, author Ian McEwan said that "Each individual death is an explosion in itself, wrecking the lives of those nearest." The man I sent to Afghanistan never really came back. But after two deployments and twenty-seven months, he was not the only one who was never the same. The woman he left behind was gone as well, burned through by nighttime phone calls about injuries, fear of answering the door, the silences that come after the unit is on communications blackout pending death notifications, the well meaning strangers with their platitudes, dead friends. For the children and families in Iraq and Afghanistan, war never seems to end, as writers like Jake Tapper, Carter Malkasian, and Dexter Filkins have shown. In a time of perpetual war and the perpetual presentness of war, women silently have borne much of the brunt—the rapes, the beatings, the dehydration, the aloneness, the pressure to conform, the financial burdens, the caretaking, and now even the fighting. It is time that artists and critics speak up.

Chapter Three

The Ace of Bloods: Lives Unled and Affective Truth in Ian McEwan's

Atonement* and Ben Fountain's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk

> "The man fires a rifle for many
> years, and he goes to war, and
> afterward he turns the rifle in at
> the armory and he believes he's
> finished with the rifle. But no
> matter what else he might do
> with his hands—love a woman,
> build a house, change his son's
> diaper—his hands remember the
> rifle and the power the rifle
> proffered."
>
> --Anthony Swofford,
> *Jarhead*

On October 25, 2007, the men of Battle Company, 2nd Battalion of the 503rd

Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade,[133] were conducting a patrol to intercept

weapons in Afghanistan's notoriously dangerous Korengal Valley. As First Platoon

returned to the outpost, they were ambushed by ten to fifteen enemy fighters armed

with RPGs (Rocket-Propelled Grenades) and PKMs (*Pulemyot Kalashnikov* machine

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[133] Sebastian Junger, an embedded reporter with the unit, describes the 173rd in his
book *WAR* as an "infamously tough unit that has been taking the brunt of the nation's
combat since World War I. The men of the 173rd performed the only combat jump of
the Vietnam War, fought their way through the Iron Triangle and the Cu Chi tunnels,
and then assaulted Hill 875 during the battle of Dak To. They lost one-fifth of their
combat strength in three weeks. By the end of the war, the 173rd had the highest
casualty rate of any brigade in the U.S. Army" (41). My account of the ambush is
assembled from Junger's interviews with the men in *WAR* and the official narrative
and citation on the Army's Medal of Honor website.

guns) ("Official Narrative"). The insurgents had set themselves up in an "L-shape," a powerful position that hits the soldiers from the front along their expected path as well as from the side.[134] The initial RPG and PKM assault was overwhelming and injured every man in the Alpha team[135] almost instantly. Alpha team leader Sgt. Josh Brennan was hit eight times, SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon) gunner Spc. Frank Eckrode was shot in the thigh, and squad leader Erick Gallardo was shot in the helmet, while the medic, Spc. Hugo "Doc" Mendoza, was shot in the femur and bleeding profusely. Within moments, the ambush had seriously wounded the squad leader (in charge of both fire teams), the alpha team leader (the senior team leader), the medic, and the SAW gunner (the machine gunner and the highest casualty-producing member of the team). In other words, the squad's leadership, firepower, and medical care had been incapacitated within seconds.

Bravo team leader Spc. Salvatore Giunta organized and provided suppressive fire, then knowingly exposed himself to fire from small arms (AK-47s), RPGs, and PKMs as he abandoned his covered position to aid his squad leader. Before he reached Gallardo, Giunta was shot in the front-plate of his body armor and in the assault pack on his back. He nevertheless continued to move forward. As he moved, Giunta realized that the bullets were not coming from the expected direction. A later military investigation explained, "the enemy was trying to throw up a 'wall of lead' between the first few men and the rest of the unit so that they could be overrun and

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[134] This position is so powerful that "correctly done, a handful of men can wipe out an entire platoon" (Junger, *WAR* 117) of approximately 39 men.
[135] An American Army infantry squad is usually made up of two fire teams of four men each plus a squad leader.

captured" (119).   Gallardo, the most experienced member of the squad, senses that

they need to push through. He gets up and gathers Giunta and the Bravo team SAW

gunner Pfc. Casey to break through the firing and RPGs to reach the wounded Alpha

team. Gallardo and Casey remain with the wounded Eckrode, while Giunta bounds

forward to get to Brennan and Mendoza.   He finds the combatants trying to drag off

Brennan and quickly engages in close-combat, killing one combatant and causing the

other to flee. He then administers first aid to Brennan. For his actions that day,

Giunta was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award for

American military valor. His choices that day are believed to have saved "the entire

unit from getting killed" (120).[136] Despite Giunta's brave and heroic efforts,

however, both Brennan and Mendoza died of their wounds.

What is especially impressive about Giunta's choices is the speed in which he

regained control of the situation. From the initial ambush to the beginning of his

counterattack, Giunta believes that less than fifteen seconds had passed. While most

people would have been disoriented and unable to respond, he "used those fifteen

seconds to assign rates and sectors of fire to his team, run to Gallardo's assistance,

assess the direction of a round that hit him in the chest, and then throw three hand

grenades while assaulting an enemy position" (121).   Giunta used the time he had to

resume control of an out of control situation. More to the point, all of his team did

the same, relying on the kinesthetic memory and instincts honed through years of

training and combat experience. They were able to operate as a single organism,

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[136] Junger explains that the following year, American troops conducted a similar L-shaped ambush and killed nearly twenty Taliban forces (120).

overlooking their individual safety to help the group (120).   Junger describes this

approach as a kind of choreography, akin to a football game, that requires a "series of

quick decisions and rather precise actions carried out in concert with ten or twelve

other men" (120). This choreography is in fact difficult to sustain, as the execution of

each man's part requires full physiological and affective control and mental focus—a

"complex synthesis of practical knowledge, emotional discipline, and bodily

disposition" (Macleish 77). Not surprisingly, combat causes a rush of hormones, like

adrenaline, ephinephrine, and norephinephrine that affect heartrate and breathing and,

by extension, complex motor skills, vision, and bodily control.[137] These

physiological responses affect a soldier's ability to shoot accurately and interpret

stimuli correctly.

What is surprising, however, is the degree to which a soldier's perceived sense

of control affects his ability to process his experiences. In the military, perception is

often described as reality, and in combat, troops that feel like they can control what is

happening—regardless of the danger they are actually in—tend to experience lower

rates of breakdown and post-traumatic stress than safer troops that believe they have

lost control.[138] The rise in PTSD is believed to be at least in part related to this

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[137] Junger describes the physiological effects of adrenaline and heartrate increase, as
hormones redirect blood to the larger muscle, the brain, and the heart: "Complex
motor skills start to diminish at 145 beats per minute, which wouldn't matter much in
a swordfight but could definitely ruin your aim with a rifle. At 170 beats per minute
you start to experience tunnel vision, loss of depth perception, and restricted hearing.
And at 180 beats per minute you enter a netherworld where rational thought decays,
bowel and bladder control are lost" (33).
[138] Junger cites a study of Israeli troops after the 1973 Yom Kippur war. On average,
combat troops have a 1:1 ratio of physical to psychiatric casualties.   As expected, the

perception of lost control, as distance weapons like IEDs and EFPs[139] have made the

survival of even the best soldiers a matter of contingency. Junger explains:

> The enemy now had a weapon that unnerved the Americans more than small-arms fire ever could: random luck. Every time you drove down the road you were engaged in a twisted existential exercise where each moment was the only proof you'd ever have that you hadn't been blown up the moment before. And if you *were* blown up, you'd probably never know it and certainly wouldn't be able to affect the outcome. Good soldiers died just as easily as sloppy ones, which is pretty much how soldiers define unfair tactics in war. (142)

While a soldier's life is marked, to differing degrees, by unfairness and lack of

choice, most soldiers believe that if they train hard enough, they might survive.   The

realities of the IED and EFP bring out the affective nature of war, as the armored

Humvees and armored bodies respond to the contingencies that point out that soldiers

are, in essence, "human bodies being offered up to die, via a practice shaped,

managed, and mediated by the technology of armor" (Macleish 68).

Israeli combat troops basically maintained that average. The rear troops—those not directly in combat—experienced three times the psychiatric casualties (122-3).
[139] The EFP, considered a deadlier version of the IED, is very cheap to make. Explosives are placed in a soup pot-like container with a cover that utilizes "dense metals with hot melting points" (Macleish 81). When the EFP explodes,

> the heat and force of detonation transforms the thin metal lid into a compact, white-hot, high-velocity slug. Armor can absorb or deflect bullets and fragments of shrapnel, but EFPs go right through layers and layers of it, in one side and out the other, and through whatever is in between. They are for use against armor . . . As metal cuts through metal, the EFP totally destabilizes the armored form, and turns it against itself and its fleshy, human contents. It fills the inside of a vehicle with the fractured bits of its own armor and structural members—this is called backspall, the armor that protects you becoming a cloud of shrapnel that will kill you. It ignited whatever will burn or explode—the bullets, rockets, and grenades that you would turn against the enemy cook off inside a confined space" (Ibid).

Unlike an IED, which is more localized in its killing, EFPs cause a "'catastrophic kill'" (Ibid.) that can destroy an entire armored military vehicle and everyone inside of it. To be hit with an EFP is, to put it bluntly, to be dead already.

For servicemembers, most choices end the day they volunteer for service. After that, the choices happen up the chain of command, far from the outposts and driving routes of Afghanistan and Iraq: "Somewhere, far from Iraq, was where the orders began, but by the time they reached Rustamiyah, the only choice left for a solder was to choose which lucky charm to tuck behind his body armor, or which foot to line up in front of the other, as he went out to follow the order of the day" (Finkel 85). While practical, tactical knowledge like that possessed by Gallardo and Giunta can ultimately be earned with blood, soldiers can do little about chance. In his account of the 2007 surge in Iraq, reporter David Finkel describes the contingency and precariousness of contemporary war, as soldiers might live or die because they slept in a different position than normal, narrowly missing a piece of shrapnel that would have hit them (93), or because they sat in a different Humvee or a different seat or placed one leg in front of the other in the Humvee. For Pfc. Jay Cajimat, luck was not on his side:

> In such a war, and in an area seeded with EFPs, what was the safest seat? The soldiers discussed it constantly. . . . The lead truck in a convoy was the one that got hit the most, but lately insurgents had been aiming at the second in line, or the third, which had been Cajimat's, or sometimes the fourth or fifth. And while most EFPs had been coming from the right side, Cajimat's had come from the left. (35)

On fire and trapped in his Humvee, Cajimat burned to death as his helpless friends watched.

For the American soldier in Afghanistan or Iraq, this fear of losing control is

one of the "unspeakable unspokens" of contemporary war. Soldiers are respected

because they possess what Ben Fountain calls the "ace of bloods": they are willing to

sacrifice their lives, limbs, and brains to protect their country and, especially, their

fellow soldiers. As Kenneth T. Macleish has described, soldiers discipline their

bodies and minds, learning how to control their feelings and how to respond

instinctively to sensory input that would overwhelm the average person. They are, in

a sense, feeling machines—controlled and cohesive in combat, training their muscle

memory and instincts to respond robotically. At the same time, these machinic

responses to combat forget that the experience of battle is emotionally productive,

and this excess of emotion can make it difficult to turn feelings off—or even to want

to. This appearance of physical, psychological, and affective control and discipline in

excess of the average civilian is what makes soldiers into heroes. At the same time,

however, soldiers' bodily and psychic vulnerability places them in proximity to

experiences that are chaotic, uncontrollable, and often intolerable to most people.

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that half of the men in Battle Company

with whom Junger was embedded were believed to be on psychiatric medications by

the end of their fifteen-month deployment (41). Overcoming this disconnect between

precarious lived experience at war and understanding that experience at home is key

to bridging the military-civilian divide.

One approach to this problem was proposed in 1990 by Vietnam veteran Tim

O'Brien in his *The Things They Carried*, a collection of linked semi-autobiographical

short stories about his year in a Vietnam infantry unit.[140] For O'Brien, writing just

before the similarly affectively limited but significantly shorter Gulf War, wars need

to be made real for non-combatants who are disconnected from the soldier's

experience. They can only be made real, however, by generating strong but specific

affective responses in readers. In his "How to Tell a True War Story," O'Brien

argues that the only way to tell a true war story is to lie—to add details that make the

experience viscerally real even if the "facts" don't match. In O'Brien's world, "story-

truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth" (179), and "story-truth" is the kind that

"makes the stomach believe" (78).   War truth is experienced affectively, as a

physiological and emotional response to the content of a story. The truth, then, is

generated by changes to content and form that create the true affective experience of

that moment.   While his approach is not synoptic and artificial in the way that Sebald

advocates, both Sebald and O'Brien stress the importance of manipulating both form

and content in order to generate affective realism.

In order to generate these true affects, O'Brien argues that true war stories

must be so specific in their "absolute and uncompromising allegiance to obscenity

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[140] The collection, a postmodern reimagining of his earlier autobiographical *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home*, was published several years after the "Vietnam chic" of movies and books had ended but just a year before the Gulf War began. It was thus both belated and proleptic as it considered how war writing should make us feel about past wars on the cusp of a future one—one marked by distance killing and clean images that belied the reality of civilian deaths on the ground. In a sense, the book appeared just before a war that engaged affects of exhilaration without calling upon feelings of individual and collective guilt and remorse.

and evil" (68-9) that there is no doubt that they tell the truth.[141] By way of example,

O'Brien offers Rat Kiley, a prolific storyteller in the text: "Listen to Rat Kiley.

Cooze, he says. He does not say bitch. He certainly does not say woman, or girl. He

says cooze." (68-9).   Cooze is an urban slang term for "cunt."[142] In contrast to the

soldier speaking the horrible affective truth of war, O'Brien describes the sentimental

older women "of kindly temperament and humane politics" (84) who always seem to

misunderstand his story. His narrator responds by changing the story-truth, "adding

and subtracting, making up a few things to get at the real truth" (85). O'Brien's

approach argues that war stories should generate maximum affective response, but

they must generate specific responses that make the war stories as awful as wars

Contemporary warfare is a product of this disconnect between what Tim

O'Brien would call happening-truth and story-truth and Walter Benjamin would

describe as news and storytelling. On the one hand, we can know so much about war

through ubiquitous access to post-cinematic media in the form of drone surveillance

and battles posted as Youtube clips, which can bring combat home to both military

planners and civilian audiences. On the other hand, we must continue to deal with the

epistemological and rhetorical black hole that former Defense Secretary Donald

Rumsfeld describes as the "unknown unknowns," or the things

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[141] For an analysis of the relationship between truth and naming atrocity in *The Things They Carried*, see Jim Hicks, *Lessons from Sarajevo* (113-4).
[142] Noting the nastiness of his language, what O'Brien is asking for is a vocabulary that speaks the ugliness of war—that does not hide war behind the clinical preciseness that we see with the recent "Operations": Operation Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or the even more opaque "Overseas Contingency Operations."

