

BODY IMAGE: FASHIONING THE POSTWAR AMERICAN

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Chapter 1 “Introduction” sets forth the overarching theme. The United States in the 1950s experienced a reconfiguration of gender roles facilitated by depictions, in Hollywood film and magazine advertisements, of fashionable bodies that would mobilize the corporeal and ideological reconfiguration of emulating viewers.

Chapter 2 “Apartment for Peggy: Probing the Postwar Prototype” examines the ways in which the post-World War II battle between the United States and Russia for global dominance gave rise to the glorification of domesticity and to the growth of infrastructures and institutions that supported it.

Chapter 3 “Underwear and the Red Scare” examines the way in which film and advertising implicitly posited foundation garments as items of apparel that distinguished the American female from her Russian counterpart; secured her immovably as the faithful, housebound wife; and inscribed her body with national anxieties over communist invasion.

Chapter 4 “Playtex, Peroxide, Playmate: Marilyn Monroe and Sexuality, Whiteness, and Class” argues that the transgressively unsealed and un-buttressed body of Marilyn Monroe not only eliminated the perceived female need for post-coital commitment and the humiliating possibility of female refusal in response to sexual overtures from Everyman but also challenged postwar understandings of class, race (including “whiteness” and “blondeness”), gender, and ethnicity.

Chapter 5 “The Ex-G.I. in the Gray Flannel Suit” examines the way that film and advertising attempted either to recuperate the enervated virility of the corporate conformist or to reeducate the war veteran returning from a military world of male camaraderie and adventure to a civilian world of female demands and domesticity.

Chapter 6 “Jimmy Stewart: The Man in the White Playtex Girdle” argues that, in most of his postwar films, Stewart was the actor who most consistently embodied the returning veteran’s wound-incurring struggle to negotiate a reconciliation between conventionally male/female oppositions.

Chapter 7 “Conclusion: Into the Sixties” surveys the 50s’ alternatives to gray-flannel conservatism that would set the stage for the protests of the coming decades.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	VII
1.0 INTRODUCTION: THE BODY AND THE BODY POLITIC.....	1
2.0 <i>APARTMENT FOR PEGGY</i>: PROBING THE POSTWAR PROTOTYPE.....	9
3.0 UNDERWEAR AND THE RED SCARE	46
4.0 PLAYTEX, PEROXIDE, PLAYMATE: MARILYN MONROE AND SEXUALITY, WHITENESS, AND CLASS.....	88
5.0 THE EX-GI IN THE GRAY FLANNEL SUIT.....	132
6.0 JIMMY STEWART: THE MAN IN THE WHITE PLAYTEX GIRDLE.....	176
7.0 CONCLUSION: GRAY FLANNEL ALTERNATIVES.....	228
BIBLIOGRAPHY	236
FILMOGRAPHY	252

PREFACE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION: THE BODY AND THE BODY POLITIC

Feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe argues that “[p]ostwar periods are . . . times . . . when [both] masculinity and femininity [are] . . . reconsidered, and perhaps reconstructed.”¹ Evidence to support her contention occurs in the decade following World War II, when the United States experienced a significant reconfiguration of gender roles . In considerable numbers, for example, returning G.I.s left foreign battlefields for corporate boardrooms, while Riveting Rosies abandoned factory work for married domesticity and motherhood. These changes in profession and milieu, moreover, required corresponding psychic changes. The corporate employer, for instance, required of its organization man not military aggressiveness but rather other-oriented bonhomie. Similarly, Rosie left the social and financial independence of her factory job in order to devote herself to her suburban household, her optimism-inspiring children, and her corporate-breadwinner/husband. Of course, not everyone conformed to this self-effacing pattern of behavior--indeed, the presence at, participation in, and triumphs of male and female athletes at the 1952 and 1956 Olympic Games represent one of many instances that demonstrate Joanne Meyerowitz’s argument against any monolithic construction of 1950s’ zeitgeist. To the contrary, Meyerowitz cautions that “[postwar] domestic ideals coexisted in ongoing tension with an ethos of individual achievement that celebrated nondomestic activity, individual striving,

¹ Cynthia Enloe, Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 95-6.

public service, and public success.”² Nevertheless, many American men and women, by their actions at least, subscribed to the 50s’ ideal of suburban domesticity funded by a corporately-employed male breadwinner. What, then, caused this ideological shift--from venturesome self-reliance to homebound self-effacement--to occur on such a grand scale and in such a concentrated span of time?

As the first step in determining a response to this question, Body Image refers to those theories of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu that consider the body as the originary site for the implementation of ideological change. Foucault, for example, describes the body as “docile” and as a “direct locus of social control” regulated by culture.³ Elaborating upon this conflation of body and culture, Bourdieu proposes that “societies . . . can produce a new man . . . [or woman] by submitting his [or her] values-given body . . . [to] the hidden persuasion of implicit pedagogy capable of instilling . . . a political philosophy through injunctions . . . regarding dress and bearing.”⁴ By thus attributing one’s ideological makeover to “injunctions . . . regarding dress and bearing,” Bourdieu recognizes quite specifically the potentially transformative power of clothing to enable the wearer’s cultural reconfiguration. Consequently, Body Image examines postwar clothing advertisements, since they contain not only images and descriptions of the types of clothing purveyed to postwar consumers but also explicit or implicit “injunctions” regarding the improvement in dress and bearing--and evolution toward the ideological ideal--that the individual achieves as the result of wearing such clothing. Like Bourdieu, Gail Kern Paster also

² Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique,” in Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 231.

³ Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (New York: Vintage, 1979), 135. Quoted in Susan Bordo, Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 165, n. 3.

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, Transl. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 94.

acknowledges the body's capacity for inscription as a cultural text, referring to it as a "container . . . subject to social formation"⁵ Yet while Bourdieu designates societal addresses to the subject as "injunctions," Paster refers to them as "[s]ociety's cumulative, continuous interpellation of the subject[--an interpellation that] includes an internal orientation of the physical self within the socially available discourses of the body."⁶ Paster's use of the term "interpellation" refers to Louis Althusser's notion that ideologies hail an individual in a manner that posits and "recruits" such individual as the ideally receptive subject of their address.⁷ Thus, in an attempt to account for postwar America's comparatively rapid and wide-ranging move toward suburban domesticity, Body Image relies, in part, on constructing the ideal subject interpellated by the images and injunctions contained within postwar clothing advertisements.

Postwar advertising, moreover, relied on two recent innovations, the first of which was so extensively deployed that Cold War author Vance Packard devoted his 1957 book The Hidden Persuaders to the phenomenon. Designating it "motivation analysis," Packard defines the process as a "large-scale effort . . . to [covertly] channel [the consumer's] unthinking habits, . . . purchasing decisions, . . . and . . . thought processes by the use of insights gleaned from psychiatry and the social sciences."⁸ The second development in postwar advertising was one that took advantage of the increasing impact of Hollywood as a cultural institution. For according to Michael Kammen, the postwar years marked the final change from popular culture to mass culture, and it was during this transition, Kammen contends, that cultural authority, as represented by intellectual elites such as critics and museums, gave way to cultural power, as

⁵ Gail Kern Paster, The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 52.

⁸ Vance Packard, The Hidden Persuaders (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1957), 3, 4.

wielded by “public relations and advertising agencies, large corporations, . . . government[,] . . . national media . . . [and] Hollywood.”⁹ In 1946, in fact, when “[a]pproximately ninety million people, two-thirds of the population of America, went to the movies every week,” film attendance reached its peak.¹⁰ Consequently, in an attempt to account for postwar America’s comparatively rapid and wide-ranging move toward suburban domesticity, Body Image relies on the images and injunctions contained not only within postwar clothing advertisements but also within Hollywood films of the 1950s. Body Image’s analysis of the ideological impact of 50s’ advertising and film is organized as follows:

Chapter 2.0 “Apartment for Peggy: Probing the Postwar Prototype” uses the largely and undeservedly overlooked film Apartment for Peggy (George Seaton, 1948) as a basis for examining the myriad ways in which the post-WWII battle between the United States and Russia for global dominance gave rise to the glorification of domesticity and to the growth of the various infrastructures that supported it. Favorable federal loan-granting regulations, for example, enabled many American families to purchase the home of their dreams wherein they could raise optimism-inspiring, merchandise-consuming children and thereby prove the superiority of American capitalism to Russian communism. In fact, the nuclear family--in which the father was breadwinner and the mother was the all-sacrificing homemaker--was so valorized by postwar culture that the single and/or childless state was pathologized as unnatural, and newly-enacted federal tax laws favored married families in which the wife did not work. Not

⁹ Michael Kammen, American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the Twentieth Century (New York: Knopf, 1999), 134. Kammen makes the following distinction between popular culture and mass culture: “I regard popular culture—not always but more often than not—as participatory and interactive, whereas mass culture . . . more often than not induce[s] . . . passivity and the privatization of culture” (22, emphasis in the original, brackets inserted by me).

¹⁰ Louis Gianetti and Scott Eyman, Flashback: A Brief History of Film, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2001), 199, emphasis in the original.

surprisingly, then, “[f]or the first time in more than one hundred years, the age for marriage and motherhood fell, fertility increased, divorce rates declined, and women’s degree of educational parity with men dropped sharply.”¹¹ These statistics reflect the fact that besides pathologizing nonconformists, Cold War culture also relied on a more covert method of behavior modification that was a particular postwar innovation: the newly formulated science of motivational research, which was deployed by advertising corporations whose burgeoning ranks were due, in large part, to the advent of television and to the rise in Hollywood’s influence over the viewing public.

Chapter 3.0 “Underwear and the Red Scare” examines the way in which film and advertising images and rhetoric regarding foundation garments interpellated the postwar female spectator. Unlike her post-World War I counterpart whose curve-concealing style of dress reflected women’s access into “areas that had previously been restricted to men,”¹² the post-World War II female was called upon to submit to the curve-sculpting constraints of “foundation garments,” newly designated as such because they were now deemed a fundamental need.¹³ Consequently, movement-inhibiting bras and girdles were built into or required wearing under every item of apparel, even sports clothes and bathing suits, and they feature explicitly or allusively in a broad array of postwar film and advertising. Chapter 3.0 examines in some detail a number of these advertisements and filmic excerpts in order to understand the cumulative force that they exerted as they collectively interpellated the female spectator by conspiring to intimidate her. Specifically, the narratives imply that the woman who refuses to submit to the corporeal constraints of undergarments--and to the ideological constraints they imply--will not

¹¹ Stephanie Coontz, The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap (New York Basic Books, 1992), 25.

¹² Marianne Thesander, The Feminine Ideal (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 113.

¹³ David Kunzle, Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body Sculpture in the West (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), 270.

attract the husband necessary to assure her place as the housebound wife and mother in the postwar American dream of suburban home and family. Finally, by considering these narratives in the context of Mary Douglas' claim that a threatened society displaces its concern over "threatened boundaries of [its]. . . body politic" onto an obsession with the purity of bodily orifices, this chapter suggests that American concerns over communist invasion and Russian world domination were acted out upon the postwar female body by virtue of the particular way in which undergarments secured it: by sealing off the vagina against foreign penetration and by buttressing the breasts with formidable facsimiles of offensive weaponry.¹⁴

Chapter 4.0 "Playtex, Peroxide, Playmate: Marilyn Monroe and Sexuality, Whiteness, and Class" considers the transgressively unsealed and un-buttressed body of Marilyn Monroe, particularly in conjunction with Richard Dyer's analysis of her as the ideal playmate. In so doing, it challenges Dyer's conclusion that Monroe's meltingly soft and sweetly ripe persona eliminated the threat posed to males by females who required sexual satisfaction. For, according to postwar studies, most women subordinated their own sexual needs to those of their male partners and therefore posed no threat with respect to sexual demands. It would appear, then, that what Monroe's soft ripeness reassuringly eliminated was not the threat of female sexuality but rather: (1) the perceived female need for post-coital commitment; and (2) the humiliating possibility of female refusal in response to sexual overtures from physically unimposing men, like Tom Ewell in The Seven Year Itch, for example, or Arthur Miller in real life. In the course of this discussion, Chapter 4.0 considers postwar understandings of class, race (including "whiteness" and "blondeness"), gender, and ethnicity, and the penalties imposed upon a woman, like Monroe, who would, at times, challenge these understandings.

¹⁴ Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (London: Routledge, 1966), 124.

Chapter 5.0 “The Ex-G.I. in the Gray Flannel Suit” examines the way in which film and advertising images and rhetoric regarding male underwear and outerwear attempted either to recuperate the enervated virility of the corporate conformist and yes-man or to reeducate him with respect to behavior and concerns appropriate to postwar masculinity. By posing real-life athletes as static models, for example, or by valorizing brainstorming males, seated indoors, in favor of women and children who frolic outdoors, the ads enjoin the male viewer to embrace sedentary rather than active pursuits and to dedicate himself to other-oriented sociability and to grasping the niceties of distinction between office dress and leisure wear. Chapter 5.0 also considers films like Apartment for Peggy, The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, and From Here to Eternity in terms of the male protagonists’ struggles to negotiate between a military world of male camaraderie and adventure and the civilian world of female demands and domesticity.

Chapter 6.0 “Jimmy Stewart: The Man in the White Playtex Girdle” attempts to rectify the exclusion of Jimmy Stewart from Steven Cohan’s Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties. Chapter 6.0, in fact, posits Stewart as the actor who was the most consistently representative embodiment of the postwar male who incurred psychic and physical wounds as he attempted to negotiate a reconciliation between conventionally male/female oppositions such as warrior/family man; military hero/corporate drone; adventure/domesticity; repression/emotionalism; individual/society; resolve/dissolution. In order to study the way in which Stewart’s characters reflected the postwar male’s wound-incurring struggles with these contending binarisms, Chapter 6.0 first briefly analyzes the insufficiency of Stewart’s body in several of his postwar films. Next, it examines Stewart’s roles in films like Frank Capra’s It’s a Wonderful Life (1946) and Alfred Hitchcock’s Rope (1954), building upon Kaja Silverman’s analysis of the former and challenging Amy Lawrence’s examination of the latter. Finally,

Chapter 5 discusses the way that John Ford's The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962)--which pits Stewart as a consensus-seeking, tenderfoot lawyer against John Wayne as the fastest gun in the West and a law unto himself--serves as a simultaneous rationalization for and critique of America's warrior-effacing masculinity.

Chapter 7.0 "Conclusion: Into the Sixties" briefly summarizes the themes of the preceding chapters and then sets forth a sartorial and cultural survey of 1950s' alternatives to gray-flannel conservatism that would set the stage for the liberal protests of the 1960s. Indeed, later in that decade, bra-trashing and draft-card-burning united men and women in liberating their bodies from institutionalized regulation. Thus, as the 1960s progressed into the 1970s, the female body, free of undergirdings, and the male one, unmilitarily hirsute, continued to resist interpellation by the state and instead sought out new and less gender-specific means of actualization and fulfillment.

2.0 APARTMENT FOR PEGGY: PROBING THE POSTWAR PROTOTYPE

By 1946, only one year after World War II had ended, the brief period of postwar peace seemed already threatened by the following events:

. . . [A]ntagonisms between Moscow and Washington had come to a boil. . . . With their common enemy, Hitler, dead, the U.S.S.R. and the United States abandoned their wartime alliance of expediency and vied for advantage in the power vacuum left by the defeat of Germany and Japan, the bankruptcy of Western Europe, and the crumbling of colonial empires in Asia and Africa. . . . Emboldened by America's . . . undisputed position as the world's economic superpower . . . and its . . . monopoly of atomic bombs[,]. . . [P]resident Truman hoped that the United States could control the terms of postwar settlements.¹⁵

Entertaining similar hopes for Russia, however, Stalin in 1946 “proclaimed new plans to make the Soviet Union secure against the challenge in the West and to overcome the American edge in weapons technology.”¹⁶ In response to the Soviet challenge, George F. Kennan, the American charge d'affaires in Moscow, advised “vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies,” and the Truman Doctrine followed Kennan's counsel.¹⁷ In “opposing capitalist freedom to Communist tyranny and pledging the keep the world open to American goods,”¹⁸ the Truman

¹⁵ Paul Boyer and Clifford Clark, The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1998), 938-9,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 939.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, quoted on 939.

¹⁸ David Savran, Communists, Cowboys, and Queers: The Poetics of Masculinity in the Work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1992), 2.

Doctrine “divided the world into two utterly opposed camps and [not only] provided the justification for. . . the largest arms buildup in world history. . . [but also] bred an anticommunism fervor that gripped the national psyche [and became] . . . the ideological currency for an America on an imperial spree.”¹⁹ Thus, America’s forces of “vigilant containment” expanded, seeking to enclose not only their original targets--Russian aggression and, by extension, America’s nuclear weapons’ monopoly--but eventually, as a result of their “imperial spree,” the entire globe. In this ultimate scenario, then, the “United States . . . was to become the ‘universal container’ “ and would thus require the “subordination of international to U.S. national interests” and render “internal security. . . synonymous with external, universal scrutiny.”²⁰ As one of the objects of such scrutiny, moreover, dangerous social forces . . . might [nevertheless] be tamed “within the confines of the home.”²¹ If the United States was the “universal container,” then, the American home came to function as its miniature counterpart: essentially, a microcosmic container for “public policy, personal behavior, and even practical values.”²²

Ideally, this American home would be located in the suburbs, for postwar America’s “central cities were seen as heading rapidly out of middle age toward decrepit dependency.”²³ The federal government’s insufficient funding of urban renewal meant that “[n]ew shopping malls or civic centers would still be surrounded by old decrepit neighborhoods.”²⁴ Even the

¹⁹ Ibid., 2, 4.

²⁰ Alan Nadel, Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 14, 21, 34.

²¹ Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1988), 14.

²² Ibid.

²³ Mark I. Gelfand, “Cities, Suburbs, and Government Policy” in Reshaping America: Society and Institutions, ed. Robert H. Bremmer and Gary W. Richard (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 266.

²⁴ Ibid., 272.

Republicans' post-1954 attempt "to put the emphasis on rehabilitation as a way of making the funds go further. . . made no sense as long as the suburbs remained a less-expensive alternative. It was difficult to get excited about fixing up a sixty-year old brownstone when a new house with open space could be purchased" at less expense by virtue of the comparatively easy loans provided by two federal institutions.²⁵ One was the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which preferred issuing credit to an individual homeowner rather than to an investor in rental units, reasoning that the former would likely have a personal investment in a single-family home that was constructed in response to market demand, whereas the latter would probably serve as an absentee landlord for rental units that were "produced in advance of a demand that might not materialize."²⁶ The other was the Veterans Administration (VA), which permitted veterans to buy a house with little or no down payment and on easy credit terms. Thus, although new downtown complexes were built in the cities, the quality of urban "schools declined, municipal services shrank, and jobs continued to flow to the suburbs"; so too did the white middle class, "leaving the city to the poor and the blacks."²⁷ Moreover, in addition to granting loans for suburban homes rather than for rental units, the federal government further contributed to urban blight and isolation by scanting on funds for public transit and instead spending "[h]undreds of millions of dollars . . . on highways" required by suburban families who relied on their cars to transport them to school, work, shopping and entertainment.²⁸ Indeed, between 1946 and 1955, new car sales quadruple[ed, and] . . . by the end of the 1950s[,] . . . three-quarters of American

²⁵ Ibid., 272-3.

²⁶ Ibid., 264.

²⁷ Ibid., 273.

²⁸ Ibid., 274.

households owned at least one car.”²⁹ Thus, the newly flowering suburbs and the promising future they betokened allowed their residents to “contain” and seal themselves off from the aging and impoverished cities’ formidable problems: the need for racial integration and for the restoration of the crumbling urban infrastructures.

In another way, too, the suburban movement reflected a “containment” mindset, since, as Alan Nadel contends, “the justification for the postwar housing boom [that produced suburbia] was part of the one-dimensional mind.”³⁰ In elaborating on his conflation of suburbia with narrow-mindedness, Nadel explains:

[T]he growth of the suburbs and the suburban lifestyle were as much ideological as demographic. Tokening the long-awaited and well-earned middle-class access to leisure time and space, the suburban lifestyle also implied a proscriptive way of life that would ensure happiness and, simultaneously, the only one that probably deserved it. Although rarely articulated as such, the lifestyle was thus a patriotic obligation, a way of demonstrating the ideological superiority of American capitalism and, as well, of strengthening the institutions that would repel communist subversion.³¹

Reveling in the delights of their suburban home and thereby “demonstrating the ideological superiority of American capitalism” as opposed to Russian communism, the suburban postwar family would repel communist subversion “not by counterforce,” Nadel explains, “but [rather] by counterexample”; that is, the “impression of American potency” and vitality conveyed by the suburban dwellers enjoying the secure comforts of home and family would “further the interests of containment by making the Soviet. . . [way of life] look less potent and attractive.”³²

²⁹ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 123.

³⁰ Nadel, 103.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 308, n. 18.

³² *Ibid.*, 17.

Indeed, at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959, Vice President Richard Nixon argued with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev—not about the nuclear arms race, a topic in which one might reasonably expect the postwar world’s two superpowers to engage, but rather about the American home appliances on display. In the course of the so-called “kitchen debate,” Nixon implicitly claimed that “American superiority rested on the ideal of the suburban home, complete with modern appliances and distinct gender roles for family members.”³³ By thus foregrounding consumerism versus militarism, Nixon was able to extol every American’s “ ‘right to choose’ “ in the marketplace—and, by implication, in the voting booth as well.³⁴ Moreover, the availability of these consumer goods to so many Americans “beat the Russians at their own game of creating a classless society. Widespread American homeownership, the argument went, put to rest the Soviet charges that capitalism created extremes of wealth and poverty and secured a firm foundation for American freedom.”³⁵ In the postwar United States, then, homeownership represented a national emblem of superiority, freedom, and egalitarianism.

In her book Homeward Bound, author Elaine May similarly observes that “[i]n the domestic version of containment, the sphere of influence was the home. Within its walls, potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed [and subsequently] . . . contribute to the secure and fulfilling life to which postwar men and women aspired. . . . [Thus,] containment aptly describes the way in which public policy, personal behavior, and even political values were focused on the home.”³⁶ In subsequent pages, May’s book contains pictures from a Defense Civil Preparedness Agency pamphlet, one of which serves to illustrate

³³ May, 16.

³⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁵ Cohen, 125.

³⁶ May, 14.

the significance of the family home as a bastion of containment culture. The sketch depicts a suburban family of mother, father, and baby who huddle beneath their home in either its basement or bomb shelter (it is not exactly clear which), safe from a raging nuclear holocaust represented by arrows whose trajectories directly and exclusively target the family's home. With the use of such clear and graphic illustrations, home-based civil defense strategies--primarily those advocating the establishment and maintenance of some type of underground shelter--had by the 1950s become "a major means of simultaneously calming the nation's atomic fears while reinforcing hostility toward the Soviet Union."³⁷ For Russia exploded its first atomic bomb in 1949, four years after the United States' explosion of the first atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki had marked not only the end of World War II but also the beginning of the cold war and the atomic age. Thus, with the United States no longer the sole possessor of nuclear power, atomic war could occur, the governor of New York warned, "whenever the fourteen evil men in Moscow decide to have it break out."³⁸ With this threat in mind, then, it is not surprising that in 1959, "two out of three Americans listed the possibility of nuclear war as the nation's most urgent problem."³⁹

The solution to this problem, identified by Harvard sociologists Carl C. Zimmerman and Lucius F. Cervantes in a study funded by the Ford Foundation, was "a stronger, more resolute and better equipped individual"⁴⁰ who would be the product of "stable homes in which men and women adhered to traditional gender roles."⁴¹ Accordingly, the "male warrior . . . [who had] come home [from war, now] . . . reassert[ed] social power on the domestic front" as head of the

³⁷ Ibid., 105.

³⁸ Boyer, 323.

³⁹ May, 323.

⁴⁰ Ibid., quoted on 108.

⁴¹ Ibid., 109.

postwar family.⁴² Indeed, the postwar husband and father wore “the badge of ‘family man’ as a sign of virility and patriotism.”⁴³ Only a family man, in fact, could fully adhere to the “breadwinning ethic [that was]. . . the unquestioned norm of [postwar] heterosexual masculinity.”⁴⁴ For successful breadwinners were identified by their ability go out to work in order to “provide the economic [means necessary to]. . . create the home of their [families’] dreams.”⁴⁵ In order to provide this dream home, the male head-of-household was expected to labor in a corporate job that American capitalism—versus economically inferior Soviet communism--made available and to dress for such a job in the proscribed fashion. “The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit,” in fact, became the sartorially-themed designation for “the exemplary middle-class domesticated breadwinner” and corporate employee.⁴⁶

The movie Apartment for Peggy (George Seaton, 1948) focuses on the family of a campus-dwelling student veteran rather than that of a gray-flannel-suited commuter, yet within the microcosm of the film, the former’s concerns are emblematic of the latter’s. For this reason, Chapter 1, in the process of providing historical, cultural, and social background for subsequent chapters, refers extensively to episodes in the film. The housing shortage that the fictional Peggy (Jeanne Crain) confronts, for example, in reality presented problems for both campus-based and suburban heads-of-families. After the war, colleges that had previously forbidden students to marry were ill-equipped to provide living accommodations for the sudden and substantial influx of ex-G.I.s and their families. Outside of academia, similar shortages confronted returning

⁴² James Combs, ed., Movies and Politics: The Dynamic Relationship (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 98.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Steven Cohan, Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 175.

⁴⁵ May, 88.

⁴⁶ Cohan, 76.

veterans who sought to shelter their newly-started families in the limited housing the remained available after the “virtual. . . [cessation of new housing construction” occasioned by the war.⁴⁷ As she seeks suitable and affordable on-campus housing for herself and her-student veteran husband, then, Peggy enacts a dilemma that affected a sizable portion of America’s postwar population.

As a mother-to-be, moreover, Peggy, like many women of that era, contributes to a postwar “baby boom [that] gave evidence that Americans felt freed from the social anguish of the past decade and a half and had begun to feel that the future held infinite promise.”⁴⁸ Sharing this national optimism, Peggy explains to her husband Jason Taylor (William Holden) and to their landlord Professor Henry Barnes (Edmund Gwenn) that she wants “to have nine kids [because] maybe seven of them will turn out to be horrible little heels but maybe two of them will be good, and . . . maybe their kids and their kids’ kids will be even better. And . . . if it keeps snowballing like that, maybe someday it’ll just be natural to be tolerant and kind and good.” When Jason wonders what will happen “in the meantime,” moreover, Peggy retorts that “The long haul’s got to start sometime, some place, and it might as well start with your son.” Peggy, then, implicitly articulates the national feeling that “a home filled with children would create a feeling of warmth and security against the [postwar atomic age’s] cold forces of disruption and alienation. Children would also be a connection to [a more utopian] future and a means of replenishing a world depleted by war deaths.”⁴⁹

With this sense of transcendent optimism, Peggy inspires Professor Henry Barnes, a retired widower, to abandon for the moment his suicidal intentions. Affectionately nicknaming

⁴⁷ Gelfand, 264.

⁴⁸ Leonard Quart and Albert Auster, American Film Society Since 1945 (New York: Praeger, 1991), 13-14.

⁴⁹ May, 23.

him “Pop” in honor of her late grandfather, Peggy so charms the initially stodgy professor that he ultimately allows her to take over his home and his life. Thus, in a “basic conflict that underlies all college-oriented movies[, the professorial decorum that Henry initially exhibits]. . . contrasts markedly with the. . . natural attitudes” of the younger generation that Peggy represents.⁵⁰ Breezily citing self-invented statistics, for example, Peggy convinces the professor that he should teach a philosophy course to the wives of student-veterans because “twenty-six percent of all college divorces. . . [occur because] the husband starts to feel a little ashamed of the [less-educated] wife.” As a result of the course’s success, moreover, Peggy arranges a lending-library system that allows the G.I. wives to help themselves to books from the professor’s own collection. And by enlisting these wives to help her redecorate the attic alcove the professor has granted the Taylors, Peggy earns Jason’s admiration for her interpersonal skills--he refers to her, in fact, as “Mrs. Tom Sawyer,” thereby invoking Mark Twain’s fictional hero who maneuvers his friends into whitewashing the fence for him because he makes the task sound like fun. Gradually, though, Peggy and Jason begin to overrun their attic space, for as they continue to make their quarters more livable, they carefreely consign the contents of the attic to the hallways of the professor’s home. In the process of refurbishing, moreover, the Taylors create a disturbance that gradually drives the professor to the farthest recesses of his house as he seeks the peace and quiet necessary for his literary endeavors. Also, in spite of the professor’s objections, Peggy and Jason adopt a stray dog whom they christen Nicodemus and who, they promise, will remain silent and confined in the attic. Almost immediately, however, Nicodemus begins to enjoy the run of the house, jumping on the professor’s bed to wake him in the morning and waiting for him to come home in the evening. Peggy similarly invades the professor’s

⁵⁰ Wiley Lee Umphlett, The Movies Go to College: Hollywood and the World of the College-Life Film (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 110.

private sanctuaries as she brings him breakfast in bed, collects his laundry, rearranges his furniture, and plays on his piano a boogie-woogie tune that contrasts jarringly with the Mozart selections favored by the professor and the other elderly members of his musical sextet. In addition, the professor's home serves as the site for a couple of Peggy-inspired functions: a sing-along attended by several other G.I. couples and a baby shower attended by the G.I. wives and their infant offspring. On the latter occasion, the presence of the guests' children indicates that, in addition to a housing shortage, which the imminent economic boom would resolve, there existed also a lack of day care, which would be resolved, in large part, only by agreement of homebound moms to take turns sharing child-tending responsibilities. Mostly all of these communal gatherings, though, have a literary and/or artistic nature: lending library visits, philosophical lectures, piano-centered song fests, and chamber music sextets. It is therefore interesting to speculate how or if the presence of a television set, which began entering homes in large numbers in 1948, the year of the film's release, might have altered these entertainment choices. Perhaps the piano-centered song fests would remain, for even though "magazines [of the time] recommended substituting the television set for the piano, "statistics showing an increase in piano sales from the 1940's to the 1960's suggest that "piano ownership might still have been significant for postwar families."⁵¹ Though the professor is initially put off by these disruptions to this quiet, fastidious, and self-involved routine, he nevertheless comes to enjoy and even rely upon the lively and engaging sociability Peggy introduces into his life. Thus, by adopting Professor Henry Barnes and Nicodemus, by investing hopes for a utopian future in her baby-to-be, and by arranging meetings of--and forging bonds with--other student-veterans and their wives and children, Peggy attempts to establish new familial and communal roots.

⁵¹ Lynn Spigel, Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 198, n. 8.

In her attempt to do so, Peggy resembles many young, suburbia-bound adults “for whom the postwar years brought rootlessness [as they] moved from ethnic neighborhoods with extended kin and community ties[–as well as the built-in child care they imply–] to homogeneous suburbs, where they formed nuclear families and invested them with high hopes.”⁵² Like Peggy also, these suburban “[n]ewcomers devoted themselves to creating communities out of neighborhoods composed largely of transients [who were]. . . trying to. . . develop a new kind of roots to replace what [they had] . . . left behind.”⁵³ As the most mobile members of society, moreover, these young, suburban Americans constituted “12.4 percent of all migrants but only 7.5 percent of the population. Higher education also prompted mobility; fully 45.5 percent of those who had one year of college or more lived outside their home states, compared to 27.3 percent of high school graduates.”⁵⁴ Despite her campus address, then, Peggy—with her proclivity for causing dispossessed creatures to be absorbed into cohesive units—exemplifies the young adults of the postwar period who colonized the burgeoning suburbs. In addition, Peggy’s penchant for quoting statistics of her own invention seems indicative of postwar America’s reliance on experts to achieve “scientific mastery and objectivity. . . [and thereby] make the unmanageable manageable”; indeed, “[p]ostwar America was the era of the expert[, and when] . . . the experts spoke, America listened.”⁵⁵ They listened to child care expert Dr. Spock, for example, with the same whole-hearted credence, apparently, that marks Professor Barnes’ reaction to Peggy’s previously-noted and unsubstantiated assertion that “twenty-six percent of all college divorces . . . [occur because] the husband starts to feel a little ashamed of the [less-educated] wife.” But by showing the comically stodgy professor’s naive and eager

⁵² May, 24.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 26, 27.

willingness to be swayed by Peggy's creatively-produced statistic, the film assumes an ambivalent position with respect to postwar America's reliance on experts.

The professor himself, in fact, demonstrates another trend of the postwar era, for with Jason's help, he attempts to assemble the baby bathtub intended as his gift to Peggy on the occasion of her baby shower. Jason and Henry, then, indulge in the postwar "do-it-yourself craze [that] encouraged leisure-time pursuits within the four walls of home [and that galvanized] . . . 'togetherness' for the suburban family [whose members, ideally, were committed to] . . . a renewed emphasis on family life."⁵⁶ As a result of this Taylor-inspired "togetherness," moreover, the professor begins to acquire the "sense of purpose" that postwar America attributed to family life.⁵⁷ Moreover, the professor's discovery of a communal and permanent sense of purpose with the Taylor family foregrounds the inadequacy of the work that has formerly provided him with only a solitary and temporary sense of purpose: his book-writing project, at the completion of which he intends to commit suicide. In fact, though, as the Taylors' sphere of influence expands to the diminution of his, the professor finds he no longer has the time, space, or solitude that his writing requires. In deference to the potentially multiplying Taylor family, for example, the professor offers to move into his library so that Jason and Peggy can move out of their cramped attic space and into his more spacious quarters. In addition, Peggy's baby shower is confined not to the Taylors' garret but instead overflows into several rooms in the professor's house. Indeed, crowded out by Peggy's friends and by their gifts--which, in their bounty, provide evidence of a newly-emerging consumer culture--the professor comes to occupy an increasingly marginalized space in what is, after all, his own home. In this respect, then,

⁵⁶ Leila J. Rupp, "The Survival of American Feminism: The Women's Movement in the Postwar Period," in Reshaping America: Society and Institutions, ed. Robert H. Bremner and Gary W. Richard (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 37.

⁵⁷ May, 29.

Peggy and her friends, on the campus of “a typical New England college,”⁵⁸ enjoy the capacity to “exert . . . considerable . . . influence unrelated to their actual numbers”--just as suburban residents did.⁵⁹ Like suburbanites, then, Peggy and her friends “form . . . new communities grounded in shared experiences of home[making] . . . and childrearing and [of] conformity to the modern consumer-oriented way of life [even as their] new[ly-forged] ties and . . . new[ly-created] institutions . . . [displace] the old.”⁶⁰

Yet Peggy’s own experiences of childrearing remain temporarily unrealized when she loses her unborn baby. Recovering in the hospital, she entertains Professor Barnes by making fun of the afternoon nurse who continually addresses Peggy in the first-person plural. When the professor comments that he should be cheering up the patient rather than vice-versa, Peggy responds:

Oh, I’m not the courageous little woman you think I am. I tried that the first day [after the baby’s death]. It didn’t work. I was so brave and cheerful it was disgusting. I locked everything inside of me like a safety deposit box and I felt awful. Then Dr. Conway as he was talking to me gave me a pinch, a hard one, and I started to cry. I bawled for two hours--almost floated out of here, but when I got through I felt wonderful. I think I can talk about it now without getting all roochy inside.

Professor Barnes is similarly bereft of uplifting words--or any words, for that matter--when Jason, having learned of his wife’s miscarriage, asks simply, “Why?” The reactions thus posited--Peggy’s tears and subsequent optimism, Jason’s question, Professor Barnes’ inability to

⁵⁸ Karole Morgan, “When Hollywood Came to UNR [University of Nevada at Reno],” UNR Times, University of Nevada at Reno Alumni Magazine 1 (April 1984): 5-7. According to Morgan’s article, the movie’s exterior scenes were filmed at the University of Nevada at Reno “because it was close to Hollywood and looked like a typical New England college.”

⁵⁹ Gelfand, 267.

⁶⁰ May, 25.

answer--remain uninformed by any religious pieties concerning God's will, His mysterious ways, etc., etc. At a time when the United States was "experiencing. . . [a] dramatic upsurge in postwar piety, however, the absence of any pious utterances on the occasion of the Taylors' tragedy seems both curious and striking, especially since, in 1947, the year preceding the film's release, "religious leaders" headed the list of groups who were "doing the most good for the country."⁶¹ The film's silence on this point might indicate the personal and private aspect of religion—that one's engagement with God and spirituality, for example, remains sacredly confidential. On the other hand, "a highly favorable attitude toward religion became . . . [an] affirm[ation of] 'the American way of life' during the Cold War," in part because such an attitude distinguished a religious America from its enemies--namely, "the Soviet Union and its allies[, all of whom] officially subscribed to atheism."⁶² When viewed through the prism of Cold War religious fervor, then, Peggy's do-it-yourself, unprayerful cheerfulness following her child's death appears less like a self-motivated coping strategy and more like godlessness. In addition, the professor's inability to offer Jason a reason for his child's death is similarly striking, for as a professor of philosophy, Henry Barnes would seem uniquely qualified to offer thoughtful comment on the subject of mortality.

Contemporary reviews of the film, however, fail to remark on the absence of any religious outpourings on the part of the bereaved. Indeed, even the Catholic magazine Commonweal refrains from mentioning the characters' lack of religious observance and notes instead that the film "manages to get across [a] . . .worthy message as it tells its downtrodden characters to live joyously in spite of fardels and such."⁶³ Film reviews may have overlooked the movie's failure

⁶¹ Stephen Whitfield, The Culture of the Cold War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 83.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Review of Apartment for Peggy, Commonweal, 22 October 1948, 41.

to invoke religion because they focused more immediately on what was apparently the film's more noteworthy omission: the college-movie genre's musical comedy format and sports-related theme. Of course, Jason might be deemed to mature to engage in such light-hearted diversions, since, as a war veteran, he is somewhat older than "a traditional age college student." Yet the latter phrase becomes distinctly problematic within the diegetic time frame of the 1940s. For during that period, over six million returning soldiers—"nearly half the veteran population"—attended college on the G. I. Bill and swelled student population to such an extent that "[b]y 1947, veterans constituted nearly half the . . . enrollments" at institutions of higher education."⁶⁴ Yet in spite of their abundant numbers, student veterans remained curiously underrepresented in film. In her book Popcorn Venus, however, Marjorie Rosen hypothesizes that the abundance of veterans in academia accounted for "the rash of college movies . . . [that] occurred late in the decade [of the 40s] and [that] dealt with adults' return to campus"—irrespective, apparently, of whether or not a period of military service preceded such return.⁶⁵ Within this "rash of college movies," though, only Yes Sir, That's My Baby (George Sherman, 1949) features an "adult" student (Donald O'Connor) who is also an ex-G. I. and a husband and father as well. Yet O'Connor's status as a student veteran and family man remains largely unexplored in a film that relies instead on the two aforementioned conventions of the college-movie genre: the musical comedy format and the sports-related theme. Apartment for Peggy, on the other hand, attempts to dramatize with more realism the experience of a student veteran and his family. By virtue of such dramatization, latter-day author Wiley Lee Umphlett observes that Apartment for Peggy breaks with the "collegiate film tradition. . . [by revealing the] dark side of the human condition

⁶⁴ May, 78.

⁶⁵ Marjorie Rosen, Popcorn Venus (New York: Avon Books, 1974), 254.

usually reserved for tragic characters,”⁶⁶ his retrospective observation resembles the more immediate reaction of contemporary viewers who noted similarly precedent-breaking features of Apartment for Peggy at the time of the film’s release. One reviewer, for example, anticipated “what could have happened with the [film’s college campus] setting--one hundred dazzling co-eds dressed like chorus girls could have lined up on the library steps to produce the impression that all college kids sing and dance their way through higher education.”⁶⁷ In the same vein, another critic favorably observed that Apartment for Peggy presents “some concepts not often found when Hollywood tackles the ‘campus’ scene. . . a look at the qualities of courage and sacrifice. . . , the basing of [a] successful [relationship] on something more than romantic love, . . . [and] a study of what in human relations is worthy to endure.”⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Professor Henry Barnes’ inability to summon from his philosophical knowledge a rationale for the Taylors’ tragedy suggests that he represents an older generation whose “wisdom would be of little help to postwar Americans who were looking toward a radically new vision. . . and trying to avoid the paths of their parents.”⁶⁹ Accordingly, Jason, a member of the younger generation, majors in chemistry at college, and his commitment to this scientific--versus philosophic--discipline makes much more sense in a postwar world where “science and technology . . . invaded virtually every aspect of life . . . [and precipitated and perpetuated] the atomic age.”

With chemistry as his specialty, in fact, Jason can anticipate a secure future, for during the 1950s, education spending was increased, for the most part, only to insure national security via “scientists and engineers [who were on] university faculties [and] engaged in full-time

⁶⁶ Umphlett, 133.

⁶⁷ Review of Apartment for Peggy, Scholastic, 29 September 1948, 37, emphasis in the original.

⁶⁸ Review of Apartment for Peggy, Rotarian, January 1949, 11.

⁶⁹ May, 26.

research for the federal government, mostly on defense projects” that claimed “more than half the federal budget because the nuclear arms race had advanced to such an extent.”⁷⁰ Indeed, the profound and wide-ranging thought processes required in Henry’s field of philosophy would seem subject to the postwar “trampling of civil liberties [that] spawned a silent generation of college students. . . . Universities banned controversial speakers[, and] numerous surveys of college students in the 1950s described them as conservative, conformist, careerist, . . . [and] more interested in security and comfort than in distinguishing themselves. Campus passivity was the norm . . . in this decade of affluence and antiradicalism.”⁷¹ Finally, as the coup-de-grace to those academicians of arts and “soft” sciences

--like Professor of Philosophy Henry Barnes--novelist Louis Bromfield observed “ ‘there has come a wonderful new expression to define a certain shady element of our population. . . . [The word is] . . . *egghead* . . . [and it means] a person of intellectual pretensions . . . superficial in the approach to any problem . . . feminine . . . supercilious . . . surfeited with conceit . . . a self-conscious prig . . . a bleeding heart . . . [a] Communis[t] . . . a professor . . . [and a supporter of presidential candidate Adlai] Stevenson.’ ”⁷² In this definition, Bromfield approaches a level of opprobrium never intended by either the term’s originator, John Alsop, or its purveyor, syndicated columnist Stewart Alsop, both of whom were Yale graduates and intellectuals. They coined the term “egghead” to designate the type of Republican intellectually attracted to the “platform of wizardry” of Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, but “[w]ithin days,” the term had spread and accumulated the scurrilous connotations articulated in

⁷⁰ Boyer, 991, 974, emphasis in the original.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 954, 982.

⁷² Quoted in Eric F. Goldman, The Crucial Decade—and after: America 1945-1960 (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 224.

Bromfield's definition.⁷³ Like the Alsops, publicly acclaimed quiz show winner Charles Van Doren similarly qualified as—but avoided the ill repute of—an egghead. For as an Ivy League-educated English instructor from a liberal, humanist, and literary family, Charles Van Doren—until his part in the Twenty-One quiz show cheating scandal came to light—became a national hero, receiving hundreds of letters identifying him as “America's hope for a more serious, cerebral future”; offers of tenured professorships; and a three-year contract with NBC's Today show, on which he was to be the “resident intellectual.”⁷⁴ Possibly, Van Doren's popularly received cerebralism resulted, at least in part, from the democratizing nature of a televised quiz show that, in essence, relocated him from the elite Halls of Ivy to the more intimate confines of each viewer's living room.⁷⁵ Finally, since the contestant who replaced Van Doren on the show was a married female attorney named Vivienne Nearing, her sex, marital status, and profession may challenge the monolithic postwar understanding of the all-sacrificing, homebound housewife just as Van Doren's pre-scandal acclaim may challenge the pejorative connotations of “egghead.”

Nevertheless, many American men and women, by their actions at least, subscribed to the 50s' ideal of suburban domesticity maintained by a selfless, homebound wife and mother and funded by a male breadwinner in a business suit. Jason briefly and partially fulfills the latter role when, tempted by an invitation from his war buddy Bill Dudley, he leaves college—and the long term prospect of a secure career in chemistry—in order to sell used cars in Chicago. By thus rejecting the long term prospect of a secure career in chemistry in favor of a job with an immediate financial payoff, Jason demonstrates his adherence to the “breadwinning ethic [that

⁷³ Ibid., 223.

⁷⁴ Halberstam, 658.

⁷⁵ I am indebted to Marianne Novy for this insight.

was]. . . the unquestioned norm of [postwar] heterosexual masculinity.”⁷⁶ When Jason promises to send for Peggy after he finds an apartment in Chicago, she similarly fulfills her postwar gender role and plays the supportive wife. Reluctantly, she tells the professor that although he has offered to give up his room for the Taylors, they will no longer need it and will, in fact, be leaving his house altogether. Although Peggy emphatically prefers that Jason remain in school, she nevertheless accepts his decision without demurrals and arranges to stay with her sister until Jason sends for her. Thus, with her obedient acquiescence to Jason’s decision--in which she has no voice and by which her life will be dramatically altered--Peggy acknowledges that despite the skills and energy she has devoted to locating, acquiring, organizing, decorating, and maintaining the Taylors’ attic-loft household, Jason is, in accordance with containment culture gender roles, its “unchallenged head.”⁷⁷ As part of her domestic maintenance, Peggy capably manages the family household and budget. In her capacities as homemaker and household administrator, moreover, Peggy substantiates the reason that “[m]en were encouraged to marry while they were in school[: w]ives could be a help to male college students by taking care of their housekeeping needs or [by] working to support them until they finished school.”⁷⁸ Indeed, Peggy herself works to supplement Jason’s government allotment, but she quits “slung[ing] hash at the cafeteria [when] the uniforms” can no longer accommodate her pregnant figure. Despite Peggy’s can-do optimism and problem-solving skills, then, Jason is the only member of the Taylor family who earns any money and who has any say as to how he will earn it. Thus, Peggy resembles many

⁷⁶ Cohan, 175.

⁷⁷ May, 88.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

other postwar wives who “frequently led a contingent life, in which their husbands’ aspirations determined their fates as well as their material security.”⁷⁹

The breadwinner’s wife was essentially required to remain within the domestic sphere, for narrowing opportunities for female employment after the war effectively “kept women in their place in the home while preserving positions in the workplace for men.”⁸⁰ For although female employment rates in the 50s climbed from an immediate postwar low in the late 40s, “part-time and low-paid clerical and sales work . . . [constituted] the norm[,] . . . and the tax code offered little incentive to married women or employers to [deviate from this norm].”⁸¹ Indeed, by the late 1940s, the Internal Revenue Code reinforced the sexist bias of 1944’s G.I. Bill of Rights (originally known as the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act), which offered largely male veterans “unemployment pay while looking for a job, tuition and subsistence allowances for further education or training, and loans to purchase homes or farms or start a business.”⁸² Availing themselves of this unprecedented entitlement, over six million former G.I.s--“nearly half the veteran population”--swelled the college student population to such an extent that “[b]y 1947, veterans constituted nearly half the . . . enrollments” at institutions of higher education.”⁸³ The two percent of the military veterans who were female, however, tended not to avail themselves of G.I. benefits to the extent that their male counterparts did. The reasons, Lizabeth Cohen cites, “were multiple, ranging from inequalities and ambiguities in their entitlements to their lack of integration into veterans organizations, where a good deal of benefit counseling took

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁸¹ Cohen, 145.

⁸² Ibid., 137.

⁸³ May, 78.

place.”⁸⁴ Moreover, unless the female veteran could prove she was independent of a male breadwinner, she was deemed ineligible to receive the same unemployment benefits and living allowances as a male veteran. Finally, women tended to abandon their military identities after discharge, since they received little cultural support in their personal lives--and sometimes, even outright discrimination in their professional lives--for perpetuating their association with the military. Thus, Cohen concludes, “[w]ith access to capital and credit, as with unemployment pay, education, and home and business loans, the transformative G.I. Bill of Rights advantaged male American over females, due to men’s greater numbers as veterans of World War II and to outright discrimination against women who were vets or married to vets.”⁸⁵ The Internal Revenue Code similarly favored the “traditional male breadwinner-headed family and the male citizen over the female within it”⁸⁶. In particular, the IRS’s mortgage interest deduction favored men over women, since “mortgage acquisition usually required male income and proof of male credit standing.”⁸⁷ In addition, the adoption in 1948 of the income-splitting joint return, which favored traditional married couples in which the wife did not work, had the effect, historian Alice Kessler-Harris says, of “restrict[ing] women’s aspirations, training, and job opportunities.”⁸⁸ Essentially, then, narrowing opportunities for female employment after the war “kept women in their place in the home while preserving positions in the workplace for men.”⁸⁹ Since economic growth relied on the production of consumer goods, moreover, “industry needed women to marry and raise children so that she [sic.] and her family could

⁸⁴ Cohen, 138.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁸⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 145.

⁸⁹ May, 28.

provide a market for industrial products.”⁹⁰ Like these dutiful wives, then, Peggy contributes to the nation’s economic health by forsaking work for a pregnancy that precipitates not only a baby shower and the requisite purchasing of consumer goods as gifts but also, ideally, a baby who itself will become a consumer in a secure, utopian future. As I will discuss more fully in Chapter 4, Peggy’s miscarriage serves not as a challenge or contradiction to this optimistic view of postwar consumerism but rather as a postponement of fatherhood for Jason until he has worked for and achieved a proper postwar masculinity that qualifies him for the role of *pater familias*. Thus, with Cold War America investing so much potential bounty in children, it is small wonder that, according to sociologist David Riesman, “a woman’s failure to bear children evolved from ‘a social disadvantage and sometimes a personal tragedy’ in the nineteenth century to a ‘quasi-perversion’ in the 1950s.”⁹¹

But the “unnatural” women who did not seek fulfillment in motherhood were not the only group susceptible to criticism, for in 1957, 80 percent of Americans polled described people who chose not to marry as “sick, neurotic, and immoral.”⁹² Bachelors in particular were categorized as “immature, infantile, narcissistic, deviant, or even pathological.”⁹³ As a bachelor, for example, Professor Barnes considers suicide as a logical solution to his lonely life’s lack of purpose. As I argue at length in Chapter 4, moreover, Professor Barnes’ suicide attempt—a reaction to his despair over the Taylors’ expected departure from his home—serves as a plot device that allows Jason to assert his newly negotiated postwar masculinity over Professor Barnes, who is thus posited as subordinate to Jason, the imposer of patriarchal law. In addition

⁹⁰ Karen Stoddard, Saints and Shrews: Woman and Aging in American Popular Film (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 86.