"we do not know we don't know" ("DOD News Briefing—Secretary Rumsfeld and

General Myers").[143] While Rumsfeld was specifically referring to the possibility of

unknown weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, continued misjudgment of these

unknowns has had major tactical, strategic, political, and personal consequences for

the troops on the ground. From the non-existent Weapons of Mass Destruction cited

as the official *casus belli* for the Iraq War to the Iraq surge that destabilized

operations in Afghanistan to the military debacle that constituted Operation

Anaconda,[144] not knowing is dangerous, to the mission, to the troops, to the country,

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[143] Rumsfeld's comment was in answer to a question about Iraq by NBC's Jim
Miklaszewski during a February 2002 news brief. The full question and answer are as
follows:

> Q: Could I follow up, Mr. Secretary, on what you just said, please? In regard
> to Iraq weapons of mass destruction and terrorists, is there any evidence to
> indicate that Iraq has attempted to or is willing to supply terrorists with
> weapons of mass destruction? Because there are reports that there is no
> evidence of a direct link between Baghdad and some of these terrorist
> organizations.

> Rumsfeld: Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always
> interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are
> things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to
> say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also
> unknown unknowns -- the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one
> looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the
> latter category that tend to be the difficult ones.

[144] Operation Anaconda, also known as the Battle of Roberts Ridge, occurred in the
Shah-i-Kot Valley of Eastern Afghanistan from March 2-16, 2002. It was one of the
first large-scale battles using conventional ground forces in Afghanistan. Special
Forces (SF) intercepted intelligence revealing large numbers of fighters were
planning a counteroffensive against the Afghan government and U.S. forces after
being routed at Tora Bora; as the numbers grew, military leaders determined that SF
troops could not handle such a large insurgent force and decided to supplement them
with ground infantry from the 101st Airborne Division and 10th Mountain Division.

and, especially, to the Iraqi and Afghan civilians caught in the middle. In this era of immediate and constant post-cinematic representation, representations can both clarify and occlude, generating powerful individual and collective affective responses—the commonplace "thank you for your service" that most soldiers so loathe--that neglect the ethics of why and how wars are fought. That is, as we can see and feel so much about war, we seem to be missing the contingent, precarious, vulnerable state that soldiers must live in, limiting both their and our own ethical responses.

This chapter works through this paradox of overwhelming representations and affective responses against limited ethical considerations through an analysis of two novels that emplot this indeterminacy and contingency as both plot devices and

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Intelligence assumed that civilians would be on the ground, so efforts were made to clarify the Rules of Engagement as the soldiers used a ring of circular formations to squeeze (Anaconda-like) escaping insurgent forces.

The battle was estimated to last only five days, but ultimately went for over two weeks due to a series of intelligence failures, from underestimating enemy numbers to dismissing enemy entrenchment in the ridgelines with mortars and artillery to a willingness to fight rather than surrender, as well as tactical and strategic miscalculations including landing the force in a valley during the day with limited artillery and aircraft support. For example, a Chinook helicopter carrying a Navy SEAL team tried to land too close to the fighting. When the helicopter was hit, one of the team members fell out of the helicopter and was captured and killed. When an Army Ranger force came to assist, they landed on the same spot and were also hit. The double-hits led commanders to decide not to send any more helicopters for rescue until it was dark. As a result, one soldier died waiting to be evacuated.

All told, eight U.S. soldiers were killed during the battle and an additional seventy-two wounded. Ultimately, the battle showed the limits of U.S. military and intelligence capabilities, as both advanced surveillance and superior technology and numbers ostensibly won the battle, but not without significant cost. See Sean Naylor for an account of the battle and its aftermath.

narrative features.   Gesturing to the ways in which new media are shaped by and

shaping war, they incorporate post-cinematic elements as formal narrative features in

order to create affective conditions that replicate ugly truths of war—and help us to

understand how representations of war can both connect us to and distance us from

affective connection and ethical responsibility. Changes in contemporary warfare

tactics, strategy, and weapons have added provided military planners with an excess

of information; at the same time, asymmetrical, 360-degree warfare has both elevated

the importance of soldierly experience—such as knowing where IEDs are often set or

how they are disguised—as well as reduced its efficacy, as an IED can be set

anywhere and be disguised as anything.   These texts capture this sense of

indeterminacy through narrative and rhetorical features that confuse our point-of-

view, emphasize the transmission of affect and the elements of chance that inform

soldier's lives, and a deny us closure. Ultimately, these representations recognize

how easy it is to dissociate from killing and dying, as representations can become a

way to replace the ethical content with affective forms.

My test cases are two disparate texts: British novelist Ian McEwan's 2001

novel *Atonement* and American novelist Ben Fountain's 2012 novel *Billy Lynn's

Long Halftime Walk.*[145] On the surface, these texts could not be more different:

published ten years apart, set in a mannered English estate and France leading up to

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[145] Although *Atonement* is written by a British author, I include it in my study for two
important reasons: the British were the biggest supporter—politically and militarily—
of the War on Terror after the United States, and the text's and subsequent film's
wide dissemination in the United States illustrated a powerful new way of
representing war.

and during World War II and in Iraq War-era Texas during a Thanksgiving Day Cowboys football game, one a tragic love story, the other a satire of contemporary visual and consumer culture.

However, these texts are more similar than they initially appear. Both incorporate realism's careful attention to images and vocabulary, from the distinctive soldiers' argot in *Billy Lynn* to *Atonement*'s detailed descriptions of the British evacuation from Dunkirk. Both engage with forms of national mythic and representational imaginaries—the English countryhouse and the romance of the countryhouse novel, and American football—in order to undermine them. They feature protagonists who join the military to avoid prison, and whose lower-middle class standing has removed their agency at great personal risk to their lives. Formally, both use complex narrative techniques, with McEwan's novel narrated, as we learn at the end, through the adult Briony; Ben Fountain uses frequent free indirect discourse, making it difficult to know whether we are reading the third-person narrator's or Billy Lynn's thoughts. Each text deals with artifice and the artificial, as both formal features and thematic concerns. And though primarily set off the battlefield, both are essentially war novels, in their concern with combat infantry soldiers.

<center>**I.**</center>

<center>**Fictions and Atonement**</center>

A few days after September 11, 2001, Ian McEwan's *Atonement* was published. The novel, which was written in a pre-war England and published on the precipice of a new war of global alliance and scope, revisits the heroic British myth of the 1940 evacuation of British forces from the beaches of Dunkirk, France. The "Miracle at Dunkirk" was considered miraculous because several hundred thousand British soldiers fled advancing German forces and then were stranded on the beaches waiting for evacuation. Although many were ultimately rescued, Dunkirk in fact represented a strategic and logistical failure by British war planners (Lloyd). It was thus a "miracle" because more men did not die, and the British navy was able to salvage enough troops to live to fight another day. Nevertheless, the response to what happened at Dunkirk was surprisingly positive at home, as the military need to raise popular morale and support was helped through press censorship and tales of military triumph, turning the debacle of men stranded by their own navy into a story of miraculous British fortitude and bravery against overwhelming force and odds.

This trope of brave men standing fast against a faceless enemy has been similarly utilized in U.S. representations of the Second World War, particularly in the post-Vietnam, post-Cold War era. McEwan's take toward British military history was a version of what Michael Herr would describe as the "mythopathic" (46) moments in

<center>167</center>

which the myths of war overtake the realities.[146] Using formal techniques such as

shifting point of view and a deeply unreliable narrator to deal with this revisionary

history, McEwan constructs one monstrous lie in the early part of the narrative that

acts as an index to even bigger lies, as the consequences of a young girl's

misunderstanding of adult behavior are seen in the lives of not only her sister and

sister's beloved but on a larger scale in the lies that kill so many others on the fields

of France and the ovens and gas chambers of Auschwitz.   This Sebaldian "synoptic

and artificial" approach uses the "details [without which] there could be no larger

picture" (McEwan 214). The intimate losses illuminate the larger-scale suffering,

which the novel blames on both military lies and artists' unwillingness to unearth

inconvenient truths.[147]

Atonement explores how Kathleen Stewart's notion of tiny, shifting accidents and

impacts can change lives in profound and immutable ways. Set on a country estate in 1935,

Atonement explores the shifting relations of young Briony Tallis, her older sister Celia, and

Celia's childhood friend Robbie Turner. On this hot day, Briony witnesses a scene of

changing affect between Celia and Robbie, as a fight over a broken vase becomes erotically

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[146] Sebastian Junger later describes the "Vietnam moment[s]" in 2007 Afghanistan as
ones in which "you weren't so much getting misled as getting asked to participate in a
kind of collective wishful thinking" (Junger 132). For example, the Taliban attack on
the Wanat outpost resulted in the deaths of nine American soldiers and the wounding
of half of those who survived.   When Junger asked the Army commanders about
what happened, they described it as an "American victory" because the men had
killed so many of the enemy. As Junger notes, Operation Enduring Freedom was not
supposed to be a war of attrition, so using enemy deaths to measure success in
Afghanistan was, at best, a "tricky business" (133).
[147] As Brian Finney has noted, much of the novel invokes and parodies modernism's
interest in the aesthetics of fragmentation following World War I, which ultimately
resulted in a disengaged art that did nothing to prevent the even larger World War II.

and unspokenly charged. Feeling an affective current that borders between animosity and

desire pass between them (Dyer 167), Robbie attempts to explain his feelings to Celia in

writing—to write the story-truth of his feelings. Succeeding drafts of letters become

increasingly blunt and sexually charged, until he finally describes his desire to kiss Celia's

"cunt." This word, chosen for its ability to shock, is intended only for his own eyes and

affective pleasure. Yet in his charged and confused state, Robbie mistakenly gives Briony

this draft of his letter to Celia. The letter initiates a surprising response by Celia, as the

bluntness of Robbie's word finally allows both to acknowledge and to consummate their

desire and love for each other. However, the highly imaginative Briony has also read it, and

the word convinces her that Robbie is a "sex maniac." When Briony's teenage cousin is

raped later that night, Briony believes what she "feels" about Robbie instead of what she

knows and has seen—that the rapist was her brother's wealthy visiting friend Paul Marshall.

Briony's affective knowledge and her family's classist assumptions are enough to

condemn Robbie to prison and, ultimately, to the wartime British infantry, which he joins in

exchange for parole from prison. The novel traces his experiences in wartime France and

finally Briony's efforts to atone for her sin as a nurse in wartime London. The narrative

leads us to believe that despite everything, Robbie and Cecilia survive the war and are

happily together, shattered versions of their earlier selves but nonetheless able to finally be

united. The final pages of the novel, however reveal the sad truth that Robbie died of septic

shock waiting to be evacuated from the Bray Dunes at Dunkirk; Cecilia was drowned shortly

afterwards while trying to shelter in a tunnel during a bombing raid.   Their happy reunion

was merely Briony's imagining, a way to bring the lovers together in story if not in life. In

this merciless world, writing and reading a single word has the power to irrevocably alter and destroy lives.

Atonement, as Paul Crosthwaite has argued, reflects the symptoms of trauma in its representation of the evacuation from Dunkirk; the trauma of the scene, however, is refracted through the lens of a character—and author—who was not present. Yet even as it imagines and enacts forms of traumatic symptoms, *Atonement* demonstrates the dangers of imagination on an individual as well as national scale. This second, more malignant, use of imagination is ultimately destructive, as the lies that destroy Robbie and Cecilia come to stand for the bigger lies—and willingness to believe those lies--that lead to the Second World War. Briony's crime becomes a microcosm for larger crimes of over-imagination and empathetic lack: "Five years later, Briony realizes that what caused her to write Robbie into her story as a villain was both an excess of imagination and a failure of imaginative projection" (Finney 80).

This same paradox of imaginative excess and limits, as Brian Finney has argued, enabled England to believe Hitler's lies in the period just before the war because it wanted to; its feelings of "deluded invulnerability" (78) in its geographical and, therefore, affective distance from continental Europe allowed Chamberlain and others to ignore the truths in front of them. Yet while Britain initially appeased Hitler because of a refusal to extend the imagination, the worst horrors of the war occurred because of a determination to extend them, as horrible new ways to kill came to be in the air wars and gas chambers and nuclear explosions that would make the Second World War the deadliest in human history.

Robbie's narrative describes this paradox in which a lack of imagined empathy and an excess of imagined ways to kill destroy a young boy:

> He was thinking about the French boy asleep in his bed, about the indifference with which men could lob shells into a landscape. Or empty their bomb bays over a sleeping cottage by a railway, without knowing or caring who was there. It was an industrial process. He had seen their own RA units at work, tightly knit groups, working all hours, proud of the speed with which they could set up a line, and proud of the discipline, drills, training, teamwork. They need never see the end result—a vanished boy. Vanished. (189-90)

Because the bombers, like modern drone operators, do not have to see what they have done, they do not have to imagine the boy as human. And, indeed, the results of the bombings have eliminated all traces of the human, including the body itself.

This paradox between limited and excessive imagination is ultimately what powers Briony's metanarrative, as she describes how she wants to "rewrite the past so that the guilty became the innocent" (246). Yet, as Finney has explained, Briony's effort to rewrite fiction to match fact is at best "an attempt at atoning for a past she cannot reverse" (69). Ultimately, reading about or watching representations of war is a form of guilt too. As Briony explains in Robbie's narrative section, "the witnesses were guilty to. All day we've witnessed each other's crimes. You killed no one today? But how many did you leave to die?" (247).

Yet even though it recognizes that representing the horrors of war can only approximate them, the narrative focuses on moments in which Barthes' *punctum* can break through. Robbie sees, for example, a leg in a tree, "severed cleanly above the knee . . . a perfect leg, pale, smooth, small enough to be a child's" (180). This

"unexpected detail" catches Robbie and stays with him (179) as he works his way through the French countryside to the beaches. On his way, he notes how affective this war is, as repeated Stuka attacks shock the men into individual and group paralysis (225). Pain is felt synaesthetically as a "flash of color" (223).

Most striking, however, are the scenes at Bray Dunes. Robbie describes how angry the British Army men are at the Royal Air Force (R.A.F.), who they believe has abandoned them to be shot up by German planes while waiting on the beaches. As Robbie and others wait in a bar, a R.A.F. pilot walks in. The men quickly swarm around him, the moment charged with violent potential: "A sense of something tasty about to happen was spreading across the bar and drawing more soldiers in. As the crowd swelled around the circle, any remaining sense of individual responsibility fell away" (237). The men, powered by their collective imagining rather than individual ethical responsibility, feed off each other's affects—the anger, the pain, the fear. Yet Robbie realizes that if the R.A.F man "had said anything, anything at all, the troops surrounding him might have remembered that he was a man, not a rabbit to be skinned" (238). In this moment, words could have cut through the loaded affective moment, reminding the soldiers of their common humanity.

What McEwan stages, then, is the problematic of speaking and reading about war. *Atonement* encodes narrative unreliability as a way to get us to question forms and our responses to them.   Through an exploration of the presence and representation of individual and collective guilt, the narrative asks us to distrust our

affective responses to stories; it also suggests that new forms might open up ways to connect to others.

II.