⁹¹ Coontz, 32.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 32-3.

to censure and humiliation, failure to marry also carried financial repercussions, for “[I]ack of a suitable wife could mean the loss of a job or promotion for a middle class man.”⁹⁴ Thus, as previously discussed, a woman depended on finding a well-educated male in order to negotiate her entry into the professional middle class; yet that man relied in turn on a “suitable” wife--one who had experienced college as a sort of “finishing school”⁹⁵--in order to maintain his profession and the status it conferred. Finally, if any doubts lingered with respect to postwar culture’s expectations of American men and women, family advice expert Paul Landis dispelled them with the following argument: “ ‘Except for the sick, the badly crippled, the deformed, the emotionally warped and the mentally defective, almost everyone has an opportunity [and, by clear implication, a duty] to marry.’ ”⁹⁶ And marry they did, for at the end of the 1940s, all the trends that had characterized the preceding part of the twentieth century suddenly reversed themselves. Stephanie Coontz reports, for example, that for the first time in more than one hundred years, “the age for marriage and motherhood fell, fertility increased, divorce rates declined, and women’s degree of educational parity with men dropped sharply. And in a period of less than ten years, the proportion of never-married persons declined by as much as it had during the entire previous half century.”⁹⁷

Yet if caring for husband and children and engaging in domestic consumerism and “professionalized homemaking [were] not enough to keep [women’s] minds alive[, stay-at-home wives] faced few alternatives, other than unpaid community volunteer work or menial

⁹⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁹⁵ I am indebted to Lucy Fischer for suggesting the use of this term, which so accurately conveys the fastidious niceties of stereotypically feminine disciplines.

⁹⁶ Coontz, 33, brackets in the original.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 25.

subordinate jobs in the sex-segregated labor force.”⁹⁸ Accordingly, after quitting her menial subordinate job “slinging hash in the cafeteria,” Peggy undertakes “unpaid community volunteer work” of a sort by arranging for Professor Barnes to teach philosophy to the G.I. s’ wives and by organizing the professor’s personal book collection into a lending library for them. When the professor first begins lecturing, several members of his female audience are engaged in various domestic pursuits: some engage in knitting or needlework, while others, because of the apparent lack of day care, feed or play with the children who have accompanied them to the lecture. In fact, the postwar “public was not ready to fund the . . . daycare that might have encouraged more women to return to work.”⁹⁹ Indeed, the only women who could rely on day care with some degree of certainty were nurses. In her article “An ‘Obligation to Participate,’ “ author Susan Rimby Leighow discusses the singular accommodations afforded to women in the nursing profession:

Married nurses . . . benefited from the chronic shortage of personnel during the 1950s. Health-care institutions desperately needed staff and subsequently met the needs of mothers. These accommodations--part-time scheduling, refresher courses, day care, and better economic rewards [including unpaid maternity leave]--enabled postwar R.N.s, even those with young children, to carve out dual roles as professionals and mothers. Women in other occupations did not have the same opportunity. [For even though] . . . private-sector employers and school districts dropped the marriage bar after World War II[,] . . . [m]ost firms and schools . . . still refused to hire or retain mothers of preschool children, and day-care centers never flourished in corporate America. In many companies, a pregnancy bar replaced the marriage bar. Young married nurses did not encounter this level of discrimination.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ May, 84.

⁹⁹ Eugenia Kaledin, Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 71.

¹⁰⁰ Susan Rimby Leighow, “An ‘Obligation to Participate’: Married Nurses’ Labor Force Participation in the 1950s,” in Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America 1945-1960, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 49.

With no day-care available, then, Peggy's friends attend Professor Barnes' class with their children in tow. But despite the divided attention they must necessarily grant to his lecture, the women become more engaged in the subject matter, and some start taking notes as others begin posing questions and making observations. Finally, in a spirited exchange, the women attempt to define "good" by using examples--like a fur coat, milk, baby-sitting--that reveal the domestic focus of their lives. Delightedly surprised with their enthusiastic and intelligent responses, Henry--for the first time in his thirty-nine-year teaching career--alerts the class that they have exceeded their allotted time. Meanwhile, Professor Barnes' friend Professor Bell looks on and wonders jokingly if "Maybe the wrong people are going to school. Maybe the husbands should stay home with the children and the wives should go to class."

And, in fact, although Professor Bell treats female college enrollment as a joke, it did indeed increase during the postwar years, but not at the same rate as men's. Consequently, this numerical gap in male versus female enrollment "contributed to the polarization of the sexes in terms of educational content and achievement. Furthermore, [since] college degrees did not guarantee the same entry into well-paying jobs and careers for women as they did for men, . . . more women were likely to drop out of college in order to marry."¹⁰¹ One study, in fact, showed that although young white women were two times as likely to enter college as their mothers had been, they were less likely to complete their degrees, opting instead to marry men they had met on campus. In other words, "[c]ollege [effectively] enabled . . . women to achieve upward mobility not through their own occupation but by attaching themselves to well-educated men who had good occupational prospects. . . . For white middle-class women, then, college was

¹⁰¹ May, 78.

an entry into affluent domesticity.”¹⁰² Thus, by virtue of her attachment to her college-educated husband and his “good occupational prospects,” Peggy, though not a college student or college graduate herself, can nevertheless anticipate entry into “the professional middle class[, a social group whose] . . . economic and social status is based on education rather than on ownership of capital or property.”¹⁰³ For most postwar women, then, a college education represented access to upwardly mobile husbands and lifestyles rather than to intellectual, professional, and psychic self-fulfillment. And it is, perhaps, this lack of fulfillment that precipitated the homebound postwar woman’s generalized malaise, which Betty Friedan designated “the problem that has no name” and which she attributed to a “voice within women that says: ‘I want something more than my husband and my children and my home.’”¹⁰⁴ Yet, female psychologist Helene Deutsch in 1944 made the following observations about women who indulged in potentially self-fulfilling intellectual pursuits:

Only exceptionally talented girls can carry a surplus of intellect without injuring their affective lives, for women’s intellect, her capacity for objectively understanding life, thrives at the expense of her subjective, emotional qualities All observations point to the fact that the intellectual woman is masculinized; in her, warm intuitive knowledge has yielded to cold unproductive thinking.¹⁰⁵

Thus, in America’s containment culture, women—including Helene Deutsch herself—could successfully engage in the male’s “cold, unproductive” thought processes only by forfeiting the

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁰³ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), quoted in Cohan, 21.

¹⁰⁴ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963), 15.

¹⁰⁵ Helene Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation: Vol. I: Girlhood, 1944* (New York: Bantam, 1973 reprint), quoted in Leslie Fishbein, “*The Snake Pit* (1948): The Sexist Nature of Sanity” in *Hollywood as Historian: American Film in Cultural Context*, ed. Peter Rollins (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998), 157.

“emotional” and “intuitive . . . warmth” inherent within their feminine natures. Thus, college women of the late forties and early fifties exited the doors of higher learning that “older professional women . . . [had] battle[d] to open.”¹⁰⁶ Or, if postwar women did attend institutions of higher learning, they usually did so to take advantage of a curriculum constructed in accordance with traditionally female fields. Thus, “[h]ome economics courses and programs proliferated[, and a]dvisors urged women to attend college [not, primarily, for their own enlightenment but rather] . . . to gain essential training for their future roles as expert homemakers and mothers, . . . to have ‘something to fall back on,’ . . . [and for the marital compatibility that would presumably occur if they became] interesting wives for [their] educated[, professional-middle-class] husbands.”¹⁰⁷ In consideration of the latter reason, in fact, Peggy asks Professor Barnes to conduct classes for the G.I.s’ wives, for she has just come from comforting her friend Dorothy, whose husband they suspect of infidelity. Tearful over finding in her husband’s pants’ pocket a handkerchief stained with lipstick that is not hers, Dorothy, nevertheless rationalizes her husband’s behavior:

It’s not just his fault. It’s just that we’re growing apart. He’s learning a lot. He’d like to discuss his studies with me, but I can’t. I don’t know anything about Spinozi [sic] or Chaucer. I don’t even know who they were. I didn’t even finish high school. Naturally, he’s going to find somebody he can talk to. I just wish it could be me.

Of course, the lipstick-stained handkerchief suggests that a discussion of “Spinozi of Chaucer” was not the only activity engaged in by the philandering and husband and his paramour, yet Dorothy’s belief that her ignorance precipitates the infidelity is shared by Peggy, who recognizes

¹⁰⁶ May, 81.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

her friend's experience as the start of an unfortunate trend: "After a while," she tells Pop, "the [college-educated] husbands find somebody else they can talk to and discuss things with, and pretty soon the [less-educated] wives find lipstick on the handkerchief like Dorothy did." In order to prevent such a catastrophe, Peggy asks, "Why couldn't some of the professors talk to us wives every once in a while . . . so we'll be able to understand some of the things our husbands talk about?" Thus, Peggy's and Dorothy's implicit assumption of responsibility for male infidelity reaffirms the previously noted phenomenon that the postwar campus--like the postwar household and postwar workplace--was yet another site of female accommodation to male needs. Peggy, then, exemplifies the recurring message that pervaded the postwar period: "a woman is most feminine and most fulfilled when she is performing functions that make life better and easier for other people," particularly the man in her life.¹⁰⁸ If that man were a war veteran, moreover, the woman was expected to be especially sensitive to his needs, for the "battles . . . of the returning veterans . . . were not all behind them."¹⁰⁹ Peggy, then, can attain " 'real womanhood' . . . [only when] she sacrifices herself to [the] welfare" of her man¹¹⁰ as he attempts to reconfigure his wartime masculinity in a way that will best equip him for "fighting [on a new front] in the competitive [postwar] world."¹¹¹

Yet in Apartment for Peggy, the Taylors are not the only married couple negotiating postwar gender roles, for at its outset, the film shows an unnamed student veteran walking the floor with his infant child while his wife complains about the noise emanating from the house next door where Pop and the other members of his musical sextet are rehearsing:

¹⁰⁸ Stoddard, 88.

¹⁰⁹ May, 66.

¹¹⁰ Brandon French, On the Verge of Revolt: Women in American Films of the Fifties. (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1978), 119.

¹¹¹ May, 66.

Husband. There, he's [i.e., the baby's] quiet now. I'll put him down.
Wife. What's the use? He won't be able to sleep with that going on.
Why don't you go over there and tell them to stop that racket?
Husband. Oh, sure, sure. I can just see me doing it. My math professor is over there playing the flute. All I've got to do is tell him to shut up, and I can just imagine what kind of grade I'll get on my mid-semester.
Wife. Why doesn't he just add numbers and keep quiet?
Husband. What do you want to make such a big thing about it for? A few professors get together and make with the music. They rotate. They're only here once a month.
Wife. If this keeps up much longer, I'm going to report it. How do they expect a student to do his work with the faculty making so much noise?

As this exchange between the couple indicates, fear of angering a superior prevents the husband from manfully insisting on the quiet needed for his own undisturbed studying and for his infant's peaceful repose. The husband in this scene cannot risk antagonizing his professor, so rather than confronting him, he attempts to placate his wife, who in turn assumes the manly role that circumstances force her husband to reject. Thus, as he simultaneously attempts to coax his child to sleep and to negotiate a truce between his discomfited wife and the disruptive professor who exerts a significant power over his future, this college student resembles the corporate Man in the Gray Flannel Suit who must similarly "rely on interpersonal skills [rather than on a] . . . display of 'manly individualism.'" ¹¹² Unable to assert himself in the classroom or in the boardroom, then, "[w]here . . . could a man still feel powerful and prove his manhood without risking the loss of security? In a home where he held the authority, with a wife who remained subordinate."¹¹³

"Home," however, is a more problematic site for these student veterans than it is for their corporate employee counterparts, whose houses in "the suburbs . . . physically reasserted the gulf

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 88.

between n the public sphere of men’s work and the private sphere of women’s homes.”¹¹⁴ That is, unlike the suburban home, the student-veteran’s campus accommodations do not “physically reassert” the gulf between men’s public work sphere and women’s private domestic sphere. On the contrary, student housing tends to consolidate both spheres, for it is either adjacent to a professor’s residence--as in the case of the G.I. couple disturbed by their neighbor’s musical sextet--or part of it, as in the case of Jason and Peggy Taylor, who share quarters with Professor Henry Barnes. Since the campus home is where the students conduct their studying, moreover, wives have the opportunity to regulate this aspect of their husbands’ work life. The unnamed wife at the start of Apartment for Peggy, for example, takes charge by threatening to report the disturbance that interrupts her husband’s studies, and Peggy herself assumes control when she politely asks Pop to leave the Taylors’ attic rooms so that Jason can complete his homework. Similarly, when Peggy scolds her husband for his failure to earn uniformly excellent grades, Jason accuses her of being “tougher than [his] old man” and thus alludes to her assumption of male-based, patriarchal authority. Essentially, then, the college life’s physical consolidation of men’s public work sphere and women’s private domestic sphere means that the students’ wives do not necessarily remain subordinate within the home but instead invade and regulate the male preserve of work.

Yet the student-veterans are emasculated not only by all-powerful, non-confrontable professors and by home-based, woman-regulated work spaces, but also by their inability to make a decent living. Indeed, to sustain even a meager subsistence, the married student veteran spent “\$175.38 a month, or almost twice his government [allotment of] \$90.”¹¹⁵ To compensate for this difference between government funding and actual expenditures, “[m]ost G. I.s . . . worked

¹¹⁴ Stoddard, 88.

¹¹⁵ “Hang on, Vets! Help Is on the Way,” in University of Nevada Sagebrush, 23 Jan. 1948, 1.

part-time jobs while attending classes.”¹¹⁶ In Apartment for Peggy, for example, a professor promises to secure a teaching assistant job for Jason, who nevertheless worries that “it won’t pay enough.” Peggy herself supplements the household income by “slinging hash in the cafeteria” until her uniform can no longer accommodate her pregnant shape. In the temporary job as a waitress, then, Peggy substantiates the reason that “[m]en were encouraged to marry while they were in school[: w]ives could be a help to male college students by . . . working to support them until they finished school.”¹¹⁷ Consequently, the married student veteran fails to fulfill the “breadwinning ethic [that was] . . . the unquestioned norm of [postwar] heterosexual masculinity.”¹¹⁸ As one such student veteran, Jason blames his baby’s death on his breadwinning inadequacies, for he reasons that if he had been able to provide his wife with proper medication and proper housing without “all those stairs” to climb, she would not have lost their child. In compliance, then, with the postwar ethos that “successful breadwinners would provide the economic [means necessary to] . . . create the home of their [families’] dreams, Jason decides to abandon school in favor of a job that will finance, he says, “a place . . . with four rooms, . . . heat, sunlight, and a backyard[–a place, in short] . . . where a fella can live with his wife without feeling that he’s letting her down.”¹¹⁹ Thus, as Peggy remains at home while Jason leaves for his new job in Chicago, the Taylors resume the “traditional postwar roles . . . [for] women and men” as well as the backgrounds of home and workplace, respectively, against which such roles were performed.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Edward Humes, Over Here: How the G. I. Bill Transformed the American Dream (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2006), 129.

¹¹⁷ May, 80.

¹¹⁸ Cohan, 175.

¹¹⁹ May, 29.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

In Chicago, Jason embarks upon his new career as a car salesman and thus implicitly associates himself with the suburban commuter, for whom the automobile represented the means to shuttle between a job in the city and the comfortably prosperous suburban lifestyle that such job made possible. Venturing into the postwar, capitalistic marketplace of Careless Carson's Corner's used car lot, Jason distances himself from the "unquestionably manly responsibilities" of his former military service by exchanging his government-issue bomber jacket for a brown suit and fedora similar to those sported by the other car salesmen.¹²¹ Thus attired, Jason now possesses the capacity to "blend . . . seamlessly into the crowds of nameless, similarly dressed [working] . . . men filling up downtown streets in every American city."¹²² When Professor Barnes visits Jason at the used car lot, he is confronted by a multitude of banners that herald such attractions as the great trade-in deals available--"Hit the Jackpot/Sell to the Crackpot"--as well as the pristine condition of the used cars--"nearly BRAND NEW." As he attempts to make his way through the used car lot in order to speak to Jason, moreover, Henry is twice accosted by similarly-attired salesmen, each of whom confidently assures him that he has "come to the right place" for his automotive needs. In their sartorial and verbal conformity, then, these flimflamming salesmen represent the "unprincipled robots [who, along with] . . . professional yes-men [are the only workers capable of] happily adapt[ing] themselves to . . . America's capitalist] . . . organizations."¹²³ The first salesman, moreover, creatively expands upon the sales staff's uniform greeting by attempting to sell Henry a car formerly owned by "a lady who had to leave for China the day it was delivered." In essence, then, Carson hires employees

¹²¹ May, 58.

¹²² Cohan, 22.

¹²³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 72.

“whose stock in trade,” like his own, “consist[s] . . . of . . . conceptual or verbal skills.”¹²⁴ Communication skills like these that were required for success in business, Steven Cohan argues, “demanded sensitivity to outer appearances and also considered social identity a persona or mask.”¹²⁵ By the mid-1950s, he continues, “no single professional figure epitomized American deployment of capital solely in the interest of selling consumerism more vividly than The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, the advertiser whose business was literally the manipulation of signs.”¹²⁶ Accordingly, with his slyly inscribed banners boasting used cars “nearly BRAND NEW,” Careless Carson proves himself to be such an advertiser and manipulator of signs. Similarly, he employs a sales staff whose brown flannel suits and smooth-talking manner demonstrate personae assumed for social and professional purposes. Finally, Professor Henry Barnes’ comic bafflement at being accosted by “Crackpot” Carson’s banners and by an identically attired and verbally-programmed sales staff demonstrates not only the film’s knowledgeably mocking attitude toward used car salesmen but also the film’s expectation that its audience shares this attitude. The film’s reliance on audience recognition of the used car salesman as a flimflammer seems not unreasonable, since John Steinbeck, for example, similarly relied on his readership to recognize the Careless Carson precursor as such in Chapter 7 of his 1939 novel The Grapes of Wrath. Written almost entirely from the perspective of a used car salesman, the chapter’s text includes the unnamed salesman’s falsely deprecating line of patter to prospective buyers—“Well, I’m a sucker. Joe says I’m a sucker. Says if I don’t quit givin’ my shirt away I’ll starve to death”; his sarcastically dismissive retort to a dissatisfied customer—“Sure, we sold it.

¹²⁴ Jackson Lears, “A Matter of Taste: Corporate Cultural Hegemony in a Mass-Consumption Society” in Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of the Cold War, ed. Larry May (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Quoted in Cohan, 20.

¹²⁵ Cohan, 22.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Guarantee? We guaranteed it to be an automobile. We didn't guarantee to wet-nurse it"; and his instructions to his employee regarding deceitful sales strategies—"Watch that woman's face[, Joe]. If the woman likes it, we can screw . . . [her] old man. . . . Show 'em that Nash while I get the slow leaked pumped on that '25 Dodge."¹²⁷

While Carson's manipulation of signs remains rather clumsily transparent, however, real-life advertisers could rely on a more covert innovation: the newly formulated science of motivational research. In 1957, in fact, author Vance Packard published The Hidden Persuaders, a book whose title refers to these new, scientific strategies employed by the advertising corporations whose burgeoning ranks allowed them to claim "Madison Avenue" as both their principal address and their metonymic designation. In fact, in his book The Fifties, author David Halberstam writes:

Advertising men became the new heroes, or antiheroes, of American life. Novels and movies appeared about them. . . . In the film version of the Frederic Wakeman novel The Hucksters, one of the early novels that helped give Madison Avenue its dubious reputation, Deborah Kerr tells Clark Gable that he does not have to sell out, that he can be an honorable man in advertising.¹²⁸

This "dubious reputation" notwithstanding, advertising, selling, and marketing became ever more important within companies. In fact, some auto executives decided that since advertising tilted the balance within their companies, marketing and sales were more important than engineering and manufacturing. Consequently, they began to espouse "a kind of misguided ethic[:] . . . that it did not really matter how well made the cars were; if the styling were halfway

¹²⁷ John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 83-4, 87, 88.

¹²⁸ Halberstam, 501-2. Directed by Jack Conway, The Hucksters (1947), Leonard Maltin observes in his Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Movie and Video Guide (New York: Plume, 1995), is a "[g]lossy dig at advertising and radio industries, with Gable battling for integrity among yes-men" (604).

decent and the ad campaign was good enough, the marketing department could sell them.”¹²⁹ Such advertising, in fact, so valorized the automobile that it became “the traditional yardstick of status” and so seduced the suburban breadwinner commuting to and from his corporate offices that he would buy a new car even if, for practical reasons, he did not need to replace his existing vehicle.¹³⁰ Using the idiom of David Reisman’s Lonely Crowd, then, Steven Cohan refers to “this new middle-class, consumer-driven, professional businessman [as] . . . an ‘other-directed’ conformist, who personified the twentieth-century organization man as a consumer as opposed to the ‘inner-directed’ individualist, who personified the nineteenth century captain of industry as a producer.”¹³¹ Seduced by advertising, then, Americans created and contributed to the postwar consumer culture. Indeed, advertising was perceived as such a powerful force that Yale historian David Potter noted in his book People of Plenty, “ ‘Advertising now compares with such long-standing institutions as the school and the church in the magnitude of its social influence . . . it has vast power in the shaping of popular standards and . . . [the] exercis[ing of] . . . social control.’ ”¹³²

Refusing to submit to the deceit implicit in advertising and marketing, Jason abandons his sales job at Carson’s used cars and negotiates a return to college in order to pursue a teaching career, a path that the film valorizes as an enlightened and idealized choice. Yet a prospective view of the future seems to indicate that with this move, the Taylors simply postpone their submission to, rather than reject altogether, the lure of consumer culture. That is, Professor Henry Barnes’ assertion that teachers are “underpaid” seems curiously at odds with his comfortable lifestyle, for he has the leisure to enjoy musical salons in a large, book-filled,

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 503.

¹³⁰ Goldman, 303.

¹³¹ Cohan, 21-2, emphasis in the original.

¹³² David Potter, People of Plenty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), quoted in Halberstam, 502.

tastefully-appointed house--complete with cleaning lady--that he can apparently afford to maintain even though he does not work and does not charge rent to his tenants, the Taylors. By virtue of its focus on his home and lifestyle, then, the film foregrounds Henry's comfortable security with a visual emphasis that easily subsumes his one verbal allusion to being "underpaid." The film's brief glimpses into the homes of fellow professors, moreover, indicate that they enjoy the same financial security as Professor Henry Barnes. Yet since the advanced age of these professors indicates that they received their college education well in advance of 1944, when the G.I. Bill promised to finance such education for World War II veterans, one might correctly assume that they possessed the means to finance their own schooling. For, prior to the passage of the G.I. Bill, college was viewed "as an aristocratic enclave . . . [and a] bastion . . . of elitism . . . where academically unqualified legacy admissions all too often triumphed over merit."¹³³ Moreover, at a time when "[f]ewer than half the G.I.s who served during World War II had even graduated from high school[,] . . . colleges were considered inappropriate for the common man."¹³⁴ Thus, by making higher education financially available to all veterans, the G.I. Bill galvanized a "revolutionary [phenomenon by] . . . creating . . . for business and industry a new professional class of workers."¹³⁵ Thus, the reasonable expectation that these professional workers would earn handsomer salaries than their less educated counterparts led to postwar America's understanding that "the reason [to acquire a] . . . college [education] was not so much . . . to pursue knowledge . . . [but rather] to qualify for a good-paying job."¹³⁶ Of course, this understanding of college-as-guarantor-of-future-financial-rewards diminishes the nobly sacrificial element of Jason's decision to leave his disreputable yet

¹³³ Humes, 32, 33.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹³⁶ Umphlett, 109.

financially satisfying sales job in order to return to the penurious groves of enlightened academe. For if the Taylors can simply manage to survive a few lean years until Jason graduates and secures a teaching position, they can then leave behind what Peggy deems their “small town. . . wrong side of the tracks” background and enter into “the professional middle class[, a social group that (1) enjoys an] economic and social status . . . based on education, rather than on ownership of capital or property [and (2) “uses consumption to establish its status.”¹³⁷ The film leaves unresolved the issue of whether or not the Taylors, when they achieve the former, will rely on the latter, but it is my hope that the subsequent chapters will offer evidence as to what the future might hold for Peggy and Jason Taylor.

¹³⁷ Ehrenreich quoted in Cohan, 21.

3.0 UNDERWEAR AND THE RED SCARE

The young Peggy Taylor of Apartment for Peggy, with her self-confessed small-town, wrong-side-of-the tracks background, perhaps has little in common with Sylvia Hunter (Dorothy McGuire) who, in Delmer Daves' A Summer Place (1959), is the mother of a teenage son and wife of a high-society husband whose increasingly dissolute behavior has led to the decline of his person, estate, and fortune. Straitened finances, in fact, have forced the Hunters to abandon Bart's business associates in Boston and to retreat instead to Maine's Pine Island, where they attempt to make a living by converting Bart's ancestral home into an inn, the summer place of the film's title. But, ineffectual at innkeeping as well, Bart (Arthur Kennedy) increasingly takes refuge in verbal jabs and alcoholism. Consequently, it is only through the efforts of his wife Sylvia--and, to a lesser extent, their son Johnny (Troy Donahue)--that the Hunter family makes even a marginal living at innkeeping. At the film's outset, Ken Jorgenson (Richard Egan)--a former Pine Island lifeguard who has made his fortune in defiance of Sylvia's social-climbing mother who urged her to reject Ken in favor of Bart--returns to Pine Island for a visit, accompanied by his wife Helen (Constance Ford) and daughter Molly (Sandra Dee). As both families share a table at dinner, Sylvia upsets what Brandon French identifies as "a [filmic] concession to the cultural imperative of the 50's[:]. . . poisoning the well of women's choices by

making even the most dreadful marriage seem divine in comparison to a solitary life.”¹³⁸ In the following exchange directed exclusively to Ken, Sylvia posits her solitude as an ideal:

Sylvia. And then, after the [busy] summer season [of innkeeping] was over, I was going to abandon all convention, go back to nature, take off my clothes, walk on the beaches in the sun, swim once again in the moonlight.

Ken. What happened?

Sylvia. I woke up, I guess.

Thus, Sylvia further reverses 50s’ cinematic convention by envisioning the reality of married life as an awakening from an idealized dream of solitude. Moreover, in thus professing her convention-abandoning, body-baring, back-to-nature intentions, Sylvia anticipates the liberation that author Caryl Emerson identifies in her explication of Bakhtinian notions of carnival and the grotesque body. Specifically, Emerson contends that “[t]he suspension of everyday anxieties during ‘holiday time’ and ‘carnival space’--the specific locus being the vulnerable, yet superbly shame-free grotesque body—rids . . . [one] of . . . self-consciousness.”¹³⁹ Indeed, the Pine Island vacation resort--which represents not only the Hunter family’s precarious livelihood but also the “Summer Place” of the film’s title--fulfills the spatio-temporal criteria of “holiday time” and “carnival space” to which Emerson refers; and Sylvia’s maternal, middle-aged, soon-to-be-bared body serves as its locus.

No viewer, however, can regard Sylvia’s body as “grotesque” in the strictly literal sense of the word. Though she apologizes to Ken for “not being as pretty” as she once was, she also asks if he has returned to Pine Island to see if she has become “fat, flabby, and sagging,” and the

¹³⁸ French, 113.

¹³⁹ Caryl Emerson, The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 163.

laughter that accompanies her question indicates the impossibility of regarding her still-slim body in those uncomplimentary terms. But in her discussion of the carnivalesque self, Emerson cites as its “ideal . . . the open . . . irregular body, which has no need for visions of symmetrical beauty [or] feats of self-discipline.”¹⁴⁰ Sylvia fulfills this ideal by virtue of her contradistinction to other characters who DO entertain visions of organized aesthetics and who DO perform of feats of self-discipline. Sylvia first appears, for example, as she readies the inn for guests, and in accordance with her task, she wears an apron over her clothes and rolled-up shirt sleeves. Bart, on the other hand, wears pleated, pale gray slacks with a white shirt and an ascot as, drink in hand, he demands that Sylvia refuse to honor the Jorgensons’ reservation, since Bart dreads the prospect of the *nouveau riche* Ken “gloating” over the reversals in their respective fortunes. Moreover, to accommodate the Jorgensons, Sylvia and Bart will need to surrender to them their own living quarters and move into the gardener’s cottage where Ken and the other hired help stayed when he was one of the island’s lifeguards. Ultimately, Sylvia persuades Bart that their precarious finances trump his “dignity,” and the Jorgensons subsequently arrive on Pine Island via a yacht that Helen has insisted Ken charter in Nassau. By thus arriving in this luxurious craft, Helen hopes that she and her family will be accepted by the coterie of aristocratic Pine Islanders. For this reason also, Helen warns Ken not to mention his time as an island lifeguard, when he was deemed one of the hired help, and she insists that Ken and Molly change into the dress clothes she has bought for them. Ken refuses to wear the hat bearing the Nassau Yacht Club insignia since he is not a member, but he does don the rest of the outfit, which Bart, spying him through a telescope, derides as “just what a Midwesterner THINKS a yachtsman should wear: blue coat, brass buttons, white [shirt and pants].” Similarly, Molly appeals to Ken to

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

override the restrictive dress code Helen has imposed upon her. Concerned that Molly appear correct and “modest,” Helen insists that Molly wear a bra and girdle beneath her white skirt and sailor-style middie blouse. Just as he has disposed of the pretentious yachtsman’s cap, Ken tosses the offending undergarments through the cabin’s porthole into the sea. Once on the island, Helen continues to issue orders. In accordance with her advice to Molly that “[w]anting a man . . . [is] cheap” and that “sex . . . [is] something [a wife] has to endure,” Helen directs Ken to occupy the smaller bedroom that they have reserved, while she and Molly share the master suite, whose bathroom she insists that Molly scour with disinfectant in order to insure its antiseptic cleanliness. And when, at dinner, after Sylvia and Ken have shared a prolonged and heartfelt look of longing--and possibly remembrance--at the end of Sylvia’s “swimming-naked-in-the-moonlight” speech, Bart asks Helen if she and Ken “often swim in the raw,” Helen responds with a highly offended and emphatic “Good heavens, no!” Undeterred, Bart continues to bait Helen by dwelling on the theme of nude swimming. “Why, there’s absolutely nothing like galloping bare-bottomed into the sea!” he tells her. “You don’t say,” Helen responds, squirming uncomfortably in her chair, averting her eyes in embarrassment, and nervously fidgeting with an earring. By thus positing Helen’s body as relentlessly rigid and sealed-off, then, the film necessarily accords to Sylvia’s body an openness and adulterous accessibility that qualifies it as the “vulnerable, yet superbly shame-free, grotesque body . . . [that represents] the specific locus . . . [of] ‘holiday time’ and ‘carnival space.’”¹⁴¹

Helen’s behavior, of course, shows that she cannot enjoy the holiday time and carnival space offered by the “summer place” of Pine Island. As “utterly charming” as she proclaims their luxurious rooms to be, for example, Helen nevertheless directs Molly to scour with

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

disinfectant the adjoining bathroom, reminding her not to "forget the toilet seat . . . [because y]ou can never be too sure!" Moreover, Helen's dread of repellent invaders extends from lurking microbes to potential neighbors and ultimately, to sexual relationships. For example, in an argument with Ken about Molly's behavior with Johnny, Helen protests, "No decent girl lets a boy kiss and maul her the very first night they meet. I suppose it's your Swedish blood in her. I've read about how the Swedes bathe together and have trial marriages and free love. I've read all about that. Anything goes!" Ken, normally moderate and even-tempered, responds to Helen's accusation in this speech that he articulates with an ever-increasing degree of indignant fervor:

So now you hate the Swedes. How many outlets for your hate do you have, Helen? We haven't been able to find a new house because of your multiplicity of them. We can't buy near a school because you hate kids--they make noise. And there can't be any Jews or Catholics on the block either. And, oh yes, they [potential homes] can't be any[where] near the Polish or Italian sections. And of course, Negroes have to be avoided at all costs. Now, let's see: no Jews, no Catholics, no Italians, no Poles, no children, no Negroes. Do I have the list right so far? And, oh yes, you won't use a Chinese laundry because you don't trust Orientals. And you think the British are snobbish, the French immoral, the Germans brutal, and all Latin Americans lazy. What's your plan--to cut all humanity out? Are you anti-people and anti-life as well? Must you suffocate every natural instinct in our daughter, too? Must you label young lovemaking as cheap and wanton and indecent? Must you persist in making sex itself a filthy word?

By thus conflating ethnic and racial purity with a germ-free commode and a chaste daughter, Helen demonstrates Mary Douglas' argument that the fetishization of purity is characteristic of threatened communities (or, in Helen's case, a threatened individual), whose concern with political boundaries is displaced onto their (or her) ritualistic attention to the potential

“pollution” associated with bodily orifices.¹⁴² Though Douglas substantiates this argument by describing the operation of particular caste systems in India, her thesis applies with equal validity to the apprehensive struggle for world dominance that characterized the postwar relationship between America and Russia.

As discussed in Chapter 1, George F. Kennan, the American *charge d'affaires* in Moscow, in 1947 urged that the United States exercise “vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies”;¹⁴³ The United States obliged, aspiring to become the “universal container” that would hold in nuclear power and seal off Communist infiltration.¹⁴⁴ In its strictest sense, then, “containment” referred to United States foreign policy from 1947 until the mid-60s, but the term, according to Alan Nadel, also includes the following “practices . . . to the extent that. . . disparate acts performed in [their]. . . name. . . contributed to the containment of communism[:]. . . the arms race and atoms for peace[,] . . . corporate production and biological reproduction, military deployment and industrial technology, . . . the cult of domesticity and the fetishizing of domestic security.”¹⁴⁵ Thus, having moved to seal its national borders against the threat of Communism, the United States, in ways this chapter will examine, also made a concomitant move to secure the susceptible bodies of its citizens, a move in keeping with Bakhtinian notions of the open body’s subversive potential and with Douglas’ observation regarding the twin anxieties of corporeal and political permeability. Consequently, the body-baring that Sylvia Hunter so pleasurably anticipates was destined to remain a utopian fantasy in the film and in the sealed insularity of postwar America’s containment culture.

¹⁴² Douglas, 123.

¹⁴³ Boyer, 939.

¹⁴⁴ Nadel, 14.

¹⁴⁵ Nadel, 14.

Indeed, Cold War film censors would not permit Sylvia Hunter even to utter the word “nude,” much less depict it. For example, in a letter dated December 16, 1958 and addressed to Jack Warner at Warner Brothers Studio, censor Geoffrey M. Sherlock lists the following objections to dialogue that appears on pages 8, 21, 22, and 28, respectively, of the script to A Summer Place: “We suggest that you eliminate the discussion of nude swimming at the bottom of this page”; “We ask that you eliminate Sylvia’s reference to ‘walking naked’ ”; “Again note the [unacceptable] emphasis on nude swimming” “ “Another reference to nude bathing [must be deleted.]”¹⁴⁶ This straitlaced censorship in postwar America reflected the similarly “straitlaced” constraints of containment culture corsetry, since both functioned as regulators and signifiers of corporeal and ideological containment. Indeed, sometimes without conscious planning on my part, this chapter frequently resorts to or relies on punning references or *double entendres*--for example, “straitlaced,” “undercover,” “undergirding”--that resonate with both sartorial and ideological connotations and with the hidden nature of both. In the book Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body, coeditor and contributor Jane Gaines addresses this connection between clothing and culture when she observes that “there is often no distinction made between a woman and her attire[, and] . . . this continuity between woman and dress works especially well to keep women in their traditional ‘place.’ ”¹⁴⁷ In the postwar era, a woman’s “place” was within the insular confines of the home; accordingly, containment culture’s insistence on flesh-binding undergarments puts into play the previously discussed notions of the (en)closed body

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Geoffrey M. Sherlock to Jack Warner, Burbank, California, 16 December 1958 (photocopy). From the Delmer Daves’ Files in Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

¹⁴⁷ Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, ed., Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1.

rendered impregnable to the potentially carnivalesque openness that Sylvia Hunter envisions in her back-to-nature fantasy.

Indeed, the role of underwear in the formation of the normative postwar American woman is extensively alluded to in Rouben Mamoulian's 1957 musical comedy Silk Stockings, a film whose very title implies the significance that undergarments play in effecting the transformation of Ninotchka (Cyd Charisse) from Russian proletariat to American bon vivant. Ninotchka's pivotal transformation scene is preceded by a fashion show sequence that ends with Esther-Williams-like American film star Peggy Dayton (Janis Paige) seducing Russian composer/pianist Viktor Boroff (Wim Sonneveld) by performing a striptease in praise of female undergarments. This song-and-dance number begins after Peggy considers the saleslady's suggestion regarding the gown Peggy models for Viktor: "Perhaps we could alter the undergarments so that the line would be most smooth." "Good, good," Peggy agrees. "It's what's under the dress that counts." Peggy continues this theme in her subsequent striptease and song, in which she appropriately trills, "With attractive trimmings beneath her dress,/ Any *damoiselle* can spell success/ If she's wearing silk and satin,/ Satin and silk." By virtue of the decadent American undergarments she reveals in the course of her striptease, then, Peggy Dayton succeeds in seducing a very willing Viktor to the West.

Similarly, in the sequence that immediately follows Peggy's striptease, Ninotchka, signifies her surrender to U.S. capitalism and to American film producer Steve Canfield (Fred Astaire) by performing her own modest striptease so that she can divest herself of her proletarian and utilitarian underclothes and then assume the sexy, capitalistic undergarments that Peggy endorses. The dance sequence depicts Ninotchka daintily holding before her a garter-less "waspie," which Elizabeth Ewing describes as "a short corset of rigid material with elastic

inserts, little bones and sometimes black lacing [although Ninotchka's is ivory] . . . shaped sharply into the waist and worn very tight . . . [u]sually over a . . . girdle."¹⁴⁸ The dance sequence, however, fails to show Ninotchka lacing herself into this instrument of torture, nor does it depict Ninotchka's struggle into the additional torturous undergarment that prevents her silk stockings from falling around her ankles: a girdle.¹⁴⁹ It falls to Anna Magnani as Serafina Delle Rose in the 1955 film The Rose Tattoo (Daniel Mann) to demonstrate the near-impossible contortions required to squirm into a girdle. While Tennessee Williams' stage directions for the 1951 play strongly suggest that Serafina's ultimate decision to dispense with her constraining girdle signifies her liberation from the self-imposed isolation of living in a falsely idealized past, the 1955 screenplay--which Williams did NOT write--presents her struggles with the girdle as Serafina's first step toward a return to normativity.

And for the post--WWII American female, girdles were the norm. Indeed, they were posited as such necessities that they, as well as brassieres, were newly categorized as "foundation garments" in order to indicate their status as a "fundamental need"¹⁵⁰ --even though their wartime function as back-support for female factory workers would appear to have been rendered obsolete by the postwar push to reclaim such jobs for returning male war veterans. Fundamentally restricted in the exercise of action and agency, then, the cinched-in female was reconfigured into the homebound woman required by postwar America. Indeed, as if the girdle-waspie combination itself did not provide sufficient female cinching, David Kunzle identifies and describes an additional device for the purpose:

¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth Ewing, Underwear: A History (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1972), 115.

¹⁴⁹ In lieu of a girdle, Ninotchka may instead be wearing a garter belt, which was similarly "wired" in order to mold the figure. Yet a garter belt, according to author Valerie Steele in The Corset: A Cultural History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), would fail to cover the dancing Ninotchka's derriere and would thus render it susceptible to "jiggling . . . [which was c]onsidered very crude" (161).

¹⁵⁰ Kunzle, 270.

The . . . effect . . . [of a cinched-in] waist . . . was further enhanced (or created, when no girdle and an unfitted dress was worn) by broad belts, introduced in 1952. The earlier elastic version went under such names as “waist-garter” and the “elastic rib-cage” and there was a variety of “fabulous fascias [i.e., bands]” using leather and metal which summoned up associations with the middle ages and veiled allusion[s] to chastity belts.¹⁵¹

In How to Marry a Millionaire (Jean Negulesco, 1953), for example, several models wear such belts in the course of a fashion show, and millionaire seeker Polo Debevoise (Marilyn Monroe) lounges at home in a white flannel bathrobe fitted with a wide, sewn-in belt that not only whittles her waist but also propels her bosom upward and outward. Waist-bound and homebound, then, the American woman’s primary job was to remain in and tend to the suburban dream house and its inhabitants. Moreover, by performing housewifely duties in bodice-hugging dresses that emphasized their girdle/waspie/belt-enhanced sleekness, American women emphatically distinguished themselves from their Russian counterparts, who, as Susan Douglas observes, were perceived to look like “Broderick Crawford in drag . . . [and who] worked in masculine jobs [while] . . . their kids were raised outside the home in state-run childcare centers [wherein they were] brainwashed to be good little comrades.”¹⁵² No wonder, then, that in the The King and I (Walter Lang, 1956), Anna Leonowens (Deborah Kerr), tutor from the “civilized” West, instructs the Siamese King (Yul Brynner), representative of the “barbaric” East, that “[u]ndergarments . . . [are of] great importance.”

Indeed, as advertisements made clear, underwear was of such great importance in the West, that the postwar American female was called upon to wear a constraining girdle beneath

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 276.

¹⁵² Susan J. Douglas, Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995), 22, 47.

her slacks, her shorts, and even her bathing suit, which itself was as rigorously constructed as a corset. In point of fact, then, even if Sylvia Hunter opted to take her moonlight swim in a bathing suit rather than her birthday suit, she would nevertheless feel containment culture's sartorially imposed constraints by virtue of what the advertisements described as the swimsuit's "built-in controls": "form control sheath with patented 'Phan-Thum' girdle"; "built-in foam rubber bust pads"; "figure-moulding Lastex"; "matletex elastic back"; "crinklepuff shirring"; and "disciplined cotton" or "Lastex-powered faille . . . [for] the best torso control on the job all the time." Thus, rather than granting Sylvia her fantasy-enacting freedom of movement, the bathing suit's underwear-mimicking features re(con)form her body in accordance with containment culture aesthetics, which celebrate "the new higher bustline, the new long body look, [and] the always glamorous slim waist and exciting curves."

Thus, since advertising in postwar America became so widely influential in creating and disseminating images deemed worthy of aspiration, emulation, or possession, part of this chapter will be devoted to an examination and contextualization of advertisements for women's undergarments as they appeared in the mid-50s--arguably, the period of containment culture's deepest entrenchment, since 1955 marked the midpoint between the end of World War II in 1945 and the gradual thawing of U.S./Soviet Cold War relations in the mid-60s. I have relied extensively on advertisements that appeared in Ladies' Home Journal and McCall's--magazines that not only represented one-half of "the 'big four' in terms of circulation"¹⁵³ during the postwar years but also addressed those women who enjoyed--or aspired to enjoy--white "middle class domestic life" and its insular concerns: "everything from makeup and hairstyles to keeping

¹⁵³ The other two were Good Housekeeping and Women's Home Companion.

a marriage together to feeding a family on a budget.”¹⁵⁴ In addition, I have also selected some advertisements from Harper’s Bazaar, which targeted affluent readers interested in the latest fashions, and Mademoiselle, which shared a focus on fashion but was intended for college age women. Rounding out the demographics, I have also included some advertisements from Life magazine, which was the prime American weekly of its day and intended for both male and female readers. Yet in spite of their differences in intended readership, several of these magazines repeatedly share the same underwear advertisements and may thereby indicate limits either to the advertising budget or to the advertisers’ willingness or need to adapt advertisements in accordance with viewer demographics. On the other hand, the commonality of these advertisements may also reflect postwar culture’s preference for uniformity in the bodily containment of its female citizens.

Quoting from a report issued by the Institute for Motivational Research, author Vance Packard explains in his advertising-industry-themed book The Hidden Persuaders that since women wished to be “accepted and respected by men as partners,” advertisements directed toward them required “ ‘more subtle and more passive sex symbols than was the case a generation ago’ with careful emphasis on such ingredients as poetry, fantasy, whimsey, and a distinct soft-pedaling of pure sex.”¹⁵⁵ Packard nevertheless notes that the use of “sex . . . as a simple eye stopper took more daring form[, particularly in a] . . . widely exhibited [advertisement that displayed]. . . overtones of masochism [and] body exhibitionism.”¹⁵⁶ Packard describes this “bold” advertisement, which depicts “a lovely girl with blond tresses, dressed only in her bra and girdle, being dragged by the hair across the floor by a modern caveman. The [playful caption]

¹⁵⁴ Nancy A. Walker, Shaping Our Mother’s World: American Women’s Magazines (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000), 65.

¹⁵⁵ Packard, 85, emphasis in the original.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

was ‘Come out of the bone age, darling!’ “ In her hand, the “lovely girl” holds the updated apparatus that replaces the outmoded “bones” in the newer model girdle she is wearing. Indeed, as the text from another advertisement for the same girdle boasts, “those long front bones that dug into your midriff [have now been replaced] with the new STA-FLAT Front[, achieved by] circular springlets pocketed in the girdle’s front panel.” Like the “lovely girl with blond tresses,” the model in the latter advertisement also holds the “circular springlets” in her hand as the saleswoman-consultant apparently enumerates for her the same aesthetic advantages identified within the text of the advertisement: “the lightweight swirled circles . . . firm . . . a greater area with lively comfort [and] . . . respond . . . to the round movements of your body--because the circle’s a natural shape” (emphasis in the original). Thus, the advertisement--as well as the sales consultant within it--seeks to persuade the female consumer that the midriff-to-thigh rubber casing--“with strong leno elastic sides,” according to the fine print at the top of the ad--is, in fact, as “natural” as one’s own skin. As such, moreover, it “will bring . . . women out of the primitive Bone Age into the free whirl[d?] of today,” even though the featured “springlets”--in spite of their implicitly dainty and diminutive designation--exert a restrictive pressure that seems the very antithesis of the “free[dom]” they purport to offer.

Indeed, the sales consultant’s appearance within the advertisement posits her as its authoritative and informed voice. The tape measure hung around her neck, her no-nonsense bun, and her fingers enumerating the girdle’s benefits--all are signifiers that attest to her credibility as a trustworthy resource. Furthermore, her long, manicured nails and wristload of bangle bracelets indicate that she, like the consumer, is also a woman who understands, appreciates, and subscribes to an investment in an attractive appearance. Indeed, this sales consultant might also be deemed an “expert fitter,” whose assistance is endorsed not only in the advertisement but

also in the 1953 publication Foundations for Fashion, an 86-page publication whose contents are “directed to the consumer [of female undergarments], because the [Corset and Brassiere] Association [of America] feels that this type of information [regarding the variety, selection, fitting, purpose, and history of undergarments] is very definitely needed by the millions of women who buy and wear foundation garments. No other item of wearing apparel more intimately affects a woman’s grooming, her comfort and physical well-being.”¹⁵⁷ Throughout its pages, in fact, Foundations for Fashion carefully touts “physical well-being” as one of corsetry’s *raison d’être*. It explains, for example, that “no other garment is as important for health, comfort, and appearance as [a woman’s] . . . foundations[,] . . . which will aid the wearer’s health and add to her sense of well-being by reminding her to stand straight and tall.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, to substantiate these claims, the Association cites data compiled for it by “an independent research organization,” whose surveyors polled “medical and nursing authorities and personnel directors of retail stores and industrial plants employing large numbers of women.”¹⁵⁹ Eighty-one per cent of these “experts considered foundation garments essential to women both in the home and on the job”; and eighty-four per cent said these garments “ ‘contribute to good health’ “ because they support back and stomach muscles, reduce strain and tension, and enhance posture and breathing.¹⁶⁰ Thus, the results of this “independent” survey, in which neither parameters nor sources are specifically identified, support the Association’s reassuring claim that “[c]orsetry has two basic functions: to improve appearance, and to safeguard health.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Foundations for Fashion (New York: The Corset and Brassiere Association of America, 1953), 4C, “Foreword.”

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3A.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3B.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, emphasis in the original.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 4B.

The lingerie advertisements, on the other hand, omit any claims regarding the health-giving properties of their merchandise, focusing instead on their ability to streamline the wearers' undisciplined bodies into attention-getting ideals. It should be noted, however, that girdles were sometimes worn by some women to safeguard health. During the war, for example, good corsetry was deemed "necessary to the vigorous maintenance of the war effort," since women doing so-called "men's work" and standing for long hours at factory benches relied on such corsetry for physical support.¹⁶² At times, even men required corsets for health-related reasons, since the protection they offer might be viewed as analogous to that provided by the supportive belts worn by weight lifters, for example, or furniture movers. In Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), however, it is convalescing policeman Scottie (James Stewart) who wears a corset while he recovers from back injuries sustained while in pursuit of a criminal. Visiting his friend Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes), Scottie first winces with pain because, he complains, the "damn corset binds." Almost immediately, though, he consoles himself with the thought that "tomorrow . . . the corset comes off . . . [and] I'll be able to scratch myself like anybody else. I'll be a free man." Thus, even though his wearing of the corset reflects his belief in its recuperative properties, Scottie verbally acknowledges not only that its permanent removal will be an act of liberation--"I'll be a free man"--but also that such a form of liberation is not available to women.¹⁶³

In this same sequence from Vertigo, Midge, an illustrator, describes to Scottie--and the extra-diegetic audience-- the aerodynamic design of a bra she is sketching for a newspaper advertisement. In this way, then, Hollywood provides to female consumers guidance on the subject of intimate apparel. Indeed, according to Michael Kammen, the postwar years marked

¹⁶² Ewing, 114.