Buying Into War: *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*

While there have been a number of War on Terror novels published since, Ben Fountains's 2012 novel *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* is thus far the most critically and commercially successful of these books and the most formally innovative, with the most to say so far about our contemporary experience of war. *Billy Lynn* describes a particularly strange day in the life of Specialist Billy Lynn, a virginal nineteen-year-old infantryman and native Texan who is unknowingly filmed rescuing a comrade during an Iraq firefight aired on Fox News. After the clip goes viral, Billy and his squad are ordered back to the United States for a two-week morale-boosting Victory Tour that culminates in a Thanksgiving Day visit to the Dallas Cowboys stadium, where the men end up marching in a halftime show with Destiny's Child.

By its conclusion, this exhilarating and often hilarious novel has turned unexpectedly dark, as this land of armchair warriors and conspicuous consumers betrays the Bravos. The men are cheated out of the movie rights to their own story and disenchanted by the shallowness of their fellow Americans, who quickly thank them for their service before returning to their Starbucks and Jumbotrons and Chevy trucks. They are even attacked by a group of roadies. Billy's journey into the dark

heart of the American dream stops just before the men are sent back to Iraq for the remainder of an extended tour—one that is almost certain to end badly. Only a few months into a yearlong deployment, the men had already lost two men—one dead, one grievously injured—in the famous firefight at the fictional Al Ansakar canal and are collectively beginning to show signs of PTSD. At least a few of these symbols of victory in a fireworks-filled, explosive public show are likely to be victims of a different kind of explosion. After being so visibly displayed on a national scale, they will return invisible, in flag-draped coffins that are banned from being shown or with invisible wounds like TBI or PTSD.

While most of the other novels on the War on Terror have focused on the soldier's mental trauma, moral injury, and inability to reintegrate into a world that no longer understands him, Fountain's book does something different by updating Tim O'Brien's work on truth in war storytelling for a post-cinematic age. Using the post-cinematic as both content and a formal technique, Fountain suggests that our interest in feeling a war from which we are so affectively and experientially distant is part of the problem. I argue that Fountain does not just highlight the emptied out language of the war—he enacts it, making us question not only what we have to say about war, but what the novel as a form might currently say in a post-cinematic, affectively mediated world.

As *Billy Lynn* shows, the problem is not a lack of affective responses—of which there is no shortage—but rather a lack of affects that generate ethical and empathetic considerations. The text captures the accelerationism that Steven Shaviro

describes as part and parcel of a post-cinematic world, saturating the men and the text with sensorial stimulation. However, in *Billy Lynn* the "story-truth" horrors of war serve to titillate and excite more bloodlust in the Bravos' "fellow Americans" (12). For two weeks, every person Billy meets is marked by emotional excess. They tremble (21), mobbing the Bravos like they are the Beatles (58), with "raw wavering voices and frenzied speech patterns, the gibberish spilled from the mouths of seemingly well-adjusted citizens. *We appreciate*, they say, their voices throbbing like a lover's" (37). They shiver with "a titillatory chill" (194) when they ask if Billy was scared. Perhaps most disturbing, "They say thank you over and over and with growing fervor, they know they're being good when they thank the troops and their eyes shimmer with love for themselves and this tangible proof of their goodness'"(39-40).

Yet as Billy notes, even when people are being supportive, something is "weird and frightening" about these encounters: "there's something harsh in his fellow Americans, avid, ecstatic, a burning that comes of the deepest need" (38). He continues,

> they all need something from him, this pack of half-rich lawyers, dentists, soccer moms, and corporate VPs, they're all gnashing for a piece of a barely grown grunt making $14,800 a year. For these adult, affluent people he is mere petty cash in their personal accounting, yet these lose it when they enter his personal space. They tremble. They breathe in fitful, stinky huffs. Their eyes skitz and quiver with the force of the moment, because here, finally, up close and personal, is the war made flesh, an actual point of contact after all the months and years of reading about the war, watching the war on TV, hearing the war flogged and flacked on talk radio. (38-9)

Meeting Billy, they have a "mystical transference"(39) of Billy's physical,

psychological, and emotional experiences of war, which moves across and through

individuals and media and into a larger public sphere. In short, the Bravos incite a

transmission of affect that makes the Americans they meet feel more alive, more

good, more brave, because they have interacted with the Bravos.

Not surprisingly, this excess of feeling and visceral response culminates in the

game itself, with its ups and downs, which operates as an emptied out metaphor for

war as a contest, or game. This kind of war is meant to entertain and distract the

masses and to make more money for the wealthy. The show begins with a Carrie

Underwood-type singing the national anthem as "Tears the size of lug nuts [tumble]

down her cheeks [because] that's the kind of thing war does to you. Sensations are

heightened, time compressed, passions aroused . . . " (206). Even the game is part of

this mediated emotional disconnect, as the narrator explains, because "It's not like

you're supposed to watch the actual game anyway, no, you watch the Jumbotron,

which displays not just the game in real and replay time but a nonstop filler of

commercials, a barrage of sensory overload that accounts for far more content than

the game itself" (220). The game, the ads, the Bravos—all are there to be

represented, sold, used, consumed, in an economy of disturbing equivalence in which

what matters are the emotions generated and the dollars made but in which the depth

of individual loss is registered only as momentary titillation for an audience of

millions.   In contrast to the real soldiers, who have to regulate their mental and

physical responses in order to operate in combat, the civilian in Billy Lynn's America

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wants and needs to lose control. As the novel shows, post-cinematic media offer the

multisensorial affective options to make that possible.

Most important for my analysis, Fountain does not just set the Bravos in this

mediated, post-cinematic America; he uses a literary appropriation of the post-

cinematic as a formal rhetorical quality that captures how the reality of war, including

injury, has been eliminated from its representations. Beginning on the second page of

the novel, Fountain utilizes what I describe as disembodied word clouds of deformed,

token words like "nina leven" and "terrRist" that invoke the brevity of Twitter and the

floating nature of the virtual landscape itself. The text's use of these deformed,

decontextualized words suggests a variety of deformities that wars create—physical,

mental, and linguistic.[148] *Billy Lynn* suggests that both the words and the notions of

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[148] Surprisingly in a novel about a major firefight, *Billy Lynn* features very few
depictions of the consequences of the war for those most affected—Shroom, who is
wounded and saved by Billy before bleeding out on the medevac chopper, and Lake,
who is grievously wounded and now hospitalized   Their wounds are largely absent
from the text, and, as Lt. Col. Peter Molin has noted in a conference presentation at
the 2013 American Literature Association War and American Literature symposium,
representations of visible wounds have been absent from larger discourse about the
war. Notable exceptions include recent short stories by Brian Van Reet, Phil Klay and
Katey Schultz. For analyses of how representations of disability in literature both
elide and overdetermine disability, see Rosemarie Garland Thompson and David T.
Mitchell and Sharon Snyder.

Although we have little description of death or injury in the novel, Fountain registers
these losses as indices of moral standing—a common trope in representations of
disabilityFor example, Billy's adulterous, cruel, super conservative father suffers a
stroke and is wheelchair bound; his sister is scarred after a horrific car accident that
ultimately results in Billy joining the military; and even Texas Stadium itself is
described as deformed. The only wounded servicemember we see is Major Mac, an
invisibly wounded half-deaf public affairs officer who accompanies the Bravos
because "on the major's very first day at the war he was blown up not just once but

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honor, sacrifice, and courage that so deeply attract the American civilian—that

activate feeling—deform and become deformed by war. In search of an authentic

feeling of war, civilian language can only approximate and distort an experience, and

a value system, that it cannot understand.

This imprecise, deformed, occluding vocabulary extends not only into the

causes of the war but also to the soldiers themselves, with real consequences for the

men. The need to make the men into a consumable affective experience begins with

the very concept of Bravo Squad, itself a produced entity: "One nation, two weeks,

eight American heroes, though technically there is no such thing as Bravo squad.

They are Bravo Company, second platoon, first squad, said squad being comprised of

teams alpha and bravo, but the Fox embed christened them Bravo squad and thus they

were presented to the world" (4). Real heroes of a fictitious squad, the Bravos appeal

to everyone because they have the "ace of bloods" (66) as they speak from the high

ground of their authentic experience and proximity to death. What they know,

however, is not the truth that anyone wants to hear—that everything is fucked: "This

is a truth so brutally self-evident that he can't fathom why its not more widely

perceived, hence his contempt for the usual public shock and outrage when a

particular situation goes to hell. The war is fucked? Well, duh. Nine-eleven? Slow

train coming. They hate our freedoms? Yo, they hate our actual guts!" (11).

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twice, resulting in profound but as-yet-to-be-determined hearing loss" (24) and an
unspecified mental injury that is most likely PTSD and/or TBI.

Instead, their presence serves to "cheer up" the bummed out executives that they meet—to generate a version of the war that matches desired affects.

Fountain expands upon the affective power of these linguistic deformities and equivocations on a narrative and syntactic level, using free indirect discourse so that we never know who is speaking or thinking, as if the agency for what is happening cannot be fixed.   In his recorded speech, Billy talks like the teenager he is: inarticulate. When a reporter asks him what he was thinking during the battle, he responds, "'I'm not sure . . . Mainly it was just this sort of road rage feeling. Everything was blowing up and they were shooting our guys and I just went for it, I really wasn't thinking at all'" (3).   The narrator, however, uses complex vocabulary and syntax that is beyond Billy's spoken abilities. The noise of the crowd, for example, is described as "a kind of drone, a bottom-register vibraphonic hum . . . the ongoing moan of successions of fans as they step onto the plaza, a windswept barrens of icy concrete with nothing between here and the Arctic Circle but thousands of miles of recumbent plains" (300). The narrator speaks in terms that both mimic and distance him from the discourse. In one passage, the narrator hopes that Billy is wrong about the movie deal, then switches into the personal pronoun: "None of the other Bravos has said anything, so maybe Billy is wrong. Probably he's wrong. Dear God please let me be wrong" (16). He uses a soldier's salty language as he describes Billy's "asswipe luck" (2), the "mindfucking potential" (27) of the war, and the "damn shame" (5) that the war had not ended while they were on the victory tour. He parrots film producer Albert's discussion of his "talks" with movie stars, moving

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from Albert to the reasons why Iraq war films might be failing at the box office, arguing that "The war might be up to its ass in moral ambiguity, but Bravo's triumph busts through all that" (6). Ultimately the Bravos never get to tell their story, and the narration captures this sense of disconnect as no one ever seems to be responsible for anything, making the Bravos narratively as well as militarily and politically mere pawns.

Fountain's formal argument about the ways in which language both deforms and propagates war, however, also addresses the worst truth about war—that the soldiers live in a world that relies on chance. Both syntactically and thematically, the novel foregrounds chance as a shaping element of the characters' fates, as the story is filled with near misses of many kinds—of bombs and bullets, but also of movie deals, Billy's near loss of his virginity to a Cowboys cheerleader, and his near decision to go AWOL. Placing words in a seemingly random arrangement on the page, Fountain captures in miniature the precariousness of the soldier's experience. The narrator explains,

> It seems to Billy a flat-out miracle that any of them are still alive. So they've lost Shroom and Lake, *only two* a numbers man might say, but given that each Bravo has missed death by a margin of inches, the casualty rate could just as easily be 100 percent. The freaking *randomness* is what wears on you, the difference between life, death and horrible injury sometimes as slight as stooping to tie your bootlace on the way to chow, choosing the third shitter in line instead of the fourth, turning your head to the left instead of the right. Random. How that shit does twist your mind. Billy sensed the true mindfucking potential of it on their first trip outside of the wire, when Shroom advised him to place his feet one in front of the other instead of side by side, that way if an IED blew low through the Humvee Billy might lose only one foot instead of two. (27)

Like the men in David Finkel's *The Good Soldiers*, the Bravos are resigned to death, recognizing that chance and luck are the controlling forces of their fate.

This combination of tactical and technical precision along with the very real possibility of random decapitation or burning to death gives soldiers Fountain's "ace of bloods" (66). Their stories trump all other stories about war because they have risked their own blood on the field of battle, but they are also alive to speak purely through chance. The Ace cuts both ways. Sanctioned by the possibility of a death that has not yet happened, "true" war stories can make "the gut believe" by raising the specter of chance—of lives unled and deaths that are still to come. In other words, the soldier speaks of the real costs of war.

Although Fountain is not a veteran, *Billy Lynn* deals with the authority that comes with real war experience, as the novel emphasizes the disconnect between watching war and feeling it. More specifically, the novel, like *Atonement*'s depiction of the evacuation from Dunkirk, is actually based on two real events: a 2004 Cowboys Halftime show that featured soldiers and Spc. Giunta's actions in the 2007 ambush I described in the opening to this chapter. What *Billy Lynn* does that other War on Terror novels do not is highlight how dangerous value—and values—can be, especially in a world of accelerating post-cinematic affects. In novels, movies, video games, online: we watch wars, we feel something exhilarating, or sad, or heartwarming, and we feel good, alive, for just a second. And then we can go back to our lives. *Billy Lynn* dramatizes this ugly side of supporting the troops, as the Bravos are nothing more than entertainment, to be used, consumed, and discarded like an

empty Starbucks cup or a Michael Bay movie.[149] They have value because they

activate an affective simulacrum of war that can touch others for just a moment.

They make us feel a lot without making us think too much about a soldier's reality.

III.

Conclusion

Stories can generate emotions and emotions can generate stories—each can

clarify and occlude in a mutually reinforcing loop that can have ethical consequences

for individuals and communities.   Robbie and Cecilia are destroyed by Briony's

excessive imagination and lack of empathy; the Bravos are baffled by their "fellow

Americans," who are emotively crazed by the men's presence but unconcerned with

their ultimate fate. After September 11, Ian McEwan argued in an opinion piece that

emotions are also narratives: "after the shock, we move inevitably to the grief." But

horrible feelings and images and stories can provoke responses other than grief.

Writing about photographs of war deaths, Susan Sontag has asked, "is it true that

these photographs, documenting the slaughter of noncombatants rather than the clash

of armies, could only stimulate the repudiation of war? Surely they could also foster

greater militancy" (8). And, indeed, the September 11 attacks did just that, as they

opened up war without spatial or temporal limits. Terror attacks provoked war on

terror—a perpetual war on affect, with effects on real bodies and lives.

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[149] David Thomson argues that Bay's *Pearl Harbor* was essentially a post-cinematic, video game version of history that denies both historical complexity and real suffering and loss.

Yet even though McEwan asks us to distrust stories, he also suggests in his response to 9/11 that stories can help us to feel more:

> If the hijackers had been able to imagine themselves into the thoughts and feelings of the passengers, they would have been unable to proceed. It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality.

Atonement and *Billy Lynn* encourage this kind of affective contact, asking us to distrust affects, especially those so easily generated in a post-cinematic world, while showing us how vulnerable we all are to the "little accident" can change human lives in ways big and small. These works index the role of chance in war—the reason experience is sanctioned. Although we do not realize it, we do in fact see the effects of chance in war on bodies and minds—a foot blown off by an IED because placed next to instead of in front of the other, for example—but we do not have the wisdom to understand what we see. Faced only with information, we need new storytellers to explain how chance shapes a soldier's life and death, and speak to our own chances to respond.