¹⁶³ Chapter 6.0 examines this scene further in terms of Stewart's embodiment of postwar masculinity.

the final change from popular culture to mass culture, and it was during this transition, Kammen contends, that cultural authority, as represented by intellectual elites such as critics and museums, gave way to cultural power, as wielded by “national media . . . , Hollywood, public relations and advertising agencies, large corporations, and even government.”¹⁶⁴ In 1946, for example, ex-G.I. Frederick Mellinger relied on the cultural currency of Hollywood when he christened his newly established lingerie firm “Frederick’s of Hollywood” and appropriately established his flagship store there, where his “sensuous lingerie was an immediate hit with Hollywood’s film stars.”¹⁶⁵ After introducing the first padded bra in 1947, Frederick’s appropriated from the film industry nomenclature for his merchandise. In 1948, for example, he introduced the “Rising Star, ” the world’s first push-up bra, and in the 1950s the “Hollywood Profile,” which was “inspired by film costume designers of the time. As Figure 9 shows, advertisements for Frederick’s of Hollywood typically depict pinup style caricatures of models rather than decorously posed photographs of them. Yet although this advertisement appeared in the May 1951 issue of Esquire, a so-called “men’s magazine”--that despite its “well-written and . . . timely articles [also]. . . includes photographs of scantily dressed (but not naked) women in every issue, often on the cover”¹⁶⁶--Mellinger also “dared to advertise his lingerie in . . . women’s magazines [as well], a marketing strategy which paid off handsomely.”¹⁶⁷ The text of one Frederick’s advertisement, however, relies not on euphemistic allusions to the garment-wearer’s sex appeal but rather on broadly burlesqued ribaldry: “Don’t give these [garments] to your mother if she’s over 25!”; “ ‘Bare-As-You-Dare’ Lingerie from Hollywood”; “[n]aughty

¹⁶⁴ Kammen, 138.

¹⁶⁵ Karen Bressler and Karen Newman, A Century of Lingerie: Icons of Style in the Twentieth Century (Edison, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1997), 94.

¹⁶⁶ Bill Katz and Linda Sternberg Katz, Magazines for Libraries (New Providence, NJ: Bowker, 2000), 759.

¹⁶⁷ Bressler, 95.

but nice . . . sheer. . . see-thru . . . nighty” and, in the order form, a fill-in requesting “Gal’s Bust Measure[ment].” Consequently, these mildly salacious stylistic features in this Frederick’s of Hollywood’s advertisement suggest that, despite Bressler’s and Newman’s claim that Frederick’s advertised in both women’s and men’s magazines, this particular advertisement was intended for inclusion only in the latter. Bressler and Newman also note that by the early 1980s, Mellinger “had recognized the danger in . . . [thus] associating . . . Frederick’s . . . too blatantly with overtly sexy lingerie . . . and [consequently began to offer] good quality mainstream lingerie which was soft and sensual, but definitely not [as] sleazy” as the firm’s postwar merchandise had been.¹⁶⁸

Yet even the less “sleazy” and more upscale lingerie houses insisted, like Mellinger, on a Hollywood connection. For example, the manufacturer of “high class brassieres” --including those buttressed by underwire, which first “began to be used around 1954 when Dior launched his new high bustline”-- was first known as Hollywood Maxwell and later as Hollywood Vassarette; not surprisingly, the firm urged its customers to “Learn from Hollywood’s ‘Stars.’”¹⁶⁹ Indeed, during the decade of the 50s, many of Hollywood’s female stars began appearing in films in their lingerie, a practice that had been forbidden in earlier decades. For example, because of Lana Turner’s corseted appearance in the 1952 film The Merry Widow, the movie’s title served as the namesake for the strapless corset that Warner introduced in the same year. A year later, in 1953, Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell wore corset-inspired showgirl outfits in Howard Hawks’ Gentlemen Prefer Blondes; and in 1958, Elizabeth Taylor’s slip-clad appearance in Richard Brook’s Cat on a Hot Tin Roof dominated the advertisement for the film. In fact, so many starlets were costumed in lingerie that Sophia Loren was quoted as saying, “ ‘There is no

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. In contrast to Frederick’s male-based industry and male-directed advertising, Victoria’s Secret, created in the early 1970s, is “a company run by women for women” and has “become synonymous with glamorous, romantic, indulgent and feminine lingerie” (Bressler, 116).

¹⁶⁹ Thesander, 141, 162.

film star today whose underwear we have not seen.’ ”¹⁷⁰ Indeed, a swimsuit ad’s reference to “the natural beauty. . . alfresco look” of Loren’s Italian countrywomen “Gina [Lollabrigida] . . . and Anna [Magnani]” suggests not only the latter’s appearance in The Rose Tattoo (Daniel Mann, 1955), in which she totteringly tries to extricate herself from the excruciating confines of her girdle, but also the former’s appearance in Trapeze (Carol Reed, 1956). In this film, Lollabrigida plays a circus aerialist, a role to which the swimsuit ad alludes by depicting the swimsuit model’s forearms in the grip of an unseen male, who presumably holds her with the same love-struck ferocity as Burt Lancaster, who portrays a fellow aerialist in the film. Indeed, the advertisement for the film depicts Lancaster and Lollabrigida sharing a gravity-defying kiss in the middle of their aerial acrobatics. In this athletic pose, Lancaster’s grip on Lollabrigida matches that of the unseen male in the swimsuit ad. In addition, Lollabrigida’s midair arch highlights her breasts in her corset-inspired trapeze outfit much as the the swimsuit’s underwear-mimicking feature of ”crinklepuff shirring” makes more prominent the breasts of the advertisement’s Gina-lookalike bathing beauty. Thus, by virtue of its explicit textual references and implicit visual allusions, the swimsuit advertisement associates the figure-reforming, bust-thrusting bathing suit with Italian goddess sex appeal--” ‘it’ as in [the] Italy. . . [of] Gina . . . and Anna”--and romance under (or at the height of) the Big Top with a three-ring hunk.

In another instance, also, the juxtaposing of a similar image from an advertisement and from a film offers a clearer depiction of an ideological signification than either isolated image might afford. Thus, in a 1956 advertising photograph taken at the “House of Fun at Coney Island’s Steeplechase Park,” a female model enjoys the effects of an updraft that blows her skirt upward to reveal her “criss-cross” Sarong girdle. Her pose recalls a comparable one that Marilyn

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Catherine Bardey, Lingerie: A Celebration of Silks, Satins, Laces, Linens and Other Bare Essentials (New York: Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers), 130.

Monroe assumes in The Seven Year Itch (Billy Wilder, 1955) when a sidewalk vent similarly blows her skirt upward to reveal her bare thighs). Unrestricted and unconfined by a girdle, Monroe's body thus represents an open and sexually accessible one in contradistinction to the closed and contained body of her Coney Island counterpart. Indeed, the transgressive nature of Monroe's ungirdled pubic area is revealed not only by this juxtaposition of the film still with the Sarong advertisement but also by a consideration of the actual results of her famous pose, which was shot in New York City at 2 A.M. in order to avoid a crowd. Word spread, however, and several thousand people showed up, cheering, applauding, and shouting "Higher, higher," as the wind blew her skirt above her panties. David Halberstam relates that her then-husband, retired and revered baseball great Joe DiMaggio, "watched from the corner, stone-faced and silent . . . [interpreting what] he saw . . . as [a] . . . public . . . expos[ition of his wife. After the shooting of the scene ended,] they had a bitter fight" that caused him to leave and effectively end their one-year marriage.¹⁷¹ Thus, the resounding moral--or, to paraphrase Nadel briefly, the "intimidating postwar narrative"--this incident reveals is that females who transgress by exposing themselves without the full complement of culturally approved undergarments will incur severe patriarchal punishment. Accordingly, the Coney Island woman can express without cultural disapproval her open enjoyment of the carnivalesque site and of her upwardly and outwardly flaring skirt, for her body, unlike Monroe's, is rendered correctly closed and sexually inaccessible by the rigid casing of the girdle. Indeed, the girdle's ballyhooed "criss-cross," positioned directly over the woman's pubic area, appears to form a prohibitive "X" that signifies any number of injunctions

¹⁷¹ Halberstam, 569. For an "it-may-well-have-happened-like-that" account of this incident, see "The American Goddess of Love on the Subway Grating" (472-4) in Joyce Carol Oates' novel Blonde (New York: Ecco Press, 2000), which she describes in an introductory and unpaginated "Author's Note" as "a radically distilled 'life' [of Marilyn Monroe] in the form of fiction."

against pre- or extra-marital proximity or penetration, like “Don’t touch,” “Out of bounds,” “No entry,” or “Access denied.”

Like most girdles and corsets made since the 1900s, the Sarong girdle covers the pubic area “and [thus] furnish[es] an actual obstacle, like the legendary chastity belt, to penetration.”¹⁷² Ironically, then, the same girdle that enhanced the female’s figure in order to attract the attention of a male was the same article of clothing that prevented such male from penetrating the female erogenous zone beneath it. This twofold purpose of the girdle reflects postwar America’s desire to contain male and female sexuality within an “eroticized marriage.”¹⁷³ That is, the female’s role in postwar courtship provided that “[o]nce caught . . . [by her] allure[, the male] . . . was to be held at bay, while [the female] gave [him] all the appropriate signals to promise sexual excitement in marriage.”¹⁷⁴ This feat of balanced negotiation--“holding” a male while simultaneously “holding” him “at bay”-- was required of women because the live-for-the-moment sexual ethic that prevailed during wartime made a complete reversal to postwar sexual abstinence unlikely. In fact, the so-called “Kinsey Report” documented incidences of widespread sexual experimentation among American men and women.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, both of Kinsey’s books were instant best sellers. Thus, in the face of this American interest in and experimentation with sex, “postwar experts believed that . . . [since sexual] repression was no longer possible [,] . . . [t]he goal . . . was to teach young people already indulging in ‘petting’ . . . [that m]arriage was . . . the appropriate container for the[ir] . . . libido[s].”¹⁷⁶ And because it

¹⁷² Kunzle, 29.

¹⁷³ May, 119.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., emphasis added.

¹⁷⁵ Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and C. E. Martin, Sexual Behavior in the Human Male; and Kinsey et al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1948 and 1953, respectively).

¹⁷⁶ May, 100-1.

was the woman's responsibility to insure premarital abstinence, females were subject to a code of sexual conduct that Stephanie Coontz describes as follows:

The new practice of going steady “widened the boundaries of permissible sexual activity,” creating a “sexual brinksmanship” in which women bore the burden of “drawing the line,” but that line was constantly changing. Popular opinion admitted, as the Ladies Home Journal put it in 1956, that “sex suggestiveness” was here to stay, but insisted that it was up to women to “put the brakes on.” This double standard led to a Byzantine code of sexual conduct. “Petting” was sanctioned so long as one didn't go “too far” (though this was an elastic and ambiguous prohibition); a woman could be touched on various parts of her body (how low depended on how serious the relationship was) but “nice girls” refused to fondle the comparable male parts in return; mutual stimulation to orgasm was compatible with maintaining a “good” reputation so long as penetration did not occur. The success of sexual containment depended on sexual inequality. Men no longer bore the responsibility of “saving themselves for marriage”; this was now exclusively a woman's job. In sharp contrast to the nineteenth century, when “over-sexed” or demanding men were considered to have serious problems, it was now considered “normal” or “natural” for men to be sexually aggressive. The “average man,” advice writers for women commented indulgently, “will go as far as you let him go.” When women succeeded in “holding out” (a phrase charged with moral ambiguity), they sometimes experienced problems “letting go,” even after marriage; when they failed, they were often reproached later by their husbands for having “given in.”¹⁷⁷

At the end of World War II, the “Byzantine code” to which Coontz refers could be more simply translated into the following series of baseball metaphors: “First base[:] . . . French kissing[:] . . . Second base[:] . . . groping underneath the shirt[:] . . . Third base[:] . . . fondling of the genitals[:] . . . Home Run[:] . . . sexual intercourse.”¹⁷⁸ Regardless of the manner in which it was encoded, however, the evolution from sexual repression to sexual containment did not necessarily liberate the postwar female; on the contrary, since it was exclusively the woman's responsibility to “put the brakes on,” she alone regulated the containment of America's postwar heterosexuality.

¹⁷⁷ Coontz, 39-40.

¹⁷⁸ “Baseball Metaphors for Sex,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baseball_metaphors-for-sex (14 May 2009).

Charged with this regulatory responsibility not to “let go” but to “hold out”--or, in containment culture imagery, “hold in”--the body of the postwar woman became a vessel of sexual containment. As such, the female body itself required regulation in order to insure that it continued to fulfill its function as America’s pre- and extra-marital sexual container.

As shown in the previously discussed juxtaposition of the girdle-clad model at Coney Island’s Fun House with the girdle-less Marilyn Monroe in The Seven Year Itch, the enclosed chastity of the former highlights the open sexuality of the latter. As a signifier of sexual prohibition, then, the girdle may thus be perceived not only as a metaphorical chastity belt but also as a symbolic defense against--or, as the following discussion will show, persuasive proof of--rape. For although in 1948, Ruth Herschberger, a feminist writer and poet, first identified rape as “a form of violence involving the personal humiliation of the victim,” she was ahead of her time in analyzing the mechanics of rape and linking it to the gendered power structure.”¹⁷⁹ For it was not until the 1973 establishment of the National Organization for Women’s Rape Task Force and the 1975 publication of Susan Brownmiller’s Against Our Will that the national consciousness began to understand rape as a crime “grounded in [violence rather than] . . . passion and sexual pleasure.”¹⁸⁰ Misunderstanding rape in accordance with the latter interpretation, then, postwar America accepted all the other rape-related myths that derive from such misunderstanding--“that women’s appearance and dress[, for example,] provoke rape; that women desire or invite rape; or that only a chaste woman can be raped.”¹⁸¹ Thus, in Otto Preminger’s 1959 film Anatomy of a Murder, Paulie, (James Stewart), a lawyer defending Frederick Manion (Ben Gazzara) against charges that he murdered his wife’s rapist, anticipates

¹⁷⁹ Maria Bevacqua, Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 58.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

the need to prove to the jury that attractive, sensuous, bar-hopping Laura Manion (Lee Remick) has indeed been the victim of a rape rather than a participant in consensual, adulterous sex. Accordingly, Paulie asks what items of underwear she was wearing on the night the rape occurred. When Laura replies, “Slip, bra, panties,” Paulie asks, “No girdle?” “I don’t need a girdle,” Laura answers. “Do YOU think I need a girdle?” Paulie, of course, does indeed think that Laura needs a girdle, not for the aesthetic reasons she imagines but rather for the purposes of sexual regulation. Consequently, when he finds Laura dancing at a roadhouse bar rather than grieving in isolation for her imprisoned husband, he drags her outside and insists not only that she avoid such “juke joints” but also that she reform her image by donning “horn-rimmed spectacles, a skirt, low-heeled shoes, and a girdle--ESPECIALLY a girdle.” Thus, the person who is really on trial is Laura Manion, and the crime of which she is implicitly accused is failure to wear a girdle. By thus indicating that her unenclosed genitals are violable, she is deemed to have invited the rape perpetrated upon her. As signified by this film, then, the girdle represents the postwar version of a chastity belt, and the woman’s failure to wear one affords a viable defense against a charge of rape.¹⁸²

Although thus confronted by advertisements and films that valorized the girdle and other merchandise intended for female beautification, postwar women, for the most part, could pay for any such items only with cash. For even “[a]s credit purchasing became the currency” of postwar America, women found that “store credit cards [and] national credit cards . . . all systematically discriminated against women, favoring single men over single women and

¹⁸² In her article “The Elusive/Ubiquitous Representation of Rape: A Historical Survey of Rape in U. S. Film, 1903-1972” (*Cinema Journal* 41, No. 1, Fall 2001), Sarah Projansky erroneously attributes Laura’s rape-worthiness to “sometimes not wearing panties” (70). Laura, however, ALWAYS wears panties--her assaulter’s post-rape possession of them, in fact, proves his guilt.

insisting that a married woman's husband be the legal holder of any credit account."¹⁸³ In consideration, then, of the postwar woman's comparatively limited financial resources, one must conclude that she had to choose carefully before she purchased any of the wide variety of beauty enhancers available. Indeed, a she could spend all of her discretionary income on foundation garments alone, for they came in a plentiful range of colors like "pale pink, blue, beige, green, yellow, lavender, and white." In addition, undergarments also came in a vast array of styles to complement a woman's outer garments. The postwar woman's potential outlay on undergarments, then, could increase exponentially when one considers the limitless permutations possible if, in accordance with advertisers' instructions, she bought bras and girdles in the color that matched and the style that enhanced each of the outfits in her closet. In an advertisement representative of several manufacturers', for example, Formfit urges the female consumer to own "the right bra and girdle for each costume in your closet. . . and for each of your fashion needs" (emphasis in the original). As other advertisements make clear, "each costume in your closet" is an all-inclusive phrase that does not permit the exception of even leisure, active, or swim wear. Indeed, in an advertisement for Talon zippers, the zippers themselves remain unseen, for as the advertisement's captions reveal, the zippers are touted for their ability to remain invisibly embedded in the various foundation garments the four models purportedly wear beneath their different outfits. One of the models, for example, depends on the "one-and-only Talon zipper" to close the pantie girdle required beneath "[c]lothes that play or lounge--like the . . . skin-tight pants" she is wearing. Yet even if a woman's "play or lounge[wear]" consisted of Bermuda shorts rather than skin-tight pants, the former would still require the buttressing of a pantie girdle--preferably, one that, an ad claims, "can't ride up--ever" Moreover, despite the

¹⁸³ Cohen, 147.

previously-described underwear-mimicking constraints built into postwar bathing suits, they apparently required foundation garments as well, for a model depicted in another ad would “never, ever slip . . . into a bathing suit . . . without first slipping into a Playtex panty brief!” As a result of these inhibiting garments, then, women, as the advertisements make clear, could not enjoy physical team sports like baseball, basketball, or soccer. Indeed, the reactions of contemporary women to such undergarments indicate their inhibiting severity. For the actresses appearing in “Mad Men,” AMC’s series set in the early 1960s world of a Madison Avenue corporate advertising firm, “the constricting garments . . . [were] unsettl[ing]. . . . Everything changed: their posture, their walk--even their breathing. . . . [W]hen [they] put the girdles on . . . [they wondered] “How am I going to work?”¹⁸⁴ This resulting impairment in respiration, then, so limited the athletic spectrum for women that, as advertisements show, they could dabble only in the most decorous, individual-oriented sports, like tennis, golf, and swimming. Besides denying women the supportive group dynamic that men experienced in sports, business, and the military, the limited physical mobility of females’ individually-oriented sports generated a similar constraint in their psychic potential, for, as Pierre Bourdieu observes, “the intensive practice of [the then-male preserve] of sport leads to a profound transformation of the subjective and objective experience of the body . . . it is no longer a thing . . . to be looked at [as the postwar woman’s was; rather] . . . it becomes a body for oneself . . . an active and acting body.”¹⁸⁵

As noted previously, girdles were posited as such necessities that they, as well as brassieres, were newly categorized as “foundation garments” in order to indicate their status as a

¹⁸⁴ Rosa Colucci, “AMC Series Mines Classic Undergarments to Achieve Look,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 21 July 2008, C1-C2.

¹⁸⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, Masculine Domination, Transl. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 67.

“fundamental need.”¹⁸⁶ Ironically, though, it was during wartime rather than the postwar period that corsets were officially rather than commercially designated as a fundamental need, for women who were “required to do ‘men’s work’ and to stand for long hours at factory benches were vocal about the fact that they now needed good corsetry more than ever for physical support.”¹⁸⁷ Indeed, Miss Mary Anderson, Director of the Woman’s Bureau of the Department of Labor, declared corsets to be essential to the performance of woman’s tasks in the war effort, pointing out that fatigue was the main reason why women frequently left their war jobs. To provide good corsets, which would reduce fatigue, was therefore “necessary to the vigorous maintenance of the war effort.”¹⁸⁸

After the war, however, women were guided off the factory floor and back into the home or into business offices in order to free up the higher-paying factory jobs for returning male war veterans. Fundamentally, then, a woman no longer needed a corset. In any case, since the word itself was now felt to “sound harsh and to be associated with too harsh a garment,” the “corset” was euphemistically renamed a “girdle,” itself “an ancient terms for any light, external waist-belt.”¹⁸⁹ Indeed, having thus posited the girdle as a necessity via its new categorical nomenclature, advertisers instead focused on the girdle’s ability to reshape the woman into a postwar male’s ideal by “lifting,” “flattening,” or “drawing in [the] tummy,” or by “eas[ing] in those unfashionable two inches.”¹⁹⁰ In addition, the girdles were uncomfortable. The early rubber or latex versions, for example, stretched only horizontally, so women constantly tugged to keep them in place. The later spandex girdles left painful welts on the skin. In the words of

¹⁸⁶ Kunzle, 270.

¹⁸⁷ Ewing, 113.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸⁹ Kunzle, 270.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 274.

Audrey Smaltz, an early girdle model for Lane Bryant, “ ‘You scratched yourself for a half hour after taking your girdle off.’ ”¹⁹¹ Yet despite this inconvenience, discomfort, and expense, women did indeed have a fundamental need for the new foundation garments. For marriage--and thus the postwar dream of suburban home and family--was impossible unless a woman could make herself sufficiently desirable to attract the husband necessary to realize such dream. Thus, “the dependence of marriage on sexual attractiveness and excitement gave both men and the mass media more influence over standards of [female] beauty” that women tried to fulfill.¹⁹² For, as noted previously in this chapter, marriage was a most essential institution in postwar America: those who remained unmarried were culturally pathologized, socially marginalized, and financially penalized, while those who did marry and form families were the beneficiaries of federally sponsored financial advantages and were perceived not only as the patriotic first line of defense against communist infiltration but also as the praiseworthy producers of strong, resolute, offspring who would deftly negotiate the apocalyptic possibilities of the nuclear future. It is not surprising, then, that in postwar America, according to one study, only 9 percent of the respondents believed that an unmarried person could be happy.

Because women’s opportunity to experience the postwar American dream thus depended largely on their appearance, the marketplace offered a variety of merchandise with which women could reconstruct their bodies in accordance with male- and media-imposed standards of beauty. Besides foundation garments, for example, women could also avail themselves of other body-enhancing devices: “exercise programs, slimming cures, diets, thigh reducers, bust developers, and expensive paraphernalia of beauty and figure salons that were all vigorously peddled in the

¹⁹¹ Quoted in Bressler, 88.

¹⁹² Coontz, 96.

women's magazines."¹⁹³ Thus, if Don Slater is accurate in his description of consumerism as “ ‘a privileged site of autonomy, meaning, subjectivity, privacy and freedom’ ” as well as a site of “ ‘strategic action by dominating institutions,’ “ then only the latter site applied to the conventionally aspiring postwar woman, much of whose consumerism was driven by the need to make herself sufficiently desirable to attract and keep the husband who could provide access to the containment culture ideal of suburban home and family.¹⁹⁴

Thus, despite containment culture's insistence on an idealized female body, postwar advertisements reveal that the way for a woman to achieve such a body was to confine it in rubber rather than liberate it via sports and exercise. Indeed, the few advertisements touting weight reduction strategies emphasize the lack of physical exertion required. According to an advertisement, for example, The Stauffer Home Plan relies on “passive exercise” rather than the “violent” kind that involves “exhausting bouts . . . [of] huffing [and] puffing . . . at the gymnasium.” Indeed, the effortless efficacy of the Stauffer Home Plan is borne out by the classically draped model reclining languidly on a chaise lounge. Her counterpart in a Relax-A-cizor advertisement assumes a similarly reclining position, but her animated smile shows that she is exuberant about the “delightful new kind of reducing exercise that requires NO EFFORT!” Despite the extensive amount of text in each advertisement, however, neither one clearly identifies the nature or mechanisms of the weight-reducing apparatus, but both advertisements stress the lack of work required on the part of the user. And while the Stauffer Home Plan substantiates its claims of efficacy with a generalized reference to “all kinds of accolades and endorsements” it has received, the Relax-A-cizor includes abbreviated endorsements from users

¹⁹³ Kunzle, 270.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Sarah Berry, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 184.

identified only by their initials: “ ‘4 inches removed from abdomen’--Mrs. M. F.” The questionable nature of these endorsements recalls those employed by the Corset and Brassiere Association of America in their previously discussed publication Foundations for Fashion, which identified corsetry’s two basic functions--”to improve appearance and to safeguard health”--and substantiated the latter claim via overwhelmingly positive responses to “[q]ueries [that concerned the healthful affects of undergarments and that were] directed to medical . . . authorities and personnel directors . . . of . . . stores . . . employing large numbers of women.”¹⁹⁵ On a subsequent page, moreover, Foundations for Fashion further substantiates the healthful function of female undergarments, for it makes the following claim: “The average woman does not use her muscles well or keep them strong enough through exercise, therefore she profits by wearing foundations that help to keep the muscles in good tone.”¹⁹⁶ Thus, even if the postwar woman could have conceived of vigorous forms of exercise rather than the laconic versions endorsed by Stauffer Home Plan and Relax-A-cizor, she would still have confronted a fairly impenetrable paradox: inhibiting undergarments are the antidote to lack of exercise, but women cannot exercise because of their inhibiting undergarments.