By way of conclusion, I want to talk about one event in the War on Terror that speaks to our own emotional responses to war. In October 2009, a group posted a video on YouTube that purported to show a major Taliban assault at Combat Outpost Keating, in which eight men died and twenty-seven were wounded in one of the deadliest assaults in the war in Afghanistan. The daylong assault on COP Keating was so severe that two soldiers, Staff Sgt. Clint Romesha and Staff Sgt. Ty Carter, were awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions at COP Keating, an outpost that

President Obama described as "indefensible." In fact, the video had been spliced

together from footage of other attacks on other outposts, some long closed. In

November 2009, the U.S. government released this footage to the U.S. media as

footage of the attack on COP Keating; the media in turn presented the footage to the

public in the same way. No one questioned the origins of the footage, or asked the

men who were there about it. No one, except the men who were there, noticed that

the battle in question was not the one that happened at COP Keating. For the

government, the media, and the American public, it didn't matter when, where, or

how eight men had died, as long as they could watch soldiers fighting and killing and

dying—the story-truth was enough. As reporter Jake Tapper explains, "One outpost,

another outpost, they were all the same to those who were safe at home" (597). But

for the men who lived or died at the tiny outpost at the bottom of a valley, separated

from help and from home, COP Keating wasn't just another outpost. For those men,

happening-truth mattered.

But for *Atonement's* Robbie Turner and for Billy Lynn and the Bravos, the

truth is this: neither story-truth nor happening-truth can save you. They "won't stop

any bombs or bullets. [Billy] wonders if there's a saturation point, a body count that

will finally blow the homeland dream to smithereens. How much reality can

unreality take?" (Fountain 306-7). On October 6, 2013, four soldiers died in an IED

attack in the Zhari district of Afghanistan (Shah and Nordland)--one day before the

twelve-year anniversary of the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom. As troops

are still dying at remote Afghan outposts and in green-on-blue attacks,[150] the current

draft of the "Security and Defense Agreement between the United States of America

and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan" suggests that U.S. forces may remain in

Afghanistan to train Afghan troops and maintain outposts for up to a decade beyond

the previously-stated 2014 pull out date (Shanker and Nordland). As of May 2014,

President Obama has committed to a 2016 drawdown (Landler). The Afghan

president has asked the United States to go; the United States has made it clear that it

will wait out the outgoing Afghan president. So how much reality can unreality take?

See you in 2024.

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[150] The later years of the Afghanistan war have seen a rise in so-called "green-on-blue attacks" in which allied Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) turn on and kill American troops. The number of such attacks has risen significantly, from two in 2007 to sixty-four in 2012 (McDonell). For an account of one such attack, see Nick McDonell, "Green-on-Blue."

Chapter Four

"The Real War Will Never Get in the Books": Authenticity and Affect in Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker*, and Video Games[151]

> "I think the ultimate deprivation of liberty would be the government taking away someone's life. But with drone killings, you do not see anything, not as a member of the public. You read reports perhaps of people who are killed by drones, but it happens 3,000 miles away and there are no pictures, there are no remains, there is no debris that anyone in the United States ever sees. It's kind of antiseptic. So it is like a video game; it's like Call of Duty."
>
> --John Yoo, legal counsel to President George W. Bush (qtd. in Bowden, "The Killing Machines")

In his memoir of his service as an Explosives Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technician, Brian Castner argues that explosives have fundamentally altered the spaces, times, and ethics of contemporary war. Where guns might kill individuals or

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[151] Quote from Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days*.

small groups, explosives could potentially kill thousands.[152] Under normal

conditions, explosives as varied as "Civil War cannonballs, Great War artillery shells

and mortars, World War II rockets and flak, Vietnam War anti-aircraft missiles and

hand grenades" (Castner 93), had temporal limits. All were built to detonate on

impact, with only chance and accident keeping them intact to explode much later.

While the military bomb disposal technician as a clearer of this "waste" goes all the

way back to the First World War, the bomb technician first became a "historic

fulcrum" (Ibid.) only during the Second, as the German Blitz[153] required Unexploded

Bomb (UXB) brigades to clear undetonated ordnance and limit civilian affective

terror of a mode of making war that might explode much later, after peace has

seemingly arrived.   Germany responded to these technicians with bomb timers,

which made a bomb look like a "dud"; in reality the bomb would be set to explode

later, during clearing.   British troops in response studied German timing systems and

learned how to disarm the bombs ever faster, and so on, with each side attempting to

outsmart the other.

Under this system, bombs could become more strategically deadly, and more

affectively powerful, by delaying their detonation---a move perfected in the current

use of IEDs and EFPs in Iraq and Afghanistan.   At the beginning of the invasion of

Iraq, however, the U.S. military misunderstood the strategic, tactical, and affective

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[152] Atomic explosions would be explosive killing taken to its most extreme, creating
what Japanese writer Yōko Ōta has called a "city of corpses."
[153] Castner attributes the bomb technician's significance to his efforts to keep British
affects in check, so that the German terror from the air would be limited. He does not
mention Allied firebombings in Germany.

power of these new weapons. In fact, when the first IED exploded under the vehicle

of PFC Jeremiah Smith, 25, and killed him on May 26, 2003, the military did not

have a term for what happened: they called it, oxymoronically, "'unexploded

ordnance'" (Zoroya, "How the IED . . ."). Years would pass before the extent of

damage, rendered in deaths, amputations, brain injury, and psychic trauma, would

become noticeable on a large scale; more than nine years later, the military finally

began to acknowledge that concussive blasts from explosions could cause the

invisible injury of TBI even in soldiers who otherwise appeared fine.[154]

More disturbing, Castner traces the abundance of ordnance to a poor strategic

decision by the American and British militaries early in the war—to trade rapid

movement to Baghdad and the affective punch of overwhelming "shock and awe"

attacks for securing ground. As Castner explains, soldiers "discovered unguarded and

open ammunition bunkers, huge complexes of high-explosive artillery rounds, aircraft

bombs, mines, and guided missiles" (95). Rather than securing and destroying what

they found, they moved onward: "Most we left to rot in the open, exposed,

vulnerable, not forgotten but simply dismissed as unimportant. By the end of the

year, those ammunition bunkers were empty, stripped clean by Iraqi militants and

redistributed for us to dispose of one by one, hidden by the side of the road" (Ibid.).

The military achieved its own terror-based affective objective, but in doing so it left

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[154] According to the Pentagon's Joint IED Defeat Organization, one-half to two-thirds
of American casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan are attributable to forms of these
explosives (cited in Zoroya, "How the IED . . .").

behind the tools for terror to be wreaked on its own troops and Iraqi and Afghan civilians.

For the American soldier, the IED is among a number of weapons that have fundamentally altered the spaces, times, and ethics of modern warfare. As I have described earlier, the IED has eliminated the distinction between the dangers of the front line and the relative safety of the rear, as it can kill truck drivers as well as infantry troops, without engaging in reciprocal combat at that moment. Because of this shift, soldiers are forced to make instantaneous, ethically fraught decisions about killing civilians who might also be insurgents. In Iraq, children would frequently run into the road—often to play, but sometimes to block a Humvee for an ambush or IED or EFP attack. The Humvee driver has to decide in a split second whether to follow the Rules of Engagement and run down a child or stop the vehicle in order to save the child, knowing that that choice might result in his or her own death.

The ethical issue, however, is not simply one of correspondence—trading one's own life for that of a child. As Marine Jess Goodell explains, that choice involves more than one's own safety: "it might mean a child's life or a Marine's life. Normally, a driver would say, without a second thought, 'It's my life.' But it is not just his life. It is the lives of all of the Marines who are in the Humvee, and maybe even the ones who are behind it. Or in front of it" (20). Their survival, and that of their friends, depended "on what soldiers see or don't see" (Zoroya, "How the IED . . ."), whether that is spotting an IED hidden in abundant trash (Finkel, *Good Soldiers* 17) or seeing a child as an insurgent. And every time they left the wire, Humvee

drivers had to be always ready to choose in a split second, based on a guess about what they are seeing and feeling—kill a child, or kill my friends?

At the same time, the growing use of drone warfare by the U.S. military has allowed insurgent killing and civilian deaths to be ever less visible. Desirous of ways of, as Elaine Scarry would put it, "outinjuring" the opponent with minimal risk to U.S. forces, the Pentagon and even CIA are utilizing drones and other forms of cyber and informational warfare to create a seemingly cleaner, affectively indistinct, and ethically superior form of killing.[155] Yet not everyone is so sanguine about the benefits of drones. In his 2012 *Rolling Stone* article "The Rise of the Killer Drones: How America Goes to War in Secret," Michael Hastings outlined the transformation of the United States' drone fleet from a "handful" at the start of the Iraq War to more than 19,000 drones less than a decade later. According to Hastings, by 2012 more than 3,000 people had been targeted and killed by drones, many civilians, while Dexter Filkins cites the New America Foundation's more conservative but still

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[155] Drone warfare has become so central to the war effort that in his last days as Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta created a new kind of military service medal to honor the valor of troops who had never set foot on a battlefield or risked any physical harm (Londoño, "Medal Will Honor . . ."). The first medal of its kind, the Distinguished Warfare Medal (DWM) was meant to honor drone pilots, who have become increasingly used in and important to how the U.S. military is waging the transnational War on Terror. Commonly and derisively called the "Nintendo medal," the DWM would have outranked the Bronze Star and Purple Heart—awards given for valor and injury in combat, including the ultimate injury, death. This hierarchy was so controversial that new Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, himself a Vietnam War veteran and Purple Heart winner, replaced it two months later with a more ambiguous and technical "device" to recognize these servicemembers' contributions (Londoño, "Pentagon Cancels Divisive . . .").

surprising estimate of 830 to 1210 deaths, accounting for the difficulty of gathering

accurate information from rural areas in which the U.S is not supposed to be

operating. In the absence of verifiable, reliable on the ground figures as to military

efficacy and civilian losses and a lack of transparency by the executive branch and

military as to whom is targeted and why, the expanding drone program has come

under harsh criticism.

Of primary concern is the lack of oversight and transparency regarding the

choice of targets. Drones are operated by both the Pentagon and the Central

Intelligence Agency (CIA). While the Pentagon has specific, though mutable, Rules

of Engagement, the CIA's drone program is highly secretive regarding its selection of

strike targets. Less controversial are so-called personality strikes, which target

known, ostensibly confirmed terrorists; more problematic are the "signature strikes,"

which kill anyone who is deemed "suspicious." As the criteria for what qualifies as

suspicious behavior has not been released, it is unclear how or why certain

individuals make it onto the Presidential "Kill List." And, as Hastings and others

have recorded, the threshold for taking a "suspicious" individual's life is disturbingly

low and, equally troubling, unacknowledged. For example, John Brennan, current

director of the CIA and former Bush National Security Advisor, famously stated in

the summer of 2011 that there had not been a single collateral or civilian death from

drones, despite testimony to the contrary (Shane). This gap between what is known

and admitted publically and privately has had real consequences on the ground in

Afghanistan as well as in Yemen, Pakistan, and other countries with whom the United

States is not formally at war, raising issues of how information is gathered, used, potentially abused, and released—and of particular significance in the current war strategy of counterinsurgency, which relies on winning civilian hearts and minds. Framing the question in the pop culture totalitarian vision of graphic novelist Allen Moore, "Who is Watching the Watchmen?"

What has happened then is a deferral of ethical responsibility, as those on the ground have no time to make ethical decisions while those in power defer the ethical responsibility for whom to kill to a Kafkaesque labyrinth of secrecy and bureaucracy, while a distant drone operator kills under orders. At stake is a world in which explosive war weapons, both in the air and on the ground, can kill anywhere at anytime. As war becomes increasingly a matter of speed killing and specialized knowledge of drone controls and IED building and bomb disarmament, the space and time for moral concerns and ethical decisions has been rooted out of war discourse. In place of the representation of war, we are faced with its constant presence, decoupled from reflective ethical considerations.

This chapter examines three contemporary works that have been lauded for their military realism, undergirded by forms of environmental, tactical, and emotional authenticity, and the changing aesthetics, affective responses, and ethical dilemmas that they articulate. I argue, however, that these increasingly realist details, which culminate in the interactivity of modern video gaming, move from using affect to raise serious examination of wartime to an increasingly affectively addicting

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experience of war. In a kind of post-traumatic bookend to the numbness I describe in Chapter 1, this chapter explores the hypercharged, equally symptomatic, affects of modern war.

I go back to Steven Spielberg's 1998 film *Saving Private Ryan,* considered the pinnacle of cinematic realism in war movies, in order to articulate how cinematic and affective realism can be used to articulate an ethics of war. Through visual, acoustic, and temporal cues, Spielberg generated powerful audience affective responses to the D-Day invasion—but as some critics have noted, this ostensibly antiwar movie ultimately encourages a kind of nationalistic fervor that would encourage young men to enlist in the military. In contrast to Spielberg's ethical stance, Kathryn Bigelow's 2008 film *The Hurt Locker* indexes how modern warfare's dependence on speed and skill intersect to create addictive affective conditions. The cost of this visual realism, however, is a removal of the human aspect of war, raising ethical questions only to subsume them beneath their representation.

Finally, I examine the rise of video games, the most popular of all media representations and a frequent recruiting and training tool of the U.S. military. In contrast to Spielberg's and Bigelow's films, these games move away from the representation of war to something else: presence. By involving players kinesthetically in both the medium and metaphor of war (Stahl), war video games erase the boundary between fact and fiction, placing players in an affective state that mirrors that of war without the corporeal or psychic consequences. While these games clearly benefit the military, military industries, and media industries, I

ultimately ask, at what cost? As they are placed into a state of total war that brings

the battlefront into the heart of the home, players experience the addiction of superior

skill and affective highs without the ethical consequences of real war. As ethical

consequences are subsumed beneath gaming's forms of realism, players become ever

more like real soldiers.

At stake in these works, then, is the question of what all this realism is serving

and what it means to realistically, visually or emotionally, represent and watch

representations of combat--a question increasingly vexed by the growing experiential

separation between servicemembers and civilians. Our investment in seeing "real"

or "authentic" representations of war is connected to our desire to "feel" what war is

like—to experience both the terror and exhilaration—at the moment in which the

fighting and feelings of war are more distant than ever before.   I argue, however,

that the use of realist details to create authentic affective responses ultimately

occludes the ethical questions raised by contemporary forms of war, both on the

ground and in the air. Unlike Toni Morrison's *Home,* in which the novel's formal

features captured the affective loss and excess of PTSD, these works fail to capture

the physical, psychological, and moral injury and pain that is a particular and

particularly noted feature of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.   What kind of realism

could make war ethically real for those for whom war is becoming more distant—

affectively and technologically—every day?

For works so focused on pain, *Saving Private Ryan, The Hurt Locker*, and

many of the recent war video games are unwilling to acknowledge others' suffering,

from civilians to insurgents—many of whom uneasily fit into both categories. By avoiding the reality of shared pain, these works engage in a militarized way of thinking that dehumanizes, or as Karl Marlantes frames it, pseudospeciates the enemy, making it a matter of killing "Crispy Critters" rather than people (*What It is Like to Go To War* 40-41). While on the one hand pseudospeciation in combat allows soldiers to kill more easily and with less psychic aftermath, representing war in this distant way also elides the true horror of war: that soldiers are asked to kill other people. Only by establishing the enemy as human can we see what it costs our soldiers to survive. Realist details in these works have served to make war more affectively present, to be exhilarating or sad when friends are lost, invoking the old sentimental trope in which we feel good about feeling bad. These works shows us how and why American soldiers die. What they have not done is show us how to bring distant war and distance killing into our ethical considerations.

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I

Sacrifice: *Saving Private Ryan*

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Visual as well as virtual representations of modern war owe much to Steven Spielberg's work in 1998, the year he released his World War II film *Saving Private Ryan*, considered by many to be a masterpiece of cinematic and emotional realism that placed the viewer at the level of the action, and *Medal of Honor*, widely considered the first visually and emotionally realistic war video game. The film was a critical and commercial success, with Academy Awards wins for Best Picture, Best

Director, Best Actor, and Best Screenplay, a prominent *Newsweek* cover, and more than $200 million in domestic box office sales. It was lauded as "a powerful and impressive milestone in the realistic depiction of combat" (Turan), a restoration of "passion and meaning" (Maslin) to the combat film genre. In particular, *Saving Private Ryan* was noted for its realistic contributions to the combat genre, which came from consultations with historian Stephen Ambrose and veteran and frequent consultant and actor Dale Dye (Basinger) and viewings of Robert Capa's on-site D-Day footage (Sontag 77-8).

As film scholar Jeanine Basinger notes, however, the film's use of "realistic combat violence," "unusual story format in which soldiers question leadership and the point of the mission," and "new and different purpose" are less distinctive than they originally appear. Without the censorship of the earlier film Production Code,[156] Spielberg was free to use graphic violence to show bodily damage, and he does so extensively, with numerous shots of severed limbs, gut wounds, headshots, and amply flowing blood. Physical realism, however, is not the same as psychological realism (Basinger): *Saving Private Ryan* is not necessarily more realistic than earlier films simply because it is more graphic.[157] And, as Basinger and film critic Tom Carson

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[156] The 1930 Hays Code, also known as the Motion Picture Production Code, articulated censorship principles related to representations of obscenity, profanity, nudity, sex, and crime based on "spiritual or moral" influence of films (cited in Doherty 347-360) Basinger suggests that though the Production Code did not specifically address combat violence, the World War II-era combat films, unlike Spielberg's uncensored *Saving Private Ryan*, "naturally conformed to the censorship standards of their own time."

[157] Basinger describes a similar phenomenon with other violent genres, such as the gangster film and the western, which became more bloody but not more realistic.

argue, audiences watching combat films in the 1940s and 1950s may not have had the direct experience of combat—although many did—but they certainly knew many men who had. Many returned maimed or they didn't return at all, and that was a reality that was all too familiar to the people watching movies back home. Personal, emotional connections were supplemented by popular newsreel footage and print photographs that captured what was happening on the front, and the government spent $50 million each year to create and distribute documentaries back home (Basinger). For the audiences recovering from World War II in the 1940s and 1950s, and during the 1960s and 1970s for those reeling from the losses of Vietnam and the images of the war brought into their living rooms every night, the combat film did not need to make war more intimate through graphic violence—the violence of war was already deeply, personally, individually and collectively remembered.

By the 1990s, however, war had become both visually and affectively distant. *Saving Private Ryan* and its video game correlate *Medal of Honor* were released during a period of late-1990s American triumphalism and inaugurated the release of a series of World War II films and video games.[158] The Cold War had ended, the Gulf

More recently, "The *New York Times* pointed out that *Starship Troopers,* a space fantasy, also showed us bodies blown apart, limbs flying through the air, and plenty of blood and gore" (Basinger). Louis Menand has also argued, of a piece with Sontag, that "horrible images do not automatically make war horrible." For example, during Menand's viewing of the film in a theater, the audience reacted vocally, at times yelling at the screen with obvious bloodlust.

[158] In addition to *Saving Private Ryan*, the 1990s saw auteur Terrence Malick's adaptation of James Jones's book *The Thin Red Line* (1998) and Merchant-Ivory's adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's book *The English Patient* (1996). In early 2001, HBO aired Spielberg's ten-part, eleven-hour miniseries *Band of Brothers*. See Albert

War won in a mere 100 days.[159] The image of dead U.S. soldiers dragged through the streets of Somalia and American inaction in Kosovo and Rwanda were subsumed beneath the glow of remembering the Second World War, what Studs Terkel ironically called the "good war" that pitted American soldiers against the Nazis.[160] Ethical questions about killing were answered by killing the right bad guys.

While the film never doubts who is the bad guy (remember Spielberg, who is Jewish, had just made the Holocaust drama *Schindler's List* before *Private Ryan*), *Saving Private Ryan* does raise the specter of honor—and its costs--in war. The detail-specific realism of *Saving Private Ryan*, grounded in bravery, goodness, and personal suffering amidst the old combat trope of the hodgepodge platoon of American everymen, was the perfect antidote to post-Vietnam, post-Cold War America in which televisual American military supremacy was all too distant and abstract. How Americans experienced war, and how few Americans were injured or died in war, had altered affective connections to combat. *Saving Private Ryan*, critiqued for its sentimentality, its attack "on the adrenal glands and tear-ducts" (Carson), made audiences feel. What it made them feel, however, was patriotism, nostalgia, thrills—certainly psychologically real aspects of war. In short, the film

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Auster for a discussion of *Saving Private Ryan* as a late twentieth-century "embodiment of American ideals of self-sacrifice" (213).

[159] Margot Norris explains that military censorship during the first Gulf War allowed the military to kill on a massive scale while giving the impression of a "corpseless" (236) war. However, while this "transformation of the Persian Gulf War into a hyperreal event . . . spared the U.S public the trauma of contending with a 'real' war, it also failed to register as a significant and lasting political credit for the Bush administration" (247). See also Steven Casey.

[160] Terkel's ironic use of the term has subsequently lost much of its punch.

was a "turn-on" (Ibid.), but as many critics have noted, a movie about the horrors of war should above all else be horrible—not emotionally sexy.[161]

The film opens and closes with quiet sequences that symbolically connect patriotism with sacrifice. After the opening credits and frequent Spielberg collaborator John Williams's soaring cinematic score, the first image we see is a faded U.S. flag, backlit by the sun. The camera then cuts to a ground-level perspective as it follows an unknown man's feet as he walks forward. The countershot shows us that we were originally watching from the perspective of his family, anxiously and distantly following behind him as he slowly moves into a cemetery, where both shots of both U.S. and French flags seal in the patriotic symbolism of the film's opening moments. The message is clear—preserving the nation requires sacrifice from the dead as well as the living. As the camera faces him head-on, the man falls sobbing on the ground before the crosses. We then zoom in to his eyes before the frame pulls back to a group of young men on a landing craft—a crafty move that leads us to believe we are viewing from the perspective of Tom Hanks's Captain Miller. This set up is critical to Spielberg's affective move and ethical stance in the film's closing.

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[161] Louis Menand has described the "hyperreal" visuals in *Saving Private Ryan* as not authentic: the "consummation" of special effects and not their "transcendence." Less generously, Carson has described this ostensibly antiwar film as an instance of "rabid nationalism" that "treats combat as horrific, but only on the way to making it sublime." For critics like Carson and Menand, the realism of the movie is only available via special effects and necessary because, for Carson, the war has become so "unreal" that it no longer "felt like part of our national experience." That national experience was one of unprecedented twentieth-century American military power and battlefield success.

The initial images are from the perspective of the men as the camera tries to replicate the violent chaos of the day through visual confusion, as the camera bobs and weaves and gets blood splatter on the lens.[162] It goes underwater with the men who are drowning, shot or weighed down by their gear. Instead of following any one soldier, the camera is constantly changing position and perspective to replicate the chaos of the landing, following the path of bullets but not allowing us to focus on the experience of one man, as we see only masses dying and masses killing. Just as Spielberg begins to focus on a specific soldier—giving us an opportunity to affectively connect to and sympathize with him—the man is shot in the chest and killed. Spielberg then utilizes the countershot to position us as emplaced German machine gunners, mowing down soldiers on the beach with their MG42s (a machine gun so effective it is the model for modern American machine guns.

Amid the chaos, blood, explosions, metal pings of bullets, and images of soldiers without limbs or with their guts hanging out, Spielberg finally focuses on all-American everyman Tom Hanks, playing an Army Ranger captain leading the men on his craft in the first wave of the Omaha Beach D-Day invasion. By confusing our sympathetic connections, Spielberg gives us no figure to hold on to other than the steady and increasingly overwhelmed Hanks. By this time, we are also overwhelmed, so that when the film slows and the sounds become muffled, we understand the

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[162] Spielberg's cinematographer, Janusz Kaminski, filmed the sequence to resemble newsreel footage (Ebert). As Carson notes, however, the real D-Day landing took hours. The men in Spielberg's version are there for what seems like real time, twenty admittedly terrifying minutes, but then they win and the battle is over. The men on the beach are never really scared, and because we connect only with Hanks, we are shocked but never really scared for them.

psychological confusion that he is experiencing. The camera, moving in and out in rhythm with his audible breaths, allows us to breathe with him as he tries to make sense of the carnage. After his men take the beach, the camera moves back to capture the panorama of all the bodies, lying lifeless in the ebb and flow of a blood-red tide. Eventually, we focus on one body: a man facedown on the sand, with only his name—Ryan S.—visible. This death provides the impetus for the rest of the film, which revolves around the efforts of Tom Hanks's squad of Army Rangers to rescue the last surviving Ryan boy after his three brothers are killed.

In *Private Ryan*, Spielberg uses the visual signature of the eyes to suggest that we are watching the landing through Hanks's Captain Miller. The opening set-up becomes even stranger when we learn in the closing minutes that the man in the cemetery is the eponymous Private Ryan, an Army Airborne infantry soldier who parachuted into Normandy and thus did not land on—or observe--the D-Day beaches. Framing the scene through Hanks, by far the most famous actor in a cast of at the time mostly unknown up-and-comers, and playing on his wholesome and trustworthy movie persona, ultimately leads us to believe that he will survive the mission and the war. When he dies in the final battle, the shock is multiplied as almost every one of the young soldiers is dead before the war is over.   The mission, which is not called into question, ultimately ends in a lost patrol that leaves multiple mothers and wives—all unseen—grieving.

This critique of the film's aesthetics, affects, and ethics, has been largely ignored. Whose suffering counts in war? Ryan's mother is seen only briefly,

silently, as she falls to the ground on her Iowa farm.   The other wives and mothers are invisible and symbolic: they represent what the men want to come home to, not women with losses and sacrifices in their own right. The French civilian perspective is likewise elided or problematized. The squad's first death comes when the larger than life Private Caparzo, played by Vin Diesel, tries to rescue a French girl. The scene is played as one in which the civilians are not listening to directions, and ultimately Caparzo's attempts to help the girl end as he is shot by a sniper and left to bleed out in the street. The only memorable civilians in the film, the French are shown as unthinking and ungrateful of Caparzo's—and by extension America's—blood sacrifice.

In the film, deaths are horrible, then, when they are American. The German deaths are "movie deaths" (Menand, "Jerry Don't Surf").   The Germans are deindividuated, except for one man I discuss below whose behavior and facial expressions are so outrageous as to be a caricature.   American suffering serves to activate audience hatred of the Nazis, making us happy when they die: "the realism ratchets up the enthusiasm" (Ibid.).   The Germans, though fighting to support a murderous regime and ideology, nevertheless become "lice to be exterminated" (Carson) rather than people. Ethically, the film's ideology touches upon that aspect of Nazism, perceiving enemies as subhuman and asking both the soldiers and audience to enjoy killing them. In this respect, the film's realism fails to accommodate a "real" aspect of war—that while many soldiers enjoy killing for a number of complicated reasons and killing is by definition necessary, killing is

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nonetheless horrible.[163] The rising rates of troops with PTSD and moral injury point to what Louis Menand has rightly suggested: that "what makes war appalling isn't the possibility that someone will maim or kill you; it is the possibility that you will maim or kill someone else. War is especially terrible not because it destroys human beings, who can be destroyed in plenty of other ways, but because it turns human beings into destroyers" ("Jerry Don't Surf").

In the opening battle sequence, Spielberg depicts several soldiers killing Germans who have surrendered. We know from the pinched look on Tom Hanks's face that the film is not on the side of revenge killing—it nevertheless refuses to humanize the Nazis. In a later, more dramatic moment, the squad chooses to attack a hidden German machine gun emplacement so that other U.S. soldiers will not be ambushed and killed. In the process, their beloved medic, Wade, is shot in the abdomen and dies, screaming for his mother. The men, including Hanks's Captain Miller, capture the German gunner and want to execute him, but their translator Cpl. Upham convinces them that it would be wrong to do so. Instead, they tie the man up and leave. In the final battle, the German reappears, laughing cartoonishly, and kills Hanks's character as a terrified Upham watches—without acting. The man he saved then laughs at the traumatized Upham and walks away, as if to say that he is too cowardly to be worth killing. Upham's attempt to behave ethically in war results in

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[163] If, as Elaine Scarry argues, "the central goal of war is to out-injure the opponent" (12), training men to do so is nonetheless challenging. In his *On Killing*, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman discusses the psychological training required to overcome any reluctance to kill.

the death of the kindly English teacher, on the edge of a breakdown, who fought so hard to keep his men safe and earn the right to return to his wife.

However, the film problematizes its own ethical argument about what is right in war by suggesting that while ethical choices, or at least the consideration of ethical choices, set the Americans apart from the Germans, the cost of ethics in war is often death. In a world in which only one side is sometimes willing to choose right over survival—where Spielberg sets his ethics apart from the Nazis'--the Germans will show no such compunction. The film sidesteps this ethical problem by acknowledging the brutality of war and reframing war's costs as a question of human relationships—of ethical obligation. Spielberg suggests that behaving ethically in war is less about how one treats the enemy than it is about contemplating what it means to owe one's life to another. As the sobbing elderly Ryan stands in the cemetery, asking his wife to tell him he was a good man, we are left to wonder whether the sacrifice of so many husbands and sons was worth the life of this one. Can one man ever be good enough to redeem all the lives lost to save his? For some, the answer is quite obviously no.

II.