As an alternative to passive exercise, one advertisement touted the “world-famous beauty authority. . . Helena Rubenstein,” who offered Reduce-Aid tablets “for permanent weight control.” The advertisement for this product depicts a slightly overweight woman in a plaid dress checking in at a hotel’s front desk, while a svelte woman, wearing a petite-sized version of the same dress, checks out. The male clerk behind the desk raises his eyebrows and uses his hand to cover his smile of amusement at the larger woman’s discomfiture in finding herself thus juxtaposed with a similarly-clad but slimmer female. The larger woman’s dismay, then, reveals

¹⁹⁵ Foundations, 4B, 3B.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21A.

that, essentially, she is doing exactly what the smirking male clerk is doing: unfavorably comparing her larger body to the other woman's slimmer one. Thus, in Anke Gleber's terms, the larger woman--like the insecurely figure-conscious female audience--has "internalized . . . criteria of male evaluation[, which she then uses to assess] . . . the other woman's image."¹⁹⁷ Females similarly internalize a critical male gaze in a scene from Oklahoma! (Fred Zinnemann, 1955) when the young, marriageable female characters "embrace the cult of woman's own bodies and appearances."¹⁹⁸ Specifically, in a pre-box-social primping with her female friends, all of whom have divested themselves of their outer clothing and wear only their lacy and constraining undergarments, the heroine Laurey sings "Many a New Day." Composers Rodgers and Hammerstein had intended the song as "just a song," but choreographer Agnes DeMille created an accompanying dance, for she viewed the latter as "a chance to expand on one of her favorite subjects: young, innocent girls on the brink of womanhood, getting dressed for a picnic, silly and self-absorbed and charming."¹⁹⁹ In fact, though, the young girls' choreographed "self-absor[ption]" somewhat belies the anthem of female romantic independence that they sing and dance to. For their stylized poses in front of mirrors suggests what Gleber terms a "competitive exchange of the gaze . . . [in which] each of its female participants[, using her] . . . internalized . . . criteria of male evaluation[, assesses] . . . the other woman's image."²⁰⁰

Indeed, two advertisements for Playtex girdles clearly assume that their female audience has internalized a critical male gaze. The model in each advertisement, for example, discreetly

¹⁹⁷ Anke Gleber, "Women on the Screens and Streets of Modernity: In Search of the Female Flaneur," in The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography, ed. Dudley Andrew (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 74-5.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁹⁹ Carol Eastman, No Intermissions: The Life of Agnes B. DeMille (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1996), 204.

²⁰⁰ Gleber, 74-5.

turns her back to the viewer in order to conceal her naked breasts. The titillating nature of these poses, then, might initially be construed as an address to a heterosexual male voyeur, a possibility that is further reinforced by the advertisements' mildly salacious opening gambits: "The naked truth about the girl next door! She's the girl of many charms and one very important secret. She's the girl with a come-hither look and a come-hither figure"; "The naked truth about the girl in Stateroom M-68! She's the girl you wonder about . . . and men dream about. She's always on the go . . . and very easy on the eye." As the remaining text makes clear, though, the advertisements' intended audience is not the male but rather the woman who has internalized his female-assessing gaze. For each of the captions reassures the uneasy female viewer that the model was not born with the lovely figure she displays but rather has achieved it just as the female viewer can: by wearing the Playtex girdle, whose perforated white rubber encases the model's otherwise naked body and thereby reduces the possibility that it will become an object of delectation for the male voyeur. Besides implicitly acknowledging female viewers who automatically and unknowingly regard themselves and each other through a critical male gaze, the two Playtex advertisements also demonstrate the truth of Gleber's observation that as a woman's gaze "loses its potential for attentive autonomy toward the exterior world, she turns to invest it rather into the image value of her own appearance."²⁰¹ For the exterior horizons suggested by the cityscape of one advertisement and the ocean view of the other seem to represent, within the context of containment culture ideology, not the possibility of psychic or even geographic exploration but rather the luxurious accouterments--a penthouse with a panoramic city-skyline view; an ocean liner cruise in first-class accommodations--that become available to the woman who achieves a male-pleasing figure by encasing her body in rubber.

²⁰¹ Gleber, 75.

Thus, in light of this understanding of the female's self-agonizing, exploration-avoiding gaze, the model's glimpse of the ocean's expanse through the cabin's porthole is not an "attentive [gaze] . . . toward the exterior world" but rather a reassuring reflection on the prizes won by virtue of an "invest[ment] . . . in . . . the image value of her own appearance." In essence, then, the ship's porthole becomes a mirror, and the woman's window on the world is her looking glass. And, as John Berger explains, "the function of the mirror [in a picture] was to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight."²⁰² In accordance with Berger's reasoning, then, the male-dominated ad agencies have contrived to make females doubly complicit in their own objectification and in their internalization of the critical male gaze. For the females on view gaze out of their respective apertures and thereby into their metaphorical mirrors, while the female viewer yearns to have her own body mirror theirs.

An advertising campaign for Maidenform Bras, however, may have inspired some female consumers to envision a larger world, for in a publicity campaign the manufacturer began offering the public cash prizes for the best fill-ins for Maidenform's adaptable slogan, "I dreamed I (fill in the blank) in my Maidenform bra." Advertisements depicted the various dreams inspired by the Maidenform Bra: "I dreamed [that] . . . in my Maidenform bra . . . I was an International Figure . . . [;] . . . had Spring Fever[;] . . . was a Work of Art[;] . . . was Venus de Milo[;] . . . was a designing woman[;] . . . was Twins[;] . . . went back to school." Unfortunately, though, these various advertisements fail to indicate whether the captioned dream is the creation of "ad men" or of a female contest entrant.²⁰³ But with respect to the "dream" campaign as a whole, Vance Packard supplies the following background:

²⁰² John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 51.

²⁰³ Packard, 86.

The ad men themselves argued about the wisdom of [the Maidenform ad's depicting, within a crowd of normally dressed people, a model fully dressed except that she wore only a bra above the waist; specifically, they worried about] . . . the deep-down effect it had on women seeing it. Some were convinced, after talking with their psychological consultants, that the scene depicted would simply produce an anxiety state in women since it represented a common oneiric, or dream, expression of the neurotic anxieties experienced by many women. Others in the trade, however, became convinced after checking with their psychologists that the ad was sound because the wish to appear naked or scantily clad in a crowd is 'present in all of us' and 'represents a beautiful example of wish fulfillment.'²⁰⁴

Yet despite women's "neurotic anxieties" and the "ad men['s]" concerns, Maidenform nevertheless asked their female consumers to consider and submit their fantasies for possible publication. The fact that they did so implicitly recognizes not only female agency but also the dissemination-worthiness of its creativity. Also, by positing consumer merchandise as the inspiration for the dream, Maidenform performs an act of enablement similar to the one performed in *Oklahoma!* by Ali Hakim, the frontier peddler who sells "not only ribbons, notions, and eggbeaters but also dreams and magic."²⁰⁵ Drumming up business, he asks, "Don't anybody want to buy something? How about you Miss Laurey? Must be wanting something--a pretty young girl like you." As Laurey indulges in a "reverie of consumption," she articulates her desires in an increasingly fervent outpouring of unfulfilled yearning:²⁰⁶

Course I want sumpin. Want a buckle made outa shiny silver to fasten onto my shoes! Want a dress with lace. Want perfume, wanta be purty, wanta smell like a honeysuckle vine! . . . Want things I've heard of and never had before—a . . . buggy, a cut-glass sugar bowl. Want things I can't tell you about—not only to things to look at and hold in your hands. Things to happen to you. Things so

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Andrea Most, " 'We Know We Belong to the Land': The Theatricality of Assimilation in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*", *PMLA* 113, no. 1 (January 1998), 84.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

nice, if they ever did happen to you, yer heart ud quit beatin'. You'd fall down dead!

As Laurey's yearnings intensify, the objects of her desire become less specific and more intangible; they graduate, for example, from clearly-defined feminine accouterments--silver buckle, lacy dress, honeysuckle perfume--to unidentified, heart-stopping happenings. Undaunted by the tall order she has given him, Ali sells Laurey a bottle of "The Elixir of Egypt," with the assurance that it will help her to "see everything clear." True to his promise, the elixir, with its hallucinogenic affects, gives rise to the dream ballet entitled "Laurey Makes up Her Mind." Perhaps like Laurey's, then, the fantasies of Maidenform's female consumer evolve from an initial "reverie of consumption" wherein a brassiere--the "most advertised item of clothing" in the postwar era--rather than an elixir ultimately inspires dreams not of further consumption but rather of a larger world.²⁰⁷ Although not the "exterior world" that Gleber valorizes, this inner world is one whose dreamed possibilities are informed not only by the woman's culturally entrenched "invest[ment] . . . in . . . the image value of her own appearance"--as "a work of art" or as "twins," who function as a vanity mirror for each other and who enjoy double the consumer-purchasing power and double the sexual objectification--but also by her incipiently transgressive vision of an uncontained body--one that breaks free from the domestic sphere to become "an international figure" or that opens itself up to the carnivalesque abandon inspired by "spring fever" or, in Sylvia Hunter's case, "A Summer Place."

Similarly, the Maidenform Venus de Milo arguably represents a more empowered and less-objectified female than the original work of art. For even though the latter boasts a semi-naked body that can thus be perceived as transgressively open, it is also that very semi-nudity

²⁰⁷ Doreen Caldwell, And All Was Revealed: Ladies' Underwear 1907-1980 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 88.

that objectifies her. Through the ravages of time, moreover, the original Venus has lost both arms, whereas the Maidenform Venus is sufficiently “armed” to pat the head of the diminutive and dis-armed male statue over whom she towers, albeit gently rather than threateningly. A similar ambivalence regarding female containment-versus-agency informs the International Figure, who breaks free of her domestic confines only to become an international object of the male gaze, and the designing woman, who uses her entrepreneurial skills to create outfits that will further objectify women. Even the Maidenform woman who daringly dreams of going “back to school,” in fact, seems not to see education as a pathway to self-fulfillment and independence but rather as a site where she can indulge in self-objectifying consumerism, as indicated by the blackboard’s notation that “E.B. loves M.F. [MaidenForm]”; in back-to-school clothes depicted in the Vogue magazine that accompanies her schoolbooks; and in customized student accessories like the monogrammed lunch box at her feet. Presumably the apple beside the lunch box will be used to win favor with her instructor, since her mathematical skills will not, as shown by the notation within her notebook that “ $2 + 2 = 5$.” Indeed, the advertisement’s caption seems to indicate that this woman’s non-dream counterparts--that is, young women still or already in school--similarly feel that rather than a place for education, school is instead an occasion to mount a fashion parade in order to attract males. And their illustrated success in this regard indicates the complimentary--and emulation-worthy--nature of the advertisement’s caption: “The[se women]. . . never lack dates except in History.” Thus, in accordance with the previously-discussed reasons for female college enrollment, this advertisement’s caption might more accurately read: “I dreamed that in my Maidenform bra I went back to school to find a college-educated husband who will insure my entry into affluent domesticity; to become an

interesting wife for my college-educated husband; and/or to learn how to be an expert homemaker [despite my lack of skill in mathematics] for my college-educated husband.”

Indeed, advertisements began addressing not only adult females but pubescent ones as well. For in the burgeoning postwar economy that first identified and marketed to a teenage demographic, padded bras were advertised as fundamental need for even the adolescent female. Indeed, “[t]he growing number of affluent teenagers in the [postwar] United States provided a new market for lingerie manufacturers, and in 1956, the first exclusively teenage lingerie fashions featured training bras--soft, cupless, wireless versions specifically designed for overeager preteens.”²⁰⁸ The fact that these preteens were overeager indicates that they had been successfully interpellated into the containment culture narrative that young women who submit their breasts to a regimen of “training”--with all its militaristic overtones--will be more attractive to the men who can fulfill for them the postwar dream of suburban domesticity. Indeed, female adolescents’ focus on breast and breast size became so extreme, Cosmopolitan reported in 1956, that “there was little surprise in psychological circles when a teenage girl just recently committed suicide because she was flat-chested.”²⁰⁹ But anxiety about breast size was not limited only to teenage girls, for “a disease dubbed ‘micromastia’ (meaning ‘small breasts’) was on the rise by the 1950s, although strangely enough it had not existed in the 1920s and 1930s when breast ideals were very different and bandeaux . . . were used to suppress rather than increase the breasts’ profile.”²¹⁰

But these nightmarish results of enculturation-via-brassiere remained outside the purview of the “dreaming” Maidenform model. So too did the possibility that the Maidenform bra--or

²⁰⁸ Bressler, 47.

²⁰⁹ Quoted in Caroline Cox, Lingerie: A Lexicon of Style (London: Scriptum Editions, 2001), 60.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

any bra, for that matter--would follow the natural shape of a woman's breasts. Indeed, the contrived and unnatural contours of the Maidenform bra subjected the female's breasts to extreme reconfiguration. But to what end? The answer to this question requires a consideration of what the female breast signified, or was configured to signify, in postwar culture. For rather than a site of soft comfort and pleasure, the postwar breast would appear at first glance to suggest mammaries-as-weapons by virtue of the pointed brassiere cups that encased them. In Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho (1960), for example, Marion Crane (Janet Leigh), after a lunchtime tryst in a hotel, reclines on her back in bed while her breasts essentially remain in an upright position, encased as they are in the projectiles that constitute the cups of her brassiere. In Vertigo (1958), another Hitchcock film, Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes) explains how this type of uplift is achieved. For as part of her job as a commercial artist, Midge sketches a brassiere, whose "revolutionary" features, she explains, were designed by "an aircraft engineer" in accordance with "the principle of the cantilever bridge." Midge thus alludes to the extra-diegetic scandal caused by The Outlaw, a film completed in 1941 but withheld from general public release until 1946. The film "was condemned by the Catholic Legion of Decency for almost a decade, denounced in pulpits from coast to coast, and banned by state and municipal censorship boards--and it broke box-office records wherever it was allowed to play²¹¹--and all because of the special "metallic bra" designed for, and worn by, the film's heroine Rio, portrayed by Jane Russell.²¹² Since the buxom Russell "had complained that bras either squashed her . . . breasts too tightly or [caused her to] 'jiggle' [by failing to] . . . give her enough support, . . . multi-millionaire Howard Hughes, who produced [and ultimately directed] the film, . . . used his

²¹¹ Gregory D. Black, The Catholic Crusade against the Movies, 1940-1975 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 31. For a more complete and colorful account of The Outlaw's encounters with film censorship, see pp. 31-43 of this book.

²¹² Bressler, 46.

engineering skills, [acquired from his experience in wartime] aircraft development, to construct a cantilevered bra” that would be capable of upholding Russell’s breasts with optimal thrust.²¹³

Similarly interested in airplanes, Harvey Earl was a top designer at General Motors, where he created for himself the LeSabre, “a highly futuristic car” that was essentially an automotive version of the F-86 Sabre jet plane.²¹⁴ Thus inspired by aircraft design, postwar Detroit affixed nose-cone-like appendages to its automobiles in the form of twin, protruding, chrome bumperettes that resembled female breasts or the projectile-shaped bras that encased them. Indeed, Frederick’s of Hollywood’s created a “Cadillac” bra, so called because the female consumer “came in looking like a Chevy and left looking like a Cadillac.”²¹⁵ Moreover, advertisements for the upscale Cadillac invariably featured not only bumperettes but also females or female signifiers. One automobile advertisement, for example, juxtaposes a Cadillac’s hood ornament with a woman’s diamond necklace. And another indicates that the model’s gown is “designed by Hattie Carnegie expressly for the Cadillac Convertible,” while yet another notes that the model’s “ensemble [is] designed by Jacques Fath expressly for the Cadillac 60 Special.” Thus inscribed within the top-of-the-line luxe that the Cadillac promises, the female comes to represent simply another high-priced accessory for the upwardly-mobile, status-seeking male.

What the female’s breasts represent, however, would appear to be at odds with the theory that, following the ravages of World War II, “the hypertrophied female breast function[ed] . . . as a sort of nourishing and consoling pillow.”²¹⁶ For during the postwar years, the female breast quite literally ceased to serve as a source of nourishment, for in most cases, bottle-feeding of infants replaced breast-feeding. Moreover, while “the French aimed for the apple shape and

²¹³ Cox, 55.

²¹⁴ Halberstam, 124.

²¹⁵ Cox, 58.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

softly padded their bras with foam rubber, the Americans turned breasts into warheads,” constructing and reinforcing conical bust cups, whose pointed tips, referred to as “torpedoes,” seemed almost to penetrate the tight sweaters then in vogue.²¹⁷ The less-well-endowed could rely upon false-facsimiles such as foam rubber inserts; or bras with “push-up” features or padding; or bras like “The Equalizer,” a bra--not a vaporizing gun, as its formidable name suggests--whose cups were whirlpool stitched with latex foam in order to create “cunningly concealed contours” for that “All, Oh so feminine American look.”²¹⁸ This postwar positing of brassieres as nationalistic and militaristic emblems resonates as an echo of wartime priorities when, to meet the needs of the military, lingerie factories used raw materials--such as cotton and rubber--for the manufacture of life belts, distress flags, and parachutes rather than for the production of undergarments. During the course of World War II, for example, Gossard, a bra factory in England, “churned out 348 experimental kites, 4,113 convoy balloons, 19,000 life belts, 73,500 sails, 34,087 distress flags, 26,095 mandropper parachute repairs, 98,700 dinghies, and 639,306 parachutes.”²¹⁹ Moreover, in *Operation Petticoat* (Blake Edwards, 1959), the girdle serves as militaristic raw material when Major Edna Heywood (Virginia Gregg) improvises a World War II submarine engine’s valve spring with her girdle. Stretched between two opposing horizontal pistons, the girdle—particularly that portion of it designed to cover the pubic area—necessarily contracts and expands in a comic burlesque of coitus that Chief Machinist’s Mate Sam Tostin (Arthur O’Connell) deems “undecent.” The postwar brassiere’s militaristic associations also arise, in part, from the research of Frederick Mellinger, who based his *Frederick’s of Hollywood’s* collection of pointed, circular-stitched brassieres on input from his

²¹⁷ Bressler, 46.

²¹⁸ Caldwell, 88.

²¹⁹ Bardey, 119-120.

former comrades-in-arms, whose opinions he solicited to see what they found alluring in women and women's underwear. Perhaps this male preference for projectile-shaped breasts arose from or manifested itself in "nose art," the term for painted figures of "scantly dressed, buxom, and gorgeous girls" with which wartime pilots decorated the similarly projectile-shaped nose cones of their aircraft.²²⁰ Indeed, in the film Flower Drum Song (Henry Koster, 1961), even a conservative Chinese elder implicitly recognizes the significance to postwar America of the projectile-like bustline when he reassures his newly immigrated friend about the assimilation potential of falsies:

Dr. Li . (examining the falsies sewn into his daughter's gown). What are these things for?

Wang. All of the women here [in America] have them.

Dr. Li. At home [in China] our daughters are taught to strap themselves in.

Wang. Here, they let themselves out.

Dr. Li. Maybe they serve to keep people away from them in crowds.

Wang. Whatever they're for, they all wear them in the United States. Here it is a symbol, like the American Eagle.

As American as the bald eagle and with similar martial resonances, then, the postwar brassiere essentially effaced the woman's work of breast-feeding in favor of the man's work of waging war. Thus reconfigured from a gynocentric signifier to a phallic one, the postwar female breast served as the signifier of a victorious-- and largely male--American superpower.

Girdles and bras cover the porous and fluid-producing portions of the female body: nipples with the capacity to lactate and a vagina open to penetration, secretion, and menstruation. With respect to the latter function, many women during World War II opted for the Tampax tampon, which such wartime popularity gthat in March 1946, on the occasion of the company's

²²⁰ Stephen E. Ambrose, The Wild Blue: The Men and Boys Who Flew the B-24s over Germany (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 173.

tenth anniversary, its president wrote in his report to stockholders: “We . . . can point with pardonable pride to the fact that Tampax has . . . become one of the best known names in the field of feminine hygiene.”²²¹ Requiring less cotton than external pads as well as fewer freight cars for shipping, “tampons . . . freed up raw materials and transportation for the war effort.”²²² Moreover, women who left their homes for military service or factory work found tampons more comfortable and convenient than external pads and more sanitary as well, since their internal use eliminated odor-causing exposure to air. Tampax’s practical achievements notwithstanding, however, the “red flood” of menstruation, according to German sociologist Klaus Theweleit, evoked in paramilitary soldiers of the Weimar Republic disturbing associations with “currents” of struggle and civil war.²²³ In order to “[w]ard . . . [o]ff . . . [this r]ed . . . [f]lood,” Theweleit continues, the male resorts to “stiffening, . . . closing himself off [in order] to form a ‘discrete entity.’ He [thereby] defends himself with a kind of sustained erection of his body.”²²⁴ In addition to this rigidly sealed body-as-erect-phallus, another male defense against the female’s porous, seeping body is written into the laws of Orthodox Judaism, which essentially requires that a wife physically distance herself for a minimum of twelve days every menstrual cycle. She may end her quarantine only after she has immersed herself in “a *mikvah*, a ritual purification bath that cleanses away the [perceived] ‘impurity’ of the menstrual cycle.”²²⁵ As discussed previously, moreover, Mary Douglas argues that porous bodily boundaries, like the menstruating or non-menstruating vagina, can come to “represent . . . any . . . societ[al] . . . boundaries . . .

²²¹ “History of Tampax”http://www.pg.com/company/who_we_are/tampax_history.shtml (16 May 2009).

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1, *Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, Transl. Stephen Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 234, 237.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 244.

²²⁵ Lindsay Perkins, “Purity: A Feminist Evaluation of Jewish Menstrual Rituals,” 5 October 2007 [http://www.associatedcontent.com/pop_print.shtml\(18](http://www.associatedcontent.com/pop_print.shtml(18) May 2009).

[that] are threatened or precarious.”²²⁶ More particularly, Douglas argues that a threatened community’s concerns with political boundaries is displaced onto its ritualistic attention to the purity of bodily orifices. Though Douglas substantiates this argument by describing the operation of particular caste systems in India, I believe that her thesis applies with equal validity to postwar America’s concerns about the containment of communist infiltration and Russian world domination. These anxieties, I conclude, were enacted upon the postwar female body by virtue of the particular way in which undergarments secured its porous boundaries: by sculpturally and defensively sealing off the vagina against foreign penetration and by stylishly buttressing the breast with formidable facsimiles of offensive weaponry. Thus Inscribed within the apparatus and mechanisms of war, the postwar female body recalls Cynthia Enloe’s instructions: “To chart the spread of militarization requires a host of skills: [not only] the ability to read budgets and interpret bureaucratic euphemisms . . . but also the ability to understand the dynamics of . . . cinematic imagery and the economies of commercialized sex.”²²⁷ Essentially, then, both the girdle that defensively shielded the vagina from invasion and the bra that offensively armed the breasts for forward thrust inscribed the postwar female body within the newly arisen institution of the military-industrial complex.

²²⁶ Douglas, 15.

²²⁷ Enloe, 3.

4.0 PLAYTEX, PEROXIDE, PLAYMATE: MARILYN MONROE AND SEXUALITY, WHITENESS, AND CLASS

One of the women of the fifties who frequently refused to submit her body to sartorial or cultural regulation was Marilyn Monroe. Monroe's failure to wear a girdle, for example, represented a violation of postwar norms, as demonstrated in the previous chapter's discussion of Monroe in her panty-revealing, subway-grating moment in The Seven Year Itch (Billy Wilder, 1955) vis-à-vis the model in the girdle-revealing, Coney Island Fun House advertisement for Sarong undergarments. Yet the latter, although correctly encased within a girdle, nevertheless enjoys more freedom of expression than her predecessors in three earlier Sarong advertisements. For in each of these advertisements, a well-dressed female—handsomely conveyanced by plane, cruise ship, and horse-drawn carriage, respectively—exhibits open-mouthed dismay at the sight of her upblown, girdle-revealing skirt, even though others within viewing range do not look in her direction and thus do not witness her discomfiture. The Coney Island model, on the other hand, expresses open-mouthed delight at her dishabille, and she even shares this enjoyment with her male escort and a Fun House clown. Appearing in March 1956, a little less than a year after the premiere of The Seven Year Itch, this advertisement was the last to appear of all four Sarong ads under discussion, and since it shares the updraft action and the lighthearted mood of Monroe's subway grating pose in that film, one might reasonably conclude that the latter gave rise to the former. As the joyful Fun House model demonstrates, then, Monroe's famous display of her

transgressive girdlelessness may subsequently have granted a woman license to revel in, rather than be dismayed by or ashamed of, the physicality of her lower body, awash, as it is, in the cooling sensation of an upborn breeze and, to a modest extent, on unashamed display.

Yet even though Monroe dispensed with undergarments, she was nevertheless constrained and shaped, in part, by postwar understandings of sexuality that Richard Dyer discusses in his book *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* in a chapter devoted exclusively to Monroe. Early in his analysis of her star-text, Dyer explains, “I have wanted to situate . . . Monroe . . . in relation to the specific ways of understanding and feeling . . . sexual questions which were available in the . . . fifties . . . rather than in relation to what they mean in those terms now.”²²⁸ Accordingly, Dyer situates Monroe as an embodiment of the “particular definitions of sexuality . . . proselytized by . . . *Playboy*,” whose debut in December 1953 featured Marilyn Monroe as both cover girl and centerfold.²²⁹ As the latter, Monroe appeared nude in a photo that had been taken by Tom Kelley in 1948 and that had been used in the “Golden Dreams calendar” as well as several other calendars before its inclusion in *Playboy*.²³⁰ Reacting to the scandal surrounding the mass publication of a nude photograph deemed inappropriate to a Hollywood star of her magnitude, Monroe denied any feelings of shame or contrition. On the contrary, in a “classic dumb blonde one-liner,” Monroe maintained that, in fact, she was not naked during the photo shoot, for she “‘had the radio on.’”²³¹ Monroe’s ability to thus defuse this potentially career-ending episode with prelapsarian openness and humorous naivete uniquely enables her, Dyer argues, to “define and justify . . . [an un]repressed hetero]sexuality [that, in

²²⁸ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: MacMillan, 1986), 3.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

Playboy's view, would] bring nothing but beauty and happiness."²³² As a guarantor of such beauty and happiness, Monroe embodies, boasts 20th Century Fox, " 'the ideal playmate,' " suggesting as she does " 'a purity of sexual delight,' " according to Diana Trilling, and the " 'luscious[ness of] . . . strawberries and cream,' " in the words of the London Evening News.²³³ Norman Mailer, moreover, rhapsodizes Monroe's body as " 'a sweet peach bursting before one's eyes [promising sex like] ice cream[--without] . . . difficult[y,] danger . . . [or] menace.' "²³⁴ Thus posited as sweet, ripe, melting, and soft, Monroe-as-playmate represents, in Dyer's words, "an escape from the threat posed by female sexuality."²³⁵ Dyer identifies the nature of this threat by alluding to a 1957 Readers' Digest article that claims: " 'What Every Husband Needs is, simply, good sex uncomplicated by the worry of satisfying his woman.' "²³⁶ In Dyer's analysis, then, the "threat posed by female sexuality" and defused by Monroe is the female demand for sexual satisfaction. But by thus identifying this female-imposed threat without further inquiry, Dyer fails to consider the wider spectrum of fifties' ideology concerning women and sexuality. Directly as a result of this omission, furthermore, Dyer's analysis of Monroe's star-text fails to fully address significant factors that together would galvanize a more comprehensive achievement of Dyer's explicitly stated desire "to situate . . . Monroe . . . in relation to the specific ways of understanding and feeling . . . sexual questions which were available in the . . . fifties."²³⁷ In particular, these underexamined yet nevertheless significant

²³² Ibid., 32, 31.

²³³ Quoted in Ibid., 28, 32.

²³⁴ Quoted in Ibid., 42.

²³⁵ Ibid., 42.

²³⁶ Hannah Lees, "What Every Husband Needs," Reader's Digest (October 1957): 139; quoted in Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak. The Fifties: The Way We Really Were, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company), 158.

²³⁷ Dyer Heavenly, 3.

factors that resonate within the Marilyn Monroe star-text include issues of sexuality, physicality, whiteness, and social class.

One of the “sexual questions” under contention in the fifties was the issue of vaginal versus clitoral orgasms. Dyer, in fact, notes that although in 1953, Kinsey’s“ evidence pointed ineluctably to the clitoris as the organ of female sexual pleasure, . . . this evidence was systematically ignored in both the intensive media coverage of the report and in the therapeutic world of counselling,” which apparently continued to rely on Freud’s theories rather than on females’ felt experience.²³⁸ For, in Shere Hite’s words, “Freud was the founding father of vaginal orgasm. He theorized that the clitoral orgasm . . . was adolescent and that, upon puberty, . . . women should transfer the center of orgasm to the vagina[, which would presumably] . . . produce a . . . more mature orgasm than the clitoris.”²³⁹ Indeed, in their 1947 book Modern Woman: The Lost Sex, authors Marynia Farnham M. D. and Ferdinand Lundberg observe that the clitoral orgasm indicates a “lack of inner involvement [and] bespeak[s] . . . a very definite lack of acceptance of femininity[, since the clitoris is] completely external to the real genital apparatus of the female.”²⁴⁰ And although they acknowledge that women should enjoy making love, they also insist that “for the sexual act to be fully satisfactory to a woman she must, in the depths of her mind, desire deeply and utterly to be a mother If she does not so desire . . . it will be sensually unsatisfactory in many ways and will often fail to result in orgasm.”²⁴¹ In spite of their caveat, however, Farnham and Lundberg nevertheless admit that even a non-maternal

²³⁸ Ibid., 54.

²³⁹ Shere Hite, Women as Revolutionary Agents of Change: The Hite Report and Beyond (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 43.

²⁴⁰ Marynia Farnham M. D. and Ferdinand Lundberg, Modern Woman: The Lost Sex (New York, 1947), 266; quoted in Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak. The Fifties: The Way We Really Were, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company), 158.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

woman may experience sexual satisfaction from intercourse, but should she do so, they deem the woman herself “masculine-aggressive” and her orgasm “malicious.”²⁴² Although in 1966, Masters and Johnson reaffirmed Kinsey’s largely ignored findings that “sexual arousal in the female . . . [is] attribu[table in] . . . large part . . . [not to the stimulation of the vagina but rather] to direct or indirect stimulation of the clitoris,” the research and debate on this subject continued into the 1970s.²⁴³ For example, in a 1973 publication of the results of his scientific study, Seymour Fisher found “that about 49 percent of the women assigned high importance to clitoral stimulation in achieving orgasm, while only about 12 percent attributed equally high importance to vaginal stimulation.”²⁴⁴ In general, he concluded not only that “the overall trend is for clitoral to be experienced as contributing more to orgasm achievement than vaginal” but also that “the greater a woman’s clitoral preference, the more likely she is to experience orgasm as having an ecstatic quality.”²⁴⁵ Two years previously, however, a core group of eleven women had compiled into book form a series of papers they had written as a course for women on women and their bodies. Entitled Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book by and For Women, the book unequivocally stated “To reach orgasm a woman needs continuous, effective stimulation of the clitoris . . . before intercourse, and some [women] . . . need direct clitoral manipulation during intercourse.”²⁴⁶ Through the 1950s until at least the 1970s, then, the prevailing understanding of female orgasm not only posited the woman unable to achieve it as the immature, neurotic, unresponsive, and blameworthy sex partner but necessarily absolved her man of any responsibility for providing essential, non-vaginal stimulation. Thus, despite the implication in

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Seymour Fisher, Understanding the Female Orgasm (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), 97.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 99.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 104, 106.

²⁴⁶ The Boston Womens’ Health Book Collective, Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book By and For Women (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 45.

Reader's Digest that “every husband” worries about “satisfying his woman,” the postwar valorization of the vaginal orgasm essentially meant that a woman could expect satisfaction only if she could achieve it in the same uncomplicated way her husband achieved his: via an energetic repetition of vaginally-enclosed, penile thrusts. Consequently, Dyer’s claim--that part of Monroe’s playmate persona resulted from “formless aspects of her image . . . [suggesting a] “‘vaginal’ representation . . . [of] gaping . . . readiness” --fails to distinguish her as a sexually undemanding playmate, since every woman, regardless of body type, was essentially considered responsible for deriving pleasure exclusively from the vaginal stimulation that the male produced only in pursuit of his own sexual gratification.²⁴⁷

In addition, the Reader's Digest's implication that “every husband” worries about “satisfying his woman” seems not entirely supported by the evidence compiled in accordance with the Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS), a series of surveys conducted by University of Michigan psychologist E. Lowell Kelly, who periodically sent questionnaires to “600 white, middle-class men and women who formed families” during the forties and fifties.²⁴⁸ Largely as a result of contemporary dating mores that permitted noncoital forms of sexual activity between altar-bound couples as long as the woman prevented such activity from culminating in intercourse before the wedding night, early marriages became the rule. So, too, did sexually unfulfilled wives, some of whom articulated their unhappiness in their responses to the KLS questionnaires. One woman, for example, confided: “ ‘I believe that our practice of letting my fiance ejaculate into a handkerchief may have resulted in some frigidity on my part. I had accustomed myself to keep under control when he was so excited. To this day I have great

²⁴⁷ Dyer Heavenly, 58-9.

²⁴⁸ May, 11.

difficulty breaking this pattern.’ ”²⁴⁹ Indeed, the learned “frigidity” described by this respondent was apparently experienced by so many other women as well that Alfred Kinsey alludes to it in his 1953 report Sexual Behavior in the Human Female:

[E]arly experience . . . [is] importan[t] . . . in the establishment of habit and thoughts and attitudes which are very difficult to alter or counteract in later years. . . . When there are long years of abstinence and restraint, and an avoidance of physical contacts and emotional responses before marriage, acquired inhibitions may do such damage to the capacity to respond that it may take some years to get rid of them after marriage, if indeed they are ever dissipated.²⁵⁰

Kinsey’s identification of “acquired [sexual] inhibitions” thus demonstrates that the KLS respondent’s personal experience was representative of a more widespread phenomenon.

In the course of executing their responsibility to militantly resist premarital coitus, moreover, women learned not only to sublimate their sexual urges but also to subordinate their own sexual needs to those of their partners. As one KLS respondent explained, “ ‘My sexual experience being with my to-be husband succeeded in conditioning me to utter subservience to his satisfaction and he never thought mine could be other than automatic upon his (else I was ‘frigid’ or wrong somehow). And he is . . . a psychoanalyst! I remain as I was--unfulfilled.’ ”²⁵¹ Another KLS participant responded in a similar fashion: “ ‘I believe that a better understanding of woman’s nature on the part of [my husband] . . . could have helped [the sexual experience] considerably. After 17 years this understanding is still lacking’ ”²⁵² Emphatically, then, the experience of these women shows that their husbands, in fact, were receiving exactly what

²⁴⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁵⁰ Quoted in *May*, 128; first 3 ellipses are mine, fourth ellipsis is *May*’s.

²⁵¹ Quoted in *May*, 128; ellipsis inserted by *May*, emphasis in original.

²⁵² Quoted in *May* 129; ellipsis and first set of brackets inserted by *May*, second set by me.

Reader's' Digest identified as "Every Husband[']s Need": " 'good sex uncomplicated by the worry of satisfying his woman.' ”²⁵³

Indeed, only 66% of KLS wives experienced orgasm regularly. Yet nearly one in five of these women professed to enjoy sex in spite of their lack of orgasms. May attempts to explain this "apparent disjunction" by theorizing that since more women than men thought it "very important" that their sexual relationships be "closely bound up with love and affection" as evidenced by the verbal expressions of love deemed desirable by both the KLS women and men, then "many women found satisfaction in sex as an expression of closeness and affection, even if it did not provide physical release."²⁵⁴ In view, then, of this female self-conditioning to subordinate their own sexual needs to those of their husbands and to settle for affectionate words rather than physical release, Dyer's implicit identification of the sexually demanding female as "the threat posed by female sexuality" appears somewhat at odds with the actual experiences of the women and men interviewed in the Kelly Longitudinal Studies and the so-called Kinsey Report. Consequently, Dyer's positing of Monroe as an antidote to this debatable threat closes off other avenues of inquiry that consider Monroe's star-text in terms of other possible threats posed by female sexuality.

I propose, therefore, that the most immediate threat posed by female sexuality in the immediate postwar era was the woman's right of refusal; that is, her right to decline any sexual advance. At that time, even a married woman, unconstrained by postwar prohibitions against premarital sex, might refuse her husband's sexual overtures. According to prevailing attitude, though, this "inadequate . . . wife [who thus "failed to cater to [her husband's] . . . sexual needs .

²⁵³ Lees, 39; quoted in Miller, 158.

²⁵⁴ May, 132.

. . . [forced him to engage in] . . . outside affairs.”²⁵⁵ Similarly, if the husband experienced impotence, either his “wife . . . or . . . [his] mother was blamed.”²⁵⁶ Monroe, on the other hand, alleviates any male anxiety related to possible stand-offishness on her part, for as Dyer himself points out (but fails to relate to his “sexual threat” theory):

[Monroe’s] career . . . [can be understood] in terms of a series of moments in which she offered herself to the gaze of men--the Golden Dreams calendar [later reproduced as the aforementioned Playboy centerfold], . . . The Seven Year Itch subway gratings pose, shot before passing crowds in a Manhattan street, her appearances at premieres in revealing and fetishistic gowns, her final nude photo session with Bert Stern and nude scene for Something’s Got to Give All these were taken as done by Monroe, the person, at her own behest.²⁵⁷

In addition, the subway gratings pose to which Dyer refers was “blown up to an image fifty-two feet tall and installed in front of New York City’s Loew’s State Theatre to advertise the June 3, 1955 premiere” of The Seven Year Itch.²⁵⁸ Thus, Monroe’s apparently willing appearances in open and provocative poses and clothes posit her not as a threat who rebuffs male attention but rather as a playmate who invites it.

Furthermore, Monroe extends this invitation not only in static poses or contexts but also by means of her provocative locomotion. Dyer notes, for example, that her walk in Niagara (Henry Hathaway, 1953) is “a wiggle, invariably described as undulating, serpentine, squiggling, squirming, wriggling, a veritable thesaurus of terms connoting movement that cannot be determined (pinned down), that has no edges and boundaries.”²⁵⁹ Time’s film reviewer, moreover, contributes his own additions to this “veritable thesaurus” when he describes

²⁵⁵ Miller, 178 n. 21.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Dyer Heavenly, 50.

²⁵⁸ “Change of Scenery,” New York Times, 24 May 1955, 34.

²⁵⁹ Dyer Heavenly, 57.

Monroe's "eye-catching gait [as] . . . more tortile [i.e., twisted, coiled] and wambling [i.e., weaving, wobbling, rolling] than ever."²⁶⁰ More succinctly, in Some Like It Hot (Billy Wilder, 1959), "Daphne" (Jack Lemmon in female disguise) says, "She moves like jello on springs!" In addition, Dyer notes not only the "billowing, undulating" movement of Monroe's skirt as it catches the updraft from the subway grating in The Seven Year Itch but also "the low camera angle . . . in The Misfits [as it] . . . catches the pendulous swing of her breasts . . . [beneath] a loose spotted dress that holds her breasts in a softly moulding way, the antithesis of the hard-shaped, pointed breasts of the brassiered days."²⁶¹ Yet even when "the hard-shaped, pointed breasts of the brassiered days" prevailed, Monroe was wont to dispense with underwear. For example, in the black-and-white film Some Like It Hot, Monroe's character Sugar appears almost scandalously overexposed and undersupported. Frolicking among the Pullman berths of the train taking her and other members of an all-female band to Miami, Sugar wears a dark, sheer, flimsy, mid-thigh-length pegnour set that relies only on strategically positioned bits of embroidery and maribou to conceal the lowest portion of her breasts, her pubic area, and her buttocks. And though, in keeping with the film's Prohibition Era setting, she wears a neck-to-knee, chemise-style bathing suit on the beach, the outline of her nipples clearly shows through her costume. Finally, the backless, knee-length, skin-tight sheath Sugar wears at the film's end is a darker version of the one she wears when she attempts to "cure" Joe (Tony Curtis) of his falsely professed impotence. Only a sleeveless, transparent piece of mesh covers the area from her neck to just above her nipples, which are barely concealed by lace appliques. Since the deep decollete thus revealed offers no evidence of any built-in underwire, one surmises that only the stiff brocade of the rest of the sheath serves to prop up Monroe's breasts. By dispensing with a

²⁶⁰ Review of The Seven Year Itch, Time 13 June 1955, 100.

²⁶¹ Dyer Heavenly, 57.

girdle as well, moreover, Monroe not only makes possible her “tortile and wambling” gait but also renders provocative The Seven Year Itch’s subway grating pose, since the updraft that lifts Monroe’s skirt reveals not the prohibitive rubber encasement of a girdle but instead bare thighs that invitingly suggest the sexual portal located at their apex. In The Lingerie Book, author Mary Kennedy affirms, “There was simply no doubt about it. Marilyn didn’t wear a girdle and from the rear she looked fabulous.”²⁶² Kennedy, moreover, goes on to say that Monroe’s “front view was, in the early days of her career, covered with wire to satisfy the censors’ horror of jiggly breasts.”²⁶³ But by the time of her final film The Misfits (John Huston, 1961), Monroe’s breasts, as Dyer notes, were as unconstrained as her buttocks. In thus abandoning brassiere and girdle in a decade that newly classified both items as “foundation garments” in order to indicate their status as a woman’s “fundamental need,” Monroe transgressed postwar gender prohibitions in order to command male attention to her body with alluring suggestions of what it might look like beneath her clothes.

Though he fails to consider the significance of this aspect of Monroe’s sartorial transgression, Dyer uses Monroe’s unstable “jiggly[ness]” as evidence to support the metaphor he constructs regarding Monroe’s soft, quivering, moist, gaping body: “a representation . . . [of] vaginal orgasm, [it thereby] . . . implies penetration . . . [while] denying the autonomous sexuality of the clitoris.”²⁶⁴ Thus positing Monroe’s body as physically permeable, Dyer also points out its defenselessness, acknowledging that Monroe is not generally abused in films . . . [but] rather taken advantage of or humiliated.”²⁶⁵ Dyer supports this claim by citing not only the end of Bus Stop (Joshua Logan, 1956), in which Monroe’s character Cheri struggles to

²⁶² Mary Kennedy, The Lingerie Book (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), 12.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Dyer Heavenly, 52.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

escape the persistent suitor who lassoes her into marriage but also the seduction scene in Some Like It Hot, when Monroe's character Sugar attempts to remedy the falsely claimed impotence of Joe (Tony Curtis). While both Some Like It Hot and Bus Stop thus foreground Monroe's defenselessness and vulnerability by positing her as the sexual dupe and kidnapped bride-to-be, respectively, The Seven Year Itch goes much further by suggesting that The Girl's (Monroe's) resistance to sexual advances would not deter downstairs neighbor Richard Sheridan (Tom Ewell) from having sex with her. Depicted as reluctant to use force, Richard hesitates about enacting his sexual fantasies with The Girl only because he fears his vacationing wife may discover his rape-adultery. In fact, in the stage version of The Seven Year Itch, Richard conceives of himself as analogous to the patient who constitutes his psychiatrist-client's most famous case study, that of Gustav Meyerheim, a rapist. Richard, moreover, has approved for the published case study a book cover that, the psychiatrist wryly remarks, "mak[es] . . . Meyerheim's victim . . . resemble in a number of basic characteristics, Miss Marilyn Monroe."²⁶⁶ These references—to psychiatric patient Meyerheim as a rapist and to his victim as a Monroe look-alike—disturbingly encapsulate several postwar misapprehensions about rape. Meyerheim's status as a psychiatric patient, for example, seems to reflect the postwar understanding of rapists as "psychopaths" outside the norm, since "[r]egular men don't rape or need to rape."²⁶⁷ Yet despite his rape fantasy, Richard nevertheless qualifies as one of these "regular men . . . [who] do[esn't] . . . need to rape" because, in the ingeniously sexist Catch-22 of postwar logic, "[w]omen desire . . . rape[, so although they] . . . say no[,] . . . they really mean

²⁶⁶ George Axelrod, The Seven Year Itch, in Best American Plays—Fourth Series, 1951-1957, ed. John Gassner (New York: Crown Publishers, 1958), 519.

²⁶⁷ Bevacqua, 59.

yes.”²⁶⁸ This irrational resolution to the critical issue of female consent—to wit, a woman’s verbalized and/or demonstrated refusal nevertheless signifies her sexual desire for her assaulter—thus posits the conclusion “[t]here is no such thing as rape.”²⁶⁹ In his book American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War: Producing and Contesting Containment, 1947-1962, Bruce McConachie, discussing Stanley Kowalski’s rape of Blanche DuBois in the 1947 premiere of the Tennessee Williams scripted, Elia Kazan directed stage play A Streetcar Named Desire, observes that when newspaper reviewers—all of whom, it should be noted, were male—alluded to “the rape at all, they usually couched it in euphemism and evasion.”²⁷⁰ While McConachie attributes this reaction, in part, to casting choices--Marlon Brando (Stanley), who could elicit audience sympathy; Jessica Tandy (Blanche), who, at least to a commensurate degree, could not—he also notes that “[d]uring the war, the American public excused similar exploits by American . . . soldier-boy[s] . . . overseas.”²⁷¹ In view of the rape-related license discussed herein, however, I would venture to suggest that such “excuses” continued to exonerate the perpetrators of many domestic, peacetime “exploits” as well.

To cold war audiences, then, Richard avoids the taint of these rape-themed references, which nevertheless suggest Monroe’s vulnerability--not only to sexual trickery (Some Like It Hot) and physical abduction (Bus Stop) but also to forcible penetration (The Seven Year Itch). Indeed, Monroe is especially susceptible to the latter because of her failure to wear a girdle. As shown in the previously discussed juxtaposition of the girdle-clad model at Coney Island’s Fun

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Bruce McConachie, American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War: Producing and Contesting Containment, 1947-1962 (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003), 95.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 97. Chapter 5.0 discusses Brando’s breakthrough role in Streetcar in terms of the effect his skin-tight pants and torso-revealing T-shirts had on females who idolized him and males who emulated him. It is noteworthy, then, that Brando’s subversion of conservative, postwar dress codes started a trend whereas Monroe’s, at least to the same extent, did not.

House with the girdle-less Marilyn Monroe in The Seven Year Itch, the enclosed chastity of the former highlights the open sexuality of the latter. As a signifier of sexual prohibition, then, the girdle may thus be perceived not only as a metaphorical chastity belt but also as a symbolic defense against or persuasive proof of rape. Thus, as previously discussed, the failure of Anatomy of a Murder's Laura Manion (Lee Remick) to wear a girdle indicates that her unenclosed genitals are violable; consequently, she is deemed to have invited the rape perpetrated upon her. Monroe similarly positions herself as the victim of a crime for which the male perpetrator comfortably bears no responsibility, since, in accordance with postwar belief, she represents one of those "women . . . [whose] appearance and dress provoke rape."²⁷² Thus represented variously and consistently as the jiggling, wiggling, foundation-free object of the male gaze, as the soft, moist, gaping analogue of the vaginal orgasm, and as the victim/inviter of the sexual predator's deceit and force, Monroe relieves males of the threat of female refusal by virtue of her enticing, undergarment-free appearances and movements and by the openness, permeability, and guilt-free penetrability they imply.

In addition, Monroe further defuses the threat of female refusal by appearing to offer un-elitist accessibility to the non-ideal Everyman. Indeed, in explaining how Monroe "defuse[s] . . . some castrating elements" of her 20th Century Fox roles, Dyer simultaneously alludes to films in which Monroe's character demonstrates her all-inclusive taste in men.²⁷³ He cites, for example, There's No Business Like Show Business (Walter Lang, 1954) to show that Monroe's showgirl character is neither two-timing Tim (Donald O'Connor) nor using him to further her career. Essentially, then, Monroe's character truly loves Tim despite his portrayal's lack of leading-man good looks and elan. Similarly, Monroe, Dyer says, "doesn't play her part as if she is a

²⁷² Bevacqua, 59.