Speed: *The Hurt Locker*

While video games are currently the most commercially successful medium—both nationally and internationally—to deal with war, films have not abdicated their interest in modern warfare. The best known film to deal directly with the Iraq war is

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Kathryn Bigelow's 2008 *The Hurt Locker*, which earned a mere $16 million dollars during its initial box office release but snatched the Best Picture Oscar away from another little film about war—James Cameron's billion-dollar virtual war behemoth *Avatar*. Beyond her gender-defying victory (her triumph made her the first female to win Best Director, she did so by making a movie about the hypermasculine domain of war, and she was divorced from Cameron), Bigelow pulled a major feat as she made soldiers in the at the time intensely unpopular Iraq War sympathetic and even cool, with a John Wayne-like character for a new era. The film, which depicts a three-man Explosives Ordinance Disposal (EOD) team completing a year-long deployment to Iraq, achieved this effect by avoiding politics and focusing on the experience on the ground—almost exclusively for soldiers and very rarely for Iraqi civilians, who are depicted as either unknown and unknowable threats or suffering victims.[164]

Unlike *Saving Private Ryan,* which relies on the familiar style of the newsreel and a detailed *mise-en-scene* to aid its emotional realism, *The Hurt Locker* is more stylized. Visually, the film utilizes a heightened documentary realism, presenting

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[164] Her approach is similar to that of Sebastian Junger and Tim Hetherington in their documentary *Restrepo*, which also focuses on soldiers on the ground and avoids the politics of how they got there or how they will be treated when they leave. In their Directors' Statement, they explain their decision:

> The war in Afghanistan has become highly politicized, but soldiers rarely take part in that discussion. Our intention was to capture the experience of combat, boredom and fear through the eyes of the soldiers themselves. Their lives were our lives: we did not sit down with their families, we did not interview Afghans, we did not explore geopolitical debates. Soldiers are living and fighting and dying at remote outposts in Afghanistan in conditions that few Americans back home can imagine. Their experiences are important to understand, regardless of one's political beliefs. Beliefs are a way to avoid looking at reality. This is reality.

close-up realist images like a fly landing on a soldier's eye alongside moments that could not be seen by the naked eye, such as the concussive blast of an explosion. In contrast to Spielberg's cinematic realism, Bigelow gives us a post-cinematic hyper-realism[165] that incorporates a granular visual style, use of acceleration and slow motion, and crosscutting of multiple visual perspectives in order to show how war damages bodies and minds.[166] Through these formal filmic techniques, Bigelow draws our attention to affective and ethical changes in the new war, which emphasizes virtual, cyber, and distance killing while problematizing the role of the human.

Like *Saving Private Ryan* before it, *The Hurt Locker* has been praised for its authenticity, which derived from screenwriter Mark Boal's embed with an Explosives Ordinance Disposal, or EOD, unit as he researched and wrote his article "The Man in the Bomb Suit"[167] before developing the screenplay for *The Hurt Locker*. The film is thus based, at least in part, on Boal's own experiences of the Iraq War—a perspective available to Spielberg only vicariously. While the film does focus on realist details,

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[165] Despite its post-cinematic content, themes, and visual techniques, the film is also insistently cinematic: it was shot on four handheld Super 16 mm film cameras (Ressner).

[166] Although I discuss the post-cinematic aspects of the film, video games less obviously influence the visual signature than in many recent films. I am thinking here of postcinematic works like the multimedia filming in the South African dystopian film *District 9* or the famous two-dimensional plane fight scene in the Korean revenge film *Oldboy* or the shot-by-shot, color, and stylistic matches of graphic novel to film adaptations in recent years, such as *Watchmen*, *Sin City*, and *300*.

[167] Published in *Playboy* in 2005. Among the larger EOD community, the film was "deride[d] for its unrealistic portrayal of such specialists as out-of-control rogues" (Tapper 304).

like flies in the desert, soldiers have criticized the film for not being realistic, or perhaps more accurately, for not being authentic in terms of narrative or tactics—that is, neither the social nor environmental realities of the film are considered accurate by at least some of those who have been in Iraq. For example, EOD units receive lengthy, extensive, and very expensive training—each technician represents a significant economic and temporal investment that cannot be easily, cheaply, or most importantly to military readiness, quickly replaced. Out of Brian Castner's EOD class of thirty, only three men passed the months of training in how to handle ordnance and biological, chemical, and nuclear weaponry. Because of the individual value and irreplaceability of each team member, a three-man EOD team would not travel around without an infantry escort, nor would they have either the skills or the need to engage in a sniper battle as they do in the film.

On the level of "authentic" environmental detail, the film also takes liberties. When he first disarms a bomb in the film, James finds a wire leading to six additional bombs. This "daisy-chain," while visually stunning, is problematic in several ways. At roughly 100 pounds per bomb, James would have to lift 600 pounds with one hand to make this surprising scene possible. More to the point, the daisy-chain structure is not tactically accurate, as the bombs are chained together and spread out to take out convoy at multiple points—the goal is maximum casualties, which cannot be achieved by overkill of a single vehicle. I argue that while the film is not militarily authentic on the level of tactics or strategy, it moves beyond Spielberg's cinematic

realism by juxtaposing the adrenaline-high of games with the emotionally real and conflicted challenges currently encountered by soldiers.

In contrast to the opening emphasis on individual, familial, and national sacrifice in *Saving Private Ryan,* the first images in *The Hurt Locker* come from the perspective of a bomb-defusing robot, moving shakily across the dirt on its way to examine an Improvised Explosive Device, or IED, in 2004 Iraq. We are literally on the ground, seeing the Iraq War through the low-resolution eyes of a machine rather than a human. Bigelow quickly problematizes this perspective, as she intercuts the robot's images with traditional shot/countershot views of three EOD technicians. We thus see what the robot sees, but we also see what the soldiers, Guy Pearce's Sgt. Thompson and his subordinates Sgt. J.T. Sanborn and Corporal Owen Eldridge, are seeing. As the men crack jokes while controlling the robot--via joystick, so we are already in the game world--Bigelow cuts between handheld camera shots that capture the chaos of people fleeing, close-ups of the soldiers' eyes as they watch the robot's footage, distance shots from the perspective of Iraqis watching the soldiers, and the soldiers' views through their rifles.

This post-cinematic movement between sights and ways of seeing mediates the scene, as we are given no clear perspective within which to locate ourselves. Is this a world best seen through the eyes of technologies like a robot or a rifle: one meant to preserve life, the other meant to take it? Or do we position ourselves as human, as the film shows us the world through the eyes of soldiers, civilians, and

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bombers? Are these perspectives equal in our eyes and in the eyes of the film?[168] As

I will show later, post-cinematic video games, which utilize first-person and third-

person points-of-view, similarly elide the difference between the human and the

technological as real human agency motivates machinic and virtual responses.

Yet the game-like visual quality of this scene is quickly undermined, as the

robot fails and Thompson is forced to put on an eighty-pound bomb suit and slowly

walk over to and attempt to disarm the bomb. This move avoids the affective

significance of what real EOD technician Brian Castner calls "The Long Walk,"

which is "A solo approach to an IED, the tactic of last resort" (143). In his memoir,

Castner discusses what it means to put on the bomb suit and walk toward an IED or,

worse yet, an EFP: "You take the Long Walk for your brother's wife, your brother's

children, and their children, and the line unborn. No greater love does one brother

have for another than to take the Long Walk" (170). Castner describes this moment

as one of deep love and loyalty, of knowing sacrifice for someone else's family and

future. Although the men in Bigelow's EOD first team have an easy, joking

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[168] The film, supporting Butler's assertion that some lives and deaths count more than
others, suggests that the American soldiers' lives are more grievable, as the Iraqis
who die are nameless and largely unknown to the audience. The only Iraqi who is
significantly featured, a soccer-loving boy who is called/calls himself Beckham,
functions to motivate James's own growth. Toward the middle of the film, James
finds a boy's body stuffed with a bomb. He believes the boy to be Beckham. Faced
with the awful decision to explode the boy's body or perform a makeshift gutting to
remove the bomb, he decides to cuts out the bomb to preserve the rest of his body.
Later, Beckham appears alive at the base, raising questions about Beckham's
interchangeability to James, as he could not tell one Iraqi boy from another.

relationship,[169] this depth of affective connection—this assertion of human agency and human love—is lost in the representation.

Just as Bigelow is reasserting the importance and agency of the non-machine, a man walks out of a butcher shop--surely symbolic--with a cell phone. Eldridge screams at him in English to drop the phone, as he and Sanborn frantically run over while Sanborn yells to "burn him." Eldridge hesitates—after all, he is being asked to kill a man merely holding a cell phone—and the man pushes a button that detonates the bomb. The explosion, experienced in extreme slow motion as Bigelow shows us the granularity of the concussive blast down to individual grains of sand, kills Thompson and leaves Eldridge devastated. He could not kill the man with the phone; now his leader and friend is dead.

This scene, which shows us what a concussive blast looks like down to grains of sand, surprisingly does not show us what it does to the human body. Thompson, whose face and body we cannot see encased in his bomb suit, dies visually when blood splatters against his face shield. What an IED really does to the body, however, is something more extreme. Castner describes a blast wave as just that, a wave, with the same properties of speeding up and slowing down depending on the density of the object it is hitting. When it hits the body, which is full of dense and less dense

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[169] After Thompson's death, much is made of the tension between new team leader James and the other two members of the EOD team, who consider "fragging," or killing, James to save themselves from being killed by his lack of caution. Thus, Thompson's putting on of the suit reads as an act of sacrifice for the team, whereas James's actions are read in light of his own addictive personality.

surfaces, the wave speeds up and slows down repeatedly, causing extreme damage

because of the changes in movement. It is worth quoting one description at length:

> when the blast wave enters your gut, it speeds up through the outer
> skin of the human body, through the fluid-packed muscle of the
> abdominal wall, and into the colon. But there it finds open air, and
> slows down, causing the shearing, ripping, and tearing. The same
> trauma occurs when the wave reenters the opposing colon wall, and so
> on throughout the body. At each density junction, shear forces and
> rapid expansion and contraction cause devastating injuries. Small and
> large intestines hemorrhage and bleed internally. Kidneys disconnect
> from fragile connecting tissue and fail. Delicate alveoli rupture and
> fill the lungs with blood, suffocating the victim. . . When a blast wave
> enters the head, it speeds up at each threshold, through the skin and the
> skull and the bag of cushioning fluid that surrounds the two main lobes
> of the brain. Then the wave encounters tiny nerve endings,
> neurological fibers, and slight synapses. Faced with a couple of billion
> density junctions, it shears, strains, rips, and tears its way through to
> the back of the skull and out the other side. (152)

In his account of the surge in Iraq, David Finkel also tallies what IEDs and EFPs do

in one month on a larger scale: "four soldiers died, one lost a hand, one lost an arm,

one lost an eye . . . eight were injured by shrapnel [as] eighty IEDs or EFPs were

detonated on passing convoys" (80). Bigelow's realism, which is so detailed on a

technical and even affective level, surprisingly avoids the human, corporeal

consequences of war.[170]

A Hurt Locker refers to the emotional space in which soldiers

compartmentalize their feelings: you put the emotional pain away to deal with it later.

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[170] In contrast, James Gandolfini's 2007 documentary *Alive Day Memories* shows not
only the moments of the blasts but also the corporeal wounds of ten servicemembers
who had what is called an Alive Day—the day they should have died yet somehow
survived. Several are missing legs and arms, one is blind, and most have PTSD. The
film does not shy away from showing gory footage of their injuries and recovery as
well as the physical and emotional scars that they currently carry.

While the film carefully avoids the bodily wounds of war, it does let us see the psychic costs of war, as James becomes a war-junkie and Sanborn and Eldridge both have emotional breakdowns, and the physical cost in dead soldiers and civilians. But we never really see the physical pain that accompanies those deaths, nor do we see their emotional effects on the families, either Iraqi or American. Characters who die do so instantly, either in a bomb blast or from a well-aimed shot. No blood, no wounds, no cries of suffering. Even when Eldridge is shot, he survives, and the reality of his wound is unexamined, as we neither see the wound itself nor experience his recovery. If anything, Eldridge's physical pain is subsumed beneath his anger—in place of cries of suffering, we have a curse-filled tirade aimed at James.

The one civilian with whom we might identify is the unnamed man at the end, wearing a bomb and swearing he has been kidnapped and forced to wear the weapon. Yet his pain and fear are also elided. The film circles back to its opening moments, which give the film, as in *Saving Private Ryan's* bookending of epic battle sequences, narrative structure and sensemaking in a war that many soldiers have failed to understand. Reminded of how not killing a potentially innocent man ended up getting Thompson killed, our emotional connection is to whether the man will blow up James. We do not worry whether or how the man will die or what will happen to his family—the question is whether he will take the film's protagonist out for a second time days before the end of the deployment. Based on Bigelow's habit of killing identifiable characters through the film, our tension and expectations are high. In the end, James realizes he cannot save the man and runs back to cover seconds before the

bomb detonates. We are relieved that James survived, but that relief overwhelms the fact that an innocent Iraqi father was just blown apart in the middle of a road.

While the film does capture the ethical choices the soldiers must constantly make, from whether to shoot men with cell phones to whether to frag a leader you believe will get you killed, *The Hurt Locker* surprisingly elides the reality of pain— particularly for civilians, Iraqi especially but American as well.   The "hurt" is mostly on the soldiers' side, as they are physically and mentally injured by the war. We do not see the suffering of James's ex-wife or the other soldiers' families.   More troubling in a movie set in Iraq is the fact that we see the suffering of Iraqi civilians only very briefly. This scene in which a bomb has detonated in a group of civilians, is lingered on only long enough to motivate James on his most outrageous, illegal, and dangerous mission yet, as he attempts to pursue the "bad guys" alone with only his two teammembers.   His choice ultimately results in Eldridge's kidnapping and shooting in the leg. Replaced by Eldridge's screams of pain and fury, the cries of the Iraqi citizens are quickly forgotten.

In one of the saddest scenes in a movie about war and death, James survives the war and returns to a gray, artificial, supermarket-filled life with his estranged wife and infant son. As he tucks his son in, James says,

> But you know what, buddy? As you get older . . . some of the things you love might not seem so special anymore. Like your Jack-in-a-Box. Maybe you'll realize it's just a piece of tin and a stuffed animal. And the older you get, the fewer things you really love. And by the time you get to my age, maybe it's only one or two things. With me, I think it's one.

With those words, we learn what the one thing he loves is, as the film cuts to James stepping off the plane to deploy again, metal music blasting as he slowly strides toward the camera. War kills, but for James, war makes him feel alive.

James experiences what Doris Lessing has described as the secret underside of war—its excitement:

> I think it is sentimental to discuss the subject of war, or peace, without acknowledging that a great many people enjoy war—not only the idea of it, but the fighting itself. In my time I have sat through many many hours listening to people talking about war, the prevention of war, the awfulness of war, with it never once being mentioned that for large numbers of people the idea of war is exciting, and that when a war is over they may say that it was the best time in their lives. This may be true even of people whose experiences in war were terrible, and which ruined their lives. People who have lived through a war know that as it approaches, an at first secret, unacknowledged, elation begins, as if an almost inaudible drum is beating . . . an awful, illicit, violent excitement is abroad. Then the elation becomes too strong to be ignored or overlooked: then everyone is possessed by it. (9-10)

This high is in fact chemically addictive, as writers like Chris Hedges, William Broyles, and Sebastian Junger have noted. In his book tracing the fate of the men at an isolated outpost in Afghanistan, journalist Jake Tapper describes the rush of battle in terms of its individual bodily effects:

> The adrenaline rush that nearly every soldier experiences in battle affects each differently. When the hormone adrenaline, or epinephrine, is released, it can constrict air passages and blood vessels, increase the heart rate, cause tunnel vision, relax the bladder, and prompt the nervous system's fight-or-flight response. Adrenaline is such a powerful chemical that people often become quite literally addicted to it, pursuing extreme sports, riding motorcycles, and engaging in other live-on-the-edge activities to feed the addiction. Postdeployment, many soldiers become thrill-seekers for the same reason. (153)

Junger describes this high as the "ultimate wound" that makes "you miss the war you got it in" (*WAR* 268).   For her part Bigelow, like Spielberg before her, affectively involves us in that excitement as the man who cannot walk away from war becomes a mythic figure—a modern day John Wayne striding off to face a world whose complex moral choices are subsumed within the technical choice of which wire to cut.

Bigelow also uses misdirection by casting unknown actors as well as better-known actors such as Guy Pearce. Although not as famous as Tom Hanks, Pearce is recognizable from the 1997 Academy Award-nominated film noir *L.A. Confidential*, in which he and Russell Crowe shared leading man status. Surrounded by at the time unrecognizable actors (many of whom, like Jeremy Renner and Anthony Mackie, now have successful film careers), we immediately know and identify with Pearce, whose onscreen persona in *L.A. Confidential* and the cult hit *Memento* is resolutely pragmatic and survivalist. Yet, less than eight minutes into the film, he is killed by an IED. By killing Pearce's character, and killing him quickly, Bigelow has shown that this is a world in which literally anyone can die in seconds, and we cannot trust what we think we know. She repeats this shock midway through when Ralph Fiennes is recast from his desert spy role in *The English Patient* as a British mercenary. Like Pearce, Fiennes is killed mere minutes into his scene—this time by a sniper. These dual killings make us affectively and ethically unmoored, as Bigelow confuses visuals, temporalities, and expectations in a way much different from what Spielberg

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does in *Saving Private Ryan*, in which the death of Tom Hanks in the closing minutes of the film raises questions about redemption and sacrifice.

Yet *The Hurt Locker*, in contrast to *Private Ryan*'s ethical concerns, does not question the value of individual life. Indeed, when people die, they do so quickly and the aftereffects of their deaths are registered briefly if at all in the film's moral universe. A dead team leader is quickly replaced and dead civilians are forgotten in the hunt to find what James describes as the "really good bad guy." Instead, Bigelow asks us to consider what is the lingering cost of, as Roger Ebert puts it, heroism, or less ideologically, just going to Iraq. By the end of the film, the four protagonists (Thompson, Eldridge, Mackey, and James) are irrevocably damaged—one dead, one wounded, one on the verge of mental collapse, and the last so hopelessly addicted to war that he abandons his child in order to disarm more bombs. The film is not interested in a new band of brothers or in what one soldier owes to another, as James repeatedly risks his own and his team's life to disarm bombs, a habit that angers and scares them to the point that they likewise consider fragging him (killing him and making it look like an accident), and James ultimately chooses war over family—and the film seems to be both horrified and impressed by that choice.

Bigelow is able to reframe the representation of the soldiers of the unpopular Iraq War by focusing on EOD technicians, whose job is to save lives, not to take them. Unlike in most war movies, which emphasize the infantry, *The Hurt Locker*

gives us protagonists who try to disarm bombs that kill civilians as well as soldiers.[171]

Amidst the chaos and confusion as to who is a civilian and who an insurgent, the men

threaten but never actually kill anyone who is innocent. While she does show her

protagonists as conflicted and imperfect, Bigelow makes it clear that they are often

facing impossible choices while trying to stop bombs from killing people. By making

the soldiers' mandate one of saving rather than killing, Bigelow avoids some of the

political fallout of the war, allowing us to root for and sympathize with the men, who

are coarse in their speech but ethical in their actions, trying to save civilians at

considerable personal risk.

Bigelow deals with Eldridge's guilt later, as he plays the popular video game

Gears of War while speaking to the base chaplain Colonel Cambridge. Cambridge

represents a distinctly pre-War on Terror way of thinking that imagines war as an

adventure—the kind of honorable dueling that is already becoming outmoded a

century earlier in Ernst Jünger's First World War memoir *In Stahlgewittern*. He

proposes that Eldridge change his attitude and consider war as a "fun," once-in-a-

lifetime experience. Eldridge stops pushing the buttons on his game controller to

demonstrate that if he had just pulled the trigger on his gun, Thompson would be

alive. Turning from the connection between making instant choices in a virtual world

to making those same choices in the real one, Bigelow juxtaposes the new modes of

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[171] Eig suggests in 2003 that post-Vietnam war movies like *Saving Private Ryan,*
Black Hawk Down, and *Behind Enemy Lines* often focus on "saving American lives."
Most of the war movies since 2003, however, have largely focused on the trials of the
returning veteran rather than combat itself.

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recruiting through video games to the old "Be All You Can Be" slogan as Eldridge asks what if all he can be is dead on the side of an Iraqi road.

Yet it is ultimately Cambridge, not Eldridge, who dies on the side of an Iraqi road. As unit chaplain, Cambridge is a man of God and an idealist who seems to genuinely want to comfort his men. Meeting Eldridge's challenge that he does not know what it is like outside the wire, Cambridge volunteers to accompany the team on a "pretty standard mission" in order to better understand what the men encounter. His attempts to empathize with the soldiers and win hearts and minds quickly turns to frustration, as language barriers limit his ability to communicate with the Iraqis he meets and he is absent as the men clear the building and remove a body-bomb implanted in the corpse of a dead boy. Because he has no experience outside the wire, Cambridge does not recognize the signs of a buried IED and is killed when it explodes—yet another death for which Eldridge blames himself. Cambridge's worldview, which combines the old way of war as adventure with the new need to interact with and win over civilian populations, is shown to be untenable in this world in which neither the old nor the new seems to be working. While the film does not focus on Iraqi pain and shows little physical injury, it does ask whether men always go to war for honorable reasons rather than addictive ones, and it explores the moral consequences of choices in a war zone.

III.

Skill: War Games

During the creation of *Saving Private Ryan*, Steven Spielberg realized that the intensity and violence of the D-Day landing sequence powered the film, but it also limited its audience to adults. Spielberg wanted those too young to watch *Private Ryan* to learn more about World War II and to experience the same kinds of verisimilitude and emotional storytelling (Russell 192-3). Influenced by his teenage son, Spielberg worked with his multimedia Dreamworks Interactive studio to develop a game that would do for the at the time benighted medium of video gaming what *Saving Private Ryan* did for cinematic realism.[172] The result was *Medal of Honor*, a World War II first-person shooter that depicted D-Day through multiple perspectives, as the 1962 D-Day film *The Longest Day* did.[173] Spielberg inaugurated a new era in gaming, with an emphasis on visual, acoustic, and affective realism and emotionally powerful narrative.[174] *Medal of Honor* showed that video games could do what films could do--visually, narratively, and emotionally (Russell 192)—and catalyzed the popularity of war games, which are now almost exclusively the most financially successful of all video games. Later makers of games would argue that as an

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[172] Film critic Roger Ebert has famously argued that "video games can never be art," starting a major debate in the video game world about what constitutes art, what constitutes a game, and by what criteria a video game might be determined to combine elements of both artistry and gaming.

[173] Players play as Lt. James "Jimmy" Patterson, an OSS operative whose spy status enables him to encounter a variety of perspectives as he rescues an American pilot in France and infiltrates the *Wehrmacht* (German Army).

[174] The game included authentic diegetic sounds, from rifle pings and flying planes, to a soaring extradiegetic soundtrack. Spielberg even included veteran Captain Dale Dye, a well-known military movie consultant—and sometimes actor—to advise.

embodied, immersive, affective medium games can be a powerful tool for learning

(Mead 58).[175]

These uses are related to how video games interact with their players. Unlike

spectators watching a film, video game players are engaged in making meaning.

They involve their bodies in the game, immersing themselves in acting upon what

they see and hear and feel. While *Saving Private Ryan* and *The Hurt Locker* have

aimed to represent visual and aural realism to create authentic affective experiences,

video games move beyond re-presentation to presence as they blur the lines between

fact and fiction.[176] As the tools and language of video games have migrated into war

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[175] This emotional and pedagogical power, however, has also placed games in the crosshairs of critics. At the same time that *Saving Private Ryan* was largely applauded for its use of graphic violence to achieve affective responses, *Medal of Honor* and other first-person shooter games were being critiqued for their use of violence. After word came out that the killers in the Columbine High School massacre had been heavy players of first-person shooter games like *Doom* and *Wolfenstein*, the makers of *Medal of Honor* reduced representations of blood and gore to mitigate criticism (Russell 197-8).

Critics like Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, an expert on the psychology of killing in war, have argued that war games desensitize players to violence, making them not only watch but participate in the creation of violence (*On Killing* 319)—a position with which some critics disagree. Veteran Karl Marlantes has similarly argued that these games, like drone warfare, make us more distant from killing (*What It is Like to Go to War* 18, 24-5, 36). Going further, what are the ethics when teenagers are too young to watch violence in *Saving Private Ryan* but not too young to participate in its virtual creation? See Parkin for a summary of recent controversies over video game violence.
[176] For an analysis of the social context of "realist" games, see Alexander Galloway. Galloway argues that video games' formal dynamism emphasizes the social contexts of production and reception in ways that other media may not At stake in Galloway's argument is the question of whether military video games are realist—and for him, most are not. He argues that while *America's Army* has the most "real" advisors since it is a game by and for the American Army, it also contains no critique—the average American teenager does not live in the world of the game, and the game encourages not "fidelity" to one's own world but a "fantastical" (83) extension into a world of

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discourse they "represent the militarization of cultural space" (Stahl 91-2) as they

offer a "pure experience of battle" (98) that has all the affective charge and none of

the ethical consequences. Put differently, they affectively merge homefront and

battlefront while ignoring the ways in which wars' effects linger past the spaces and

times of combat.

The games have achieved this affective power through extreme and highly

marketed attention to gaming realism.[177] War games, from *Medal of Honor* to the

present, in particular have emphasized their collaboration with the military and

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corporatized military violence. Actions in the game world do not mirror those of the
real world for most teenagers playing *America's Army, Call of Duty*, or other
similarly realist games. They are, however, a realist social reality for military
members playing the games. They are the "killers" that Anthony Swofford describes
watching war movies (5-6), except they do more than watch—they play.
[177] While reviewers have repeatedly applauded the detail-based realism of *Saving
Private Ryan* and the authentic emotional exhilaration of *The Hurt Locker*, realism in
video gaming is much more difficult to define. Ed Halter has described the problem
thus:

> "realism" was a slippery term. It could refer to the increasingly cinematic
> qualities showcased in games for next-gen console systems like the
> Playstation and Xbox, whose images boasted better graphics and more fluid
> movement than ever before available to a consumer product. It could be about
> how savvy and responsive the game's AI was—meaning the intelligence-
> simulating programming that controls a player's computerized opponents. Or
> it might concern all the myriad of artistic details that appeared to correlate to
> the sensorial clutter of nondigital existence: the background hum of traffic,
> garbage in the streets . . . For war games especially, it could refer to the
> veracity of any number of real-life elements: geographical environments
> based on real locations, accurate depictions of weapons that could only fire a
> certain amount of rounds before reloading, or ballistics that caused missiles to
> travel in arcs that replicated real-world physics. (xiii)

Realism in gaming can refer to historical, visual, geographic, scientific, acoustic, or
game-control details, making the question of what realism is serving even more
complicated than for films.

military advisors and invocation of real settings as selling points.[178]   And the

military, for its part, has been only too happy to work with the entertainment industry,

as video games have been recognized as an effective tool to recruit,[179] train,[180] and

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[178] For example, Activision's *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* game was a blockbuster, selling more than seven million copies worldwide at $60/copy. Although Iraq is never named, much of the game is set in an urban setting in a Middle Eastern country that clearly was based on Iraq, down to the toppling dictator statue and references to "shock and awe." This game, like *The Hurt Locker* after it, relied heavily on both environmental realism and elements of shock. Developer Infinity Ward wanted the game to feel more realistic, so it sent a team to observe a live-fire exercise at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms (Rieke and Boon 24). Veterans consulted on the game and much of the motion capture (Ibid.), lending a kinesthetic realism based in the human body. This realism was used to ground the player, making several shocking events—including the killing off of the first and then second protagonists--more affectively powerful.

[179] According to Corey Mead, Ed Halter, and Stacey Peebles, two years into the war in Afghanistan and during the build-up to Iraq, the Army—the biggest of the U.S. military branches—wanted to find a new way to appeal to and train future soldiers. In 2003, the U.S. Army released *America's Army*, a free-to-play game that would quickly become the most successful recruiting tool the military has ever created, with over five million downloads of the free game in its first two years. Up to that point, none of the war first-person shooters were actually set in the current wars. To "sell" the game—and the Army—the producers emphasized its contemporary setting and "realism," which included "real" Army advisors and producers. The game appealed heavily to young men, who form the majority of the military's ranks and were until 2012 nominally the only sex allowed in combat.

[180] Outside the world of recruitment, even commercially available games have been recognized as important to military preparedness. To give you some sense of the influence of these games, the *Call of Duty* series has sold over 100 million copies globally (at a price of $60/game). It holds the record for most sales in a single-day, with a total of $360 million for last year's *Call of Duty: Black Ops*. In a two-month period, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* players spent 639 million hours playing in co-op mode (Takahashi). This astounding figure is actually low, as this number excludes all hours spent playing the game alone. Not counting China, more than 40 million people play *Call of Duty* online every month (Takahashi). And while in 2010 there were 34,000 servicemembers in Afghanistan, 2.2 million individuals played *Call of Duty* on Xbox Live—in a single day (Suellentrop).   According to series creator Activision's website since it began setting its games in contemporary wars in 2007, *Call of Duty* players have fired 32.3 *quadrillion* shots over *25 billion hours*, which totals 2.85 million years of gameplay—giving the primarily male players far

even heal[181] injured servicemembers. Drone controllers have been based on those of

the Playstation and Xbox systems because of the operators' presumed comfort and

familiarity with them (Stahl 91).

Media critics such as Roger Stahl, Alexander Galloway, Ed Halter, and Chris

Suellentrop have traced these deep roots that connect war recruiting and training to

video game makers, with financial and intellectual links that have benefitted both

sides of what J.C. Herz describes as the "military-entertainment complex" (201) and

James Der Derian describes as the "military-industrial-media-entertainment network."

Roger Stahl has differently described the network between video game makers,

Hollywood film studios, and the U.S. military as part of a larger system of

"militainment," which encompasses video games, movie, toys, and sports.   Whatever

the name, it is clear that soldiers are now partially training themselves, with their own

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more training in response times, coordination, and military tactics than the military
could ever hope to complete in regular training.   Mead interviewed one researcher
who discovered that game players had "better visual attention skills than nongamers.
These skills enable people to 'focus on relevant visual information while suppressing
irrelevant data'" (63).

[181] To respond to the real emotional consequences that intrude on the troops recruited
and trained by virtual wars, the military has created *Virtual Iraq*, a game that uses the
same combat simulator as the one in *Full Spectrum Warrior* (Dyer-Witheford and de
Peuter 98). The same training that was meant to protect servicemembers from mental
and physical injury is now being used to heal them afterwards—with the ultimate
goal to send them back into combat. The game is intended to work like Narrative
Exposure Therapy by allowing servicemembers to encounter and reencounter the Iraq
environment and work through their traumas. While this approach sounds like a
promising way for soldiers to safely (because the format is so familiar) encounter and
work through their traumas, the point of the program is not *only* healing—ideally, the
game will heal servicemembers so that they can return to duty. And as at least one
critic has described, the Pentagon's new default solution is to "'throw a video game at
its problems'" (qtd. in Campbell) rather than create a "'comprehensive'" plan to train
and heal its troops.

money and on their own time, while civilians are similarly enjoying the exhilarating ludic pleasures of gaming—and war--without the corporeal or psychic dangers and ethical weight of combat.

This expansion of what Patrick Crogan describes as virtual "gametime" into civilian life has had consequences in the real wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The current crop of war games has, as Stahl has argued, focused so thoroughly on creating a realist "how" of killing, that no one has bothered to ask about the "why" (97)—they have "subordinat[ed] critical and ethical questions to movement and action" (110). For example, the *Call of Duty* series (particularly the *Modern Warfare* incarnations) has emphasized its commitment to environmental realism in its games, ostensibly using possible military scenarios that raise ethical questions.[182] For example, the 2007 *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* depicted the explosion of a nuclear bomb in a city that is unnamed but clearly meant to be Baghdad. Although the scene is shocking in its depiction of a nuclear bomb detonation in a game (a video game first), the main affective shock comes when the ostensible protagonist—as *Saving Private Ryan* and *The Hurt Locker*--is killed in the explosion. In 2011, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* depicted another video game first: the death of a child in a London terrorist

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[182] In contrast to the environmental and contextual realism of the *Modern Warfare* iterations, Forbes has described the *Call of Duty: Black Ops* series as "preposterous . . . absurd, over-the-top, implausible intense, violent, action-packed, " in which "You play as a super-soldier, mowing down hordes of enemies, chasing after a cartoonishly evil villain with the fate of the world, capitalism, and your own tragic backstory at stake" (Kain). In contrast to the *Modern Warfare* series, *Black Ops* focuses on gore for shock value alone—arms blown off and other images of extreme violence—rather than the shock of ethical dilemmas.

bombing.[183] In both of these examples, however, these scenes were shown in a

"cinema," or a cut scene similar to that in a movie in which players cannot interact

with or affect the gameplay. In effect, the games were marketing the shock of nuclear

bombs and child death, but they were doing so to spectators rather than participants.

In 2009, however, the *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* game raised the ethical

stakes, as players played as an undercover agent in a terrorist organization that attacks

a Russian airport. Players must choose whether to kill civilians or blow their cover.

However, the scene ultimately has no ethical weight, as the outcome of the sequence

is the same either way, with the terrorists ultimately killing the agent/player in order

to catalyze a global war. As game violence becomes visually and affectively more

realist, the ethical considerations have become more fraught. Depictions of rape or

torture—particularly in relation to player involvement—have catalyzed discussions

about whether not only watching but interacting in an unethical moment is in fact an

endorsement or a critique (Parkin). At stake in these ethical debates, of course, is

whether gaming is an art form, with its own modes and analytical tools needed but

nonetheless worthy of the critical attention that literature and film receive.

The ethics of violence in gaming has come up against the reality that games

are paradoxically both too violent and not violent enough.   In the *America's Army*

game, "When humans are hit with gunfire, they crumple noiselessly to the ground.

Sometimes a mist of blood escapes an invisible wound, but the victims neither flail

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[183] In the case of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*, the child-killing was used as part
of the marketing campaign, raising ethical issues not only about the game itself but
about our desire to purchase a game in order to watch the imagined death of a child.

nor cry. Bodies tend to disappear as if raptured up to heaven" (Stahl 108). *Full*

Spectrum Warrior has similarly been described as "not violent enough" because

> The price of failure is remarkably low. If soldiers in Alpha and Bravo are
> lightly injured, blood spatters across the screen. If one is more seriously
> wounded, he falls, and if unaided, he will eventually die. He can, however, be
> carried by his squad back to a Casualty Evacuation point, where healing is
> almost immediate. . . if you die, you just restart and do it over. (Dyer-
> Witheford and de Peuter 111-112)

By skirting the reality of real death and injury on the battlefield, these games avoid

what is arguably the most important part of a war: its consequences.

Not only do these games elide physical hurt—players also do not witness the

realities of mental trauma and moral injury. Because the games want to focus on

survival and avoiding what is considered too much graphic violence, they ignore what

happens when you actually lose your troops. Thus, players "don't have to watch a lot

of them killed, no screaming, no moral choices or psychological injury, no civilian

deaths—'war is peace' (112-3).[184] For this reason, Brian Castner describes the joy of

playing games in a war zone: "So you wander over to the adjacent room, and play a

little Halo. Every alien is a bad guy, and needs to die. It's so refreshingly simple"

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[184] The games not only elide the realities of violence—they reward its injudicious
application. For example, *Call of Duty 4* introduced the now widespread use of "kill
streaks," in which players are rewarded with additional technological support in the
form of airstrikes and drones for killing more enemies in a row. In effect, they
encourage the virtual enactment of the troubling military phrase to "kill 'em all, let
God sort it out."

(63). Compared to the complex moral choices in the real war, virtual wars offer clarity and simplicity masked behind technological complexity.[185]

This chasing of affective realism without considerations of the ethical aftereffects reached new heights in 2012, when the latest iteration of the video game *Medal of Honor: Warfighter* was marketed with a website with links to the real gun, knife, and combat-attire found in the game (Meier and Martin). After the outcry in the aftermath of the 2012 Sandy Hook elementary school shootings, which again raised public debate on the relationships of guns, video game violence, and mental health, gamemaker Electronic Arts removed the links from the website. This game, unlike the *Call of Duty* series or even the Army-funded *America's Army* or *Full Spectrum Warrior,* did not just attract, recruit, and train young men for the military— EA directed them toward the tools to make war on any target at any time.

Similarly, in 2013, the makers of the highly violent, massively popular *Grand Theft Auto V* promoted the authenticity of their game by noting that they hired "real" Los Angeles gang members to voice characters, because there is "nothing worse than" a "goofy L.A. actor who went to a fancy school trying hard to be a gang

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[185] In the event that those ethical choices are unclear, the games even provide direction. For example, the 2007 *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*—the first in the series to be set outside of World War II--features a roughly ten-minute sequence called "Death from Above" in which the television screen represents the screen of the television monitor of an AC-130 gunship. The player is both the monitor and gunner as he fires at running individuals below. Because the game, as Roger Stahl has noted (103), gives voice commands that tell us what our affective responses should be— "good kill"—the game creates an affective and ethical clarity that new forms of virtual war both hide and create.

member" (Byford).[186] To make this game--which consists solely of beating other gangsters and anonymous prostitutes and destroying as much property as possible-- more authentic and realist, the makers delved into a world of real violence. While aesthetically and even affectively there could be nothing worse than an L.A. actor pretending to be a gangster, ethically there must be consequences to paying members of ultra-violent, transnational Salvadorean street gangs such as MS-13 and the 18th Street Gang to be themselves. In essence, the makers of *GTA V* are selling their brand of virtual war on the streets by valorizing and even funding agents of real violence— and it worked, as the game became to that point the best-selling game of all time, with $800 million in international sales on its first day (Hollister). Affective realism here has extended the real possibilities of violence in disturbing and unrecognized ways.[187]

IV.

Conclusion

Perpetual, global war is not just the way of the War on Terror; in promoting war games, the military has made terror a possible part of everyday life—abroad and at home. As the games—and war making itself—increasingly rely on skill and the speed at which skill can be utilized, we are left only with the addictive affective

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[186] The creators did not discuss alternatives to the gangster/goofy actor dichotomy, such as consulting or hiring reformed former gang members, local police, or federal agents who are familiar with the culture and discourse.

[187] None of the articles I have found on this phenomenon in *GTA V* have critiqued the makers for using real gangsters or for bragging about this choice as a selling point (Byford; Kojder; . In contrast, *COD* was widely critiqued for—possibly accidentally—using the death of a child to advertise one of its games.

pleasures of war. Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* uses temporal dislocation—such as when Tom Hanks's character is overwhelmed by the noise and chaos--to index psychological states, slowing down and speeding up images and sounds to replicate the affective confusion of war. Bigelow, in contrast, is not interested in using temporal adjustments for psychological expression of characters' subjectivity. Instead, she uses quick cuts to create tension in the audience, as our sense of time compressing replicates the characters' sense as they are forced to make life or death decisions instantly. She then slows down the filming at the moment of detonation to show the effects of those decisions, allowing us to see at a microscopic level what a bomb blast does while simultaneously eliding the reality of pain, both military and civilian. But while we see the bomb's concussive impact on grains of sand, we do not really see what it does to the body.

Shifts in temporalities in these works, which mark affective responses in their characters and incite them in their audiences, also problematize the ethics of fighting, feeling, and watching war. *Private Ryan* asks us to consider the value of individual human life—how many must die to save one soldier? How many lives is a symbol worth? Bigelow, in contrast, is more interested in the consequences of valor after combat. While Spielberg's Army Rangers just want to return to their wives and mothers, Bigelow's hero cannot walk away from the exhilaration of war, even for a woman who loves him and a son he adores. This inconvenient truth—that some people love the violence of war—disturbs the patriotic image we have of soldiers, but Bigelow also valorizes James as a necessary hero, a modern day equivalent of

Orwell's "rough men who do violence on our behalf." Where *Saving Private Ryan* once asked us to look for the pain of war in the soldiers themselves, *The Hurt Locker* suggests that the war itself might be addictive, as James, a highly skilled bomb technician, can never leave the battlefront.

The recent war video games, however, problematize the ethics of war representations by encouraging players not only to watch but also to actively engage in killing, with scripted affective responses and ostensible ethical choices that are in fact predetermined. Even in the popular video games that raise ethical dilemmas of modern warfare—child soldiers, killing of civilians, drones—by forcing player participation they provide no critical distance to consider ethical choices. Video games provide a time and space to make difficult decisions and an opportunity to re-do poor ones—a problem that soldiers in contemporary wars have consistently noted as related to the development of PTSD and moral injury—but they also encourage players to kill, and reward injudicious, constant killing. By encouraging a psychosomatic response to killing, the games blur the ethics of war, hiding the player's complicity under the mask of issues raised. That is, they confuse the content with critique. Modern gamers thus can imagine themselves to grapple with ethical positions while simultaneously and repeatedly transgressing them.

Games like *Call of Duty* thus ask players to kill without consequences, as the experiential lines between gaming at home and killing with game controllers abroad have become blurred. *Medal of Honor* once asked us to expand our notions of how we can experience war and to participate in its ethical challenges; today, we must ask

whether our pursuit of an authentic experience should encourage access to real weapons and funding for real transnational war.   I fear in telling some war stories, we may be writing the future of war.

Conclusion: Beyond Blood Wings

Despite the growing presence of representations of war, we still talk about and conceptualize war experiences as unspeakable and unknowable. So many of us say that we "can't imagine" what soldiers have gone through. Yet as Marine veteran and writer Phil recently argued, this "failure of imagination" is a problem. Klay states:

> The civilian wants to respect what the veteran has gone through. The veteran wants to protect memories that are painful and sacred to him from outside judgment. But the result is the same: the veteran in a corner by himself, able to proclaim about war but not discuss it, and the civilian shut out from a conversation about one of the most morally fraught activities our nation engages in — war.

Not speaking about war traps veterans, limiting them from reconnecting with the civilian world; further, this silence allows civilians to blithely send young men and women off to war, safe in their ignorance of what war actually feels like (Klay). Sebastian Junger makes a similar argument in a 2013 *Washington Post* opinion piece. He argues that if "the country approved, financed, and justified the war—and sent the soldiers to fight it," then the "moral burden" of war falls on all of us. It is too easy, according to Junger, for civilians to ignore what servicemembers have been asked to do and what they have done. Some say they opposed the war, others that soldiers are "heroes" worthy of worship but not criticism. Both stances absolve everyone of responsibility for civilian killings and PTSD and domestic violence and rape and suicide and amputations.

As both Junger and Klay explain, talking through their experiences—giving them an "emotional outlet" (Junger, "Moral Burden") that opens up what they heard, saw, and felt to civilians—is a crucial step toward healing individuals and communities.[188] In short, when veterans do not speak about war and civilians do not listen or try to imagine what war is like, we end up with what Walter Benjamin described as information, or news devoid of the contextual connections that help us make meaning. These connections, particularly in a world in which the military and civilians are increasingly divided, is necessary to more ethical considerations of when, where, and how we fight—and how we handle the aftermath.

This dissertation is a cry for the blood we don't see and the pain we don't feel. It encompasses the physical, psychological, and interpersonal losses felt by servicemembers, their families, and civilians. As the War on Terror has made the possible spaces and times of war unlimited, our affective connection to war has been decoupled from experiential knowledge. This gap has further consequences as the affective disconnect has led to a lack of aesthetic representations of the War(s) on Terror. Ignoring the soldier's experience means that we forget the physical and psychic costs of war, leaving a generation of invisibly wounded men—and increasingly women—to heal themselves. Ignoring how war affects families, military and civilian, assumes that war can only be felt in immediate proximity, as both

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[188] Jones notes that this willful ignorance and neglect extends to the realms of treatment: "While the public cuts veterans all kind of slack, or simply ignores them, the VA therapist circles around them on tiptoe, careful not to judge. How then is a soldier burdened by guilt to expiate the wrong he has done to himself and others? How is he to share it with those who sent him to war?" (*They Were Soldiers* 147).

violent and subtle consequences of war are played out in the privacy of the home. Based upon the skyrocketing rates of active-duty servicemembers' and veterans' suicides, rapes, substance abuse, and domestic violence, that healing is not occurring: not quickly enough, not easily enough, not often enough. On the other hand, ignoring what war feels like for families and civilians—to privilege only the soldiers' experiences—means that we forget the true scope of war, how the violence of the battlefield ripples out and finds other victims.

Ultimately, in the absence of experiential, aesthetic, and affective knowledge of war, the ethical effects of war have been occluded for both soldiers and civilians— with the military and civilians worlds denying responsibility for what happens. This dissertation seeks to bridge that gap, bringing the aesthetic representations and affective connections to war to bear on the ethics of waging war and living with war's consequences.   How do we register these losses? Can we ever feel what is lying behind the blood wings?

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