²⁷³ Dyer Heavenly, 45-6.

manipulator” in Gentleman Prefer Blondes (Howard Hawks, 1953).²⁷⁴ On the contrary, she befriends a wealthy older man and his wife, and despite the abundance of attractive men who demonstrate an interest in her on board the cruise ship, she remains faithful to her wealthy but nerdy fiancé. And although she “sets out to manipulate male sexual response for money” in How to Marry a Millionaire (Jean Negulesco, 1953), Monroe’s character Polo Debevoise ultimately and happily pairs off with Freddy (David Wayne), a penniless, on-the-lam tax-evader rather than the sought-after male of the film’s title.²⁷⁵ Indeed, Paula’s initial bond with Freddy occurs because both, afflicted with poor eyesight, need to wear glasses. Freddy, already cured of his resistance to wearing glasses and thereby risking the epithet “Four Eyes,” reassures Polo, who prefers nearsighted collisions to wearing her glasses in the presence of males, “I already think you’re quite a strudel[, but] . . . you look better with them on. [They] give . . . your face a certain mystery, distinction.” In Some Like It Hot, moreover, Monroe’s character Sugar discounts male hunks “with shoulders like Johnny Weismuller” and instead rhapsodizes, “Men who wear glasses are so much more gentle, sweet, and helpless.” And although Sugar fantasizes that these men may have developed weak eyes from monitoring their stockholding assets in the Wall Street Journal, her actual romances have been with a series of deadbeat saxophone players who, she admits, succeed in seducing her with their music even as they borrow her money and “spend it on other dames and race horses.” Thus, each of Monroe’s characters almost always subordinates her gold-digging intentions to the course of “true love,” no matter how plain, impoverished, or unworthy the object of her love may be. Perhaps, though, Monroe’s most emphatic affirmation of her willingness to accept the non-ideal male as her romantic and sexual

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

partner occurs in The Seven Year Itch when she reassures Richard Sheridan (Tom Ewell) with the following speech that does not appear in the stage play:

You and your imagination. You think every girl's a dope. You think a girl goes to a party and there's some guy, a great big lunk in a fancy striped vest, strutting around like a tiger, giving you that "I'm so handsome, you can't resist me" look. And from this she's supposed to fall flat on her face. Well, she doesn't fall flat on her face. . . . But there's another guy in the room. Way over in the corner. Maybe he's kind of nervous and shy and perspiring a little. First you look past him. But then you kind of sense he's gentle and kind and worried, and he'll be gentle with you, nice and sweet. That's what's really exciting. . . . If I were your wife, I'd be very jealous of you. I'd be very, very jealous.

This speech, Steven Cohan observes, qualifies as a "ringing endorsement of Richard's hegemonic masculinity."²⁷⁶ If so, then it also posits Monroe as a sexual partner who prefers the nerd who is gentle, nice, and sweet--though Richard's rape-fantasy would seem to exclude him from this sensitive category of nerddom--to the lunky, lady-killing "tiger."²⁷⁷ By thus reassuring Richard, Monroe further defuses the threat of female refusal by foregrounding her playmate-like availability to Everyman. In fact, after completing work on The Seven Year Itch, Monroe and "tiger" Joe DiMaggio divorced, and she subsequently married playwright Arthur Miller, a comparatively unlikely candidate for the designation "lady-killer." In this case of life imitating art, then, Monroe conveyed an approachable accessibility that seemed as credible offscreen as on.

Having thus addressed two of the threats posed by female sexuality--to wit, the female demand for sexual satisfaction and the female right to refuse sexual advances--I now address what I determine to be the final one insofar as it intersects with the Playboy philosophy and the

²⁷⁶ Cohan, 67.

²⁷⁷ An analysis of postwar "tiger" iconography appears in Chapter 5.0.

Marilyn Monroe star-text: the female need of commitment from her sexual partner, whether or not a premarital pregnancy requires such a commitment. Indeed, at the time of Playboy's debut and Monroe's stardom, contraception was essentially a male responsibility, since "the birth control pill and the intra-uterine device did not go on the market until the early 1960s."²⁷⁸ Even at that, state laws and medical protocols made these contraceptives fairly difficult to obtain. According to Elaine Tyler May, in fact, "American public opinion, legislative bodies, and medical establishment all did their part to make sure that the birth control technology would encourage marriage and family life . . . rather than premarital sexual experimentation or alternatives to motherhood for women."²⁷⁹ Indeed, not until 1965 did the Supreme Court, in their decision regarding Griswold v. Connecticut, invalidate that state's anticontraceptive law and determine that the Bill of Rights provided "a constitutional right to privacy for married couples."²⁸⁰ Only later in 1972, in the case of Eisenstadt v. Baird, did the Supreme Court not only invalidate Massachusetts' " 'crimes against chastity' law that prohibited the distribution of birth control information or supplies to unmarried persons" but also guarantee "freedom from government intervention in matters pertaining to sexuality and reproduction as a quintessentially individual right."²⁸¹ In the fifties, then, when Playboy and the Monroe playmate first emerged into the cultural consciousness, a female might resort to "the awkwardness of [a visit to the doctor for a] diaphragm fitting," but, in general, "before the pill, fewer than 20 percent of fertile women went to doctors for contraceptive advice."²⁸² Consequently, the responsibility for

²⁷⁸ James Reed, The Birth Control Movement and American Society: From Private Vice to Public Virtue (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 374.

²⁷⁹ May, 152.

²⁸⁰ Andrea Tone, ed., Controlling Reproduction: An American History (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1997), 183, emphasis added.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 185, emphasis in the original.

²⁸² Reed, 364-5.

contraception devolved by default to the male, for a man could obtain birth control without submitting to invasive medical procedures or protocols. Moreover, he would remain relatively exempt from the societal condemnation that would visit any unmarried female who, on a similar mission, necessarily revealed her intention to engage in premeditated, nonmarital sex. Indeed, in 1958, when “sales of . . . female contraceptives (diaphragms, spermicidal jellies, creams, and tablets) accounted for \$20 million, condoms were a \$150 million business and the most frequently used contraceptive” in the United States.²⁸³ Even assuming, however, that the playboy bachelor was willing to forsake a degree of sexual spontaneity and stimulation by wearing a condom, the threat posed by the female desire for commitment continued to remain, even if the threat posed by pregnancy did not.

In order to defuse this commitment-related threat, then, the Monroe playmate had to embody, in addition to sexual accessibility, its reverse: postcoital disposability. Monroe achieves this disposable aura, in part, as a result of her own personal deprivation and misfortunes: “born illegitimate to a mother [often confined] . . . in mental hospitals; fostered by several different couples, . . . [relegated at times] to an orphanage[;] . . . indecently assaulted at the age of nine; . . . [and unlucky in love after] three unsuccessful [and/or] abusive marriages [and numerous affairs].”²⁸⁴ As these frequently publicized elements of her life indicate, then, Monroe herself, in youth as well as in adulthood, was repeatedly discarded: as quasi-orphan, foster child, abuse victim, ex-wife, and spurned lover. But the disposable aspect of Monroe’s persona is informed not only by these real-life abandonments but also by her diegetic working class persona. In most of her films, for example, she plays some variation of the working girl: a

²⁸³ Andrea Tone, Devices and Desires: A History of Contraceptives in America (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 239.

²⁸⁴ Dyer Heavenly, 48.

secretary in Home Town Story (Arthur Pierson, 1951), As Young As You Feel (Harmon Jones, 1951), and Monkey Business (Howard Hawks, 1952); a prostitute in O. Henry's Full House (Henry Hathaway, 1952); a model of little renown in The Seven Year Itch and How to Marry a Millionaire; and a showgirl in All About Eve (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950), Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, There's No Business Like Show Business, The Prince and the Showgirl (Laurence Olivier, 1957), Let's Make Love (George Cukor, 1960), River of No Return (Otto Preminger, 1954), Bus Stop, and Some Like It Hot. Dyer, too, constructs a fairly similar inventory of Monroe's film roles, but he uses it to argue that her body of work has a "tendency to treat her as nothing more than her gender" and as the frequently anonymous and biography-less "object of [the] male sexual gaze."²⁸⁵ While I agree with Dyer on this score, I also wish to consider the implications of the working-class milieu wherein these films invariably situate Monroe's characters. For thus posited as a member of the working class, the Monroe playmate remains socially inferior to the readers of Playboy, whose intended audience was "upwardly mobile middle-class men who were acquiring spending power in the economic boom of the 1950s."²⁸⁶ Indeed, by 1958, Playboy "was able to attract an upscale audience rivaled only [by that of] The New Yorker and U.S. News and World Report in most upscale indicators, including median income and travel, clothing, appliance, and automobile expenditures."²⁸⁷ This class distinction is important in constructing the basis for Monroe's aura of disposability, for the upscale playboy and his working-class playmate mirror a postwar phenomenon observed by Alfred Kinsey: "men frequently engaged in premarital intercourse with women of a lower social class, rather than with partners from their own class" who apparently remained on reserve for the men--"nearly half [of

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁸⁶ Nadel, 131.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

those] . . . surveyed[--who] wanted to marry a virgin.”²⁸⁸ In A Summer Place, for example, Bart Hunter (Arthur Kennedy) attempts to dissuade his son Johnny (Troy Donahue) from marrying his true love Molly (Sandra Dee) by positing her instead as a likely and desirable partner in a sexual dalliance, since she’s not only “a pretty little wench . . . who probably knows all the tricks” but also “a lifeguard’s daughter [and thus] not one of [Johnny’s] . . . class.” In view of her lower class persona, then, Monroe, like Molly, could serve as a playmate but never a mate.

In Bus Stop, for example, Monroe as Cheri confesses to her fiance Beau (Dan Murray), “I ain’t the kind of girl you thought I was. . . . I’ve had a real wicked life. . . . I’ve had other boyfriends before you. . . . Quite a few. . . . So you can see . . . you’re better off [without me]. Cuz I ain’t the kind of gal you thought I was at all.” Indeed, until her confession, Beau has regarded Cheri as “an angel . . . all pale and white” and has thus equated an angel’s moral and aesthetic qualities with whiteness, “the normative privileged identity.”²⁸⁹ Presumed to possess an angel’s qualities and coloring, then, the white woman, according to Dyer, “is offered as the most highly prized possession of the white man, and the envy of all other races.”²⁹⁰ For example, in The King and I (Walter Lang, 1956), the Siamese King (Yul Brynner) rejects as dance partners all the native women in his harem and chooses instead to polka with his children’s British tutor Anna Leonowens (Deborah Kerr). Ultimately, though, he refuses to dance hand-in-hand with her; rather, he insists on assuming the same dance position as an English gentleman’s . Thus, in a silence charged with a shared acknowledgment of forbidden inter-racial desire, Anna, with her white shoulders and décolleté exposed above the mauve silk bodice of her gown, breathlessly submits as the King slowly extends his dark-skinned hand until he encompasses

²⁸⁸ Kinsey quoted in May, 121, 123.

²⁸⁹ Steve Garner, Whiteness: An Introduction (London: Routledge, 2007), 5.

²⁹⁰ Dyer Heavenly, 43.

Anna's waist within it. In the midst of the exuberant polka that they subsequently share, however, royal business intrudes: the King's concubine and slave Tuptim (Rita Moreno), a gift from the King of Burma, has been caught eloping with her lover, whom the palace guards have killed, and now the King must inflict upon her a merciless whipping as penalty for her crime. Tuptim's punishment thus presents Anna with two emphatic reminders: not only of the unbridgeable difference between Eastern "barbarity" and Western "enlightenment" but also of the severity of the crime of culturally unsanctioned desire, be it outside the harem or between two races. Consequently, Anna decides to leave Siam and the King on the next ship. As the film concludes, then, 50s audiences witness two normative assumptions played out. First of all, Anna, whom the Siamese King desires in spite of his access to an entire harem of women of his own race, represents "the white woman . . . offered as the most highly prized possession of the white man, and the envy of all other races."²⁹¹ And second, though "other races" may thus understandably aspire to possess "the white woman," they are forbidden to do so because of the dread of "miscegenation[,] . . . danger[ous because it] . . . taints [the very] whiteness" that they so esteem.²⁹²

When Monroe appears as one of the "white women . . . in racialized spaces," however, a somewhat different dynamic occurs.²⁹³ For example, in There's No Business Like Show Business, Monroe's character Vicky, an entertainer, performs the song-and-dance number "Heat Wave" with an all-male chorus of dark-skinned, mustachioed and/or bearded men apparently intended to represent field laborers, judging from their bare feet, naked torsos, knee-length shorts, and bandanas. Although the song fails to identify the name of the island on which Vicky

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Samina Najmi and Rajini Srikanth, ed., White Women in Racialized Spaces: Imaginative Transformation and Ethical Action in Literature (State University of New York Press, 2000), 4.

²⁹³ Ibid., 23,

and the men frolic, the lyrics do indicate a Caribbean setting since the island responds to meteorological influences emanating in “Jamaica” and “Martinique.” In the course of the number, moreover, when Vicky asks three of the men their names, they respond “Pablo,” “Chico,” and “Melito” and thereby indicate a possible Spanish ethnicity. Their swarthy skin, though, appears to mark them as racially Other, especially in contrast to the whiteness of Monroe’s Vicky who, as the number makes clear, represents the source of the island’s sexual “heat wave.” In this respect, the appearance of white, sexually provocative Monroe surrounded by an enthralled chorus of dark-skinned males--one of whom she kisses--upsets what Steve Garner calls “the norms . . . of sensuality [and] vivacity[, qualities attributed to racial . . . Others . . . [and deemed] not appropriate for white . . . womanhood.”²⁹⁴ Yet in accordance with the filmic narrative’s requirement that Vicky achieve show business success, her norm-upsetting performance of Other-directed sexual energy elicits only approving comments from the diegetic audience. On the other hand, it garners almost universal eyebrow-raising from the extra-diegetic one. Commonweal, for example, described Monroe’s performance in “Heat Wave” as “extremely vulgar,” and America similarly found it “graceless and flagrantly suggestive.”²⁹⁵ More specifically, the New York Times found Monroe’s “wriggling and squirming . . . embarrassing to behold,” while Time anticipated that by “bump[ing] . . . and grind[ing] . . . as expressively as the law will allow[,] . . . Marilyn Monroe will undoubtedly singe the eyebrows off front-row patrons.”²⁹⁶ Like these media critics, Monroe’s then-husband Joe DiMaggio similarly condemned his wife’s performance. According to author Barbara Leaming, DiMaggio

²⁹⁴ Garner, 49-50.

²⁹⁵ Philip T. Hartung, Commonweal, 24 December 1954, 334; Moira Walsh, America, 18 December 1954, 326.

²⁹⁶ Bosley Crowther, “‘There’s No Business,’ Etc.; and Musical at the Roxy Sets Out to Prove It,” New York Times, 17 December 1954; Time, 17 January 1955, 76.

“[s]ullenly watched from the shadows as his wife strutted about in a plumed headdress and a tight, skimpy two-piece outfit [with a flouncy, ruffled, slit-to-the-waist overskirt] that left her midriff [and her thighs] exposed.”²⁹⁷ Throughout Monroe’s performance, DiMaggio continued to radiate “disapproval and disgust,” and he refused to be photographed with her.²⁹⁸ Furthermore, actress Susan Strasberg, fifteen-years-old at the time, reports that when her friend Steffi asked Monroe, “ ‘What kind of character were you doing in that song?’ ”, Monroe stuttered an unintelligible reply until a visit by the body makeup lady rescued Monroe from the necessity of responding.²⁹⁹ Shortly thereafter, Steffi’s father, columnist/producer Sidney Skolsky, chastised his daughter: “ ‘What’s the matter with you? . . . You know she’s playing a whore. You know Joe [DiMaggio] is sensitive about what she does, why did you have to say anything?’ ”³⁰⁰ Finally, Monroe herself summarized the censure she received when, in the following quotation, she attributes the box office failure of There’s No Business Like Show Business to her controversial performance in the “Heat Wave” number:

To New York housekeeper, Lena Pepitone, she ranted that the film “was supposed to be a big hit. But when it wasn’t, who do they blame? Me! I was ‘obscene.’ I was ‘menace’ to kids. Can you believe it? . . . I was wearing this open skirt—I think they call it flamenco—with this black bra and panties underneath. The dance people kept making me flash the skirt wide open and jump around like I had a fever. They called it a native dance . . . they said it was good for me, good for the picture.”³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ Barbara Leaming, Marilyn Monroe (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1998), 123-4.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁹⁹ Susan Strasberg, Marilyn and Me: Sisters, Rivals, and Friends (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1992), 8.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

³⁰¹ Sandra Shevy, The Marilyn Scandal: Her Life Revealed by Those Who Knew Her (London: Sedgwick & Jackson, 1987), 194, ellipsis in the original.

These criticisms, then, focus exclusively on Monroe and specifically on the “menac[ingly]” provocative nature of her costume and movements.

In contrast, two advertisements of the time, both featuring the “[a]dventures of FRAN, the Formfit [undergarment] Gal,” presumably represent the globe-trotting Fran as a model who, unlike Monroe, goes native in culturally approved “fashion,” in that word’s sartorial as well as modal connotation. For in each advertisement, the dimensions of Fran’s Formfit bra and girdle require outer clothing that, unlike Monroe’s, extends in a modest expanse from hemline to neckline. Furthermore, although in each advertisement, Fran professes to perform a dance—a hula in one, a samba in the other—that evokes visions of Monroe-like hip gyrations, the actual images of Fran depict her, like models in most of other previously discussed advertisements, in static rather than active poses. In each advertisement, for example, Fran, standing, clamps her legs securely and demurely together, and the only body parts that appear to enjoy even a limited range of motion are her arms, which hold her native props. Thus, in one ad, “hula” Fran delicately holds outstretched in one hand the lei that encircles her neck, while with her other hand, she lightly cradles a ukulele in the crook of her elbow. Similarly, “samba” Fran wields maracas to indicate a lady-like, south-of-the-border milieu. By virtue of these statically and decorously contrived poses, then, Fran effectively erases any suggestion of bodily abandon or impropriety evoked by the gyration-based hula and samba. Thus, regardless of the sexual suggestiveness of these dances, Fran ultimately remains beyond reproach because she, unlike Monroe, adapts her native garb and choreography to the corporeal restrictions of a girdle—the item of clothing that, as previously discussed, renders the postwar female distinctly American and immovably chaste.

Both advertisements, moreover, allude to the potentially problematic ethnicity and race of Fran's native male admirers. "Hula" Fran's ode to Hawaii, for example, reveals that she associates not with the field-laborer class of "Heat Wave" 's chorus but rather with the aristocratic "Admirals, Planters, [and] Sugar Kings/ [Who offer . . . [her] yachts and diamond rings." The more egalitarian, less neo-colonial "samba" Fran, on the other hand, chums at large with "the natives" of Rio de Janeiro and even refers to the Spanish-accented endearment—"Leetle Sugar Loaf"—conferred upon her by one of the beachboy "lobos" or "wolves." Presumably, Fran's girdle serves as a defense against such romantic/sexual overtures uttered by males whose class, ethnicity, and/or race may well posit them, in containment culture's view, as undesirably Other. Monroe, however, as her censured "Heat Wave" costume and movements illustrate, fails to wear this undergarment as armament against the threat of a similar foreign invasion. It is curious, then, that the previously cited criticisms of Monroe's "Heat Wave" performance fail to mention its most strikingly transgressive aspect: namely, the participation, in this sexually charged number, of male Others. Indeed, the only review of There's No Business Like Show Business that even makes reference to "Heat Wave" 's male chorus does so in a complimentary manner, praising choreographer Robert Alton for his skill in surrounding singers with atmosphere-evoking dancers. The review then inventories the film's memorable numbers in which Alton demonstrates this skill, reserving for the end—and thus, for pride of place—its praise for "Monroe and a male troupe doing 'Heat Wave' as it has never been done before. The latter employs for the boys a modernized Latin vocabulary [and] for Miss Monroe, the ultimate in bumps, grinds, [and] flashes."³⁰² Thus, while reviewer Leo Lerman implicitly identifies

³⁰² Leo Lerman, "Dance in the Movies," Dance Magazine, January 1959, 9. According to Bart Mills in Marilyn on Location (London: Sedgwick & Jackson, 1989), Monroe's request for "more movement" in the "Heat

Monroe as a stripper who “bumps, grinds, [and] flashes,” he also describes “the boys” who accompany her as “Latin[o],” a term that, in accordance with the following—and necessarily lengthy—definition, encompasses a variety of skin colors, nationalities, and ethnicities:

“Latino” is a term that . . . has been used with increasing frequency since the mid-twentieth century to describe people and cultures that hail from Latin America. However, “Latin America” is itself a European designation meant to describe Mexico and all the nations of Central and South America, lands that were conquered by Europeans who spoke languages originally derived from Latin. Sometimes Latino culture is defined primarily through the use of Spanish language; however, not all Latinos speak Spanish, and even for those who do, dialects and regional differences contribute to and underscore regional diversities. (The term “Latino” also implicitly supports a male-dominated society, since the term is gendered as masculine. “Latina” is used to refer to women and women’s culture from these regions.) . . . “Latino[,]” [moreover,] vastly condense[s] and oversimplif[ies] . . . the wide range of languages, histories, and cultures of diverse groups of people. Some Latinos trace their ancestry back to indigenous populations . . . who occupied these lands before the arrival of the Europeans. For others, Latin cultures include African customs and heritages, as South and Central America were also involved in the slave trade. Still others . . . trace their ancestry to Europe and colonization. Concepts of race thus intersect with concepts of nationality and ethnicity in complex ways. . . . [As a result of t]he apparent need of dominant white cultures to maintain separation and control on the basis of the concept of race[,] . . . [s]ome people even conceive of Latinos as a separate race—the so-called “brown” race—even though classical theorists of race never conceived of such a category.³⁰³

Not surprisingly, then, the history of Hollywood’s representation of Latinos reflects the changing variances of skin color that resists categorical distinction as either black or white. Thus, in the first decade of the twentieth century, the most common filmic Latin stereotype was the “greaser,” an “oily, dark-skinned, and mustachioed bandit,” or, in a “milder” incarnation, a

Wave” number led to the replacement of Robert Alton, who “arrang[ed] . . . the rest of [Show Business]’ dances,” with Jack Cole, “who had choreographed [Monroe] . . . in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes” (74-7).

³⁰³ Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin, America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 136.

“shiftless and lazy ‘no-account.’”³⁰⁴ By the 1920s, however, the economic punishment the movie industry suffered from Latin American bans on films portraying Latinos in a negative light inspired Hollywood to create the more favorable stereotype of the Latin Lover, a “sensual[,] . . . sexual[,] . . . hot-blooded[,] . . . and alluring darker-skinned sex object whose cultural difference hinted at exotic and erotic secrets.”³⁰⁵ But while “the greaser was an overtly racialized Other” whose relationship with a white woman would be deemed “vile and taboo,” the Latin Lover “was more of an ethnic type [who] . . . could potentially be assimilated into whiteness . . . [and] succeed . . . in winning the hand of the white female lead.”³⁰⁶ In the 1930s, however, because of Depression-incited xenophobia, “few opportunities existed for Latinos either behind or in front of the camera,” but in the 1940s, Latinos again found work in films because the United States instituted the Good Neighbor Policy, “a series of federal initiatives and programs designed to . . . shore up [America’s] . . . relationships with . . . Central and South American nations [to insure that they] . . . did not align themselves with the . . . Axis powers.”³⁰⁷ Consequently, Hollywood studios in the early 1940s “produc[ed] . . . a non-stop fiesta of Latin American musicals” to the extent that an “entire Latin music craze took hold in the United States . . . and people learned to dance the conga, the samba, and the rumba.”³⁰⁸ Consequently, “Cuban American bandleaders Xavier Cugat and Desi Arnaz became radio and recording stars and even appeared in a few Hollywood movies.”³⁰⁹

Yet in spite of the latter’s popular success in the 1940s, television network executives in the 1950s initially resisted casting Arnaz in I Love Lucy as husband to the series’ star Lucille

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Ball, his real-life wife, for they “had qualms about showing a ‘mixed marriage.’”³¹⁰ According to the show’s headwriter and producer Jess Oppenheimer, “ ‘One of [the executives] . . . said, “Who would believe her married to a wop?” Of course, he’d picked on the wrong nationality, but it didn’t excuse his prejudice. Such discrimination was rampant not only in broadcasting but throughout show business at the time.’ ”³¹¹ A similar ethnic confusion and bias afflicted MGM Studio chief Louis B. Mayer, who backhandedly complimented Arnaz, “ ‘[Until] you hang that drum around your shoulder[,] . . . you’re just another Mexican.’ ”³¹² Moreover, when Arnaz corrected him—“ ‘Not Mexican, sir, Cuban’ —Mayer replied, “ ‘Well, one of those Latin fellows.’ ”³¹³ During the 1950s, then, the media returned to pre-Good Neighbor discrimination, and the “resistance to showing Arnaz and Ball as romantic demonstrates [that] . . . many Americans of the 1950s still regarded Latinos as racially Other.”³¹⁴ In addition to this reluctance to cast Arnaz in his real-life role as a white woman’s husband, films like Blackboard Jungle (Richard Brooks, 1955) and Touch of Evil (Orson Welles, 1959) resurrected and adapted the greaser stereotype of the early 1900s into the “violent, dirty, and sexually aggressive Latino gang member.”³¹⁵ The foregoing examples, then, demonstrate the doubt that prevailed in the 1950s concerning the appropriateness of pairings between Latinos and white females.

Serving to magnify this doubt, moreover, the lyrics to “Heat Wave,” as previously noted, fail to identify the Caribbean isle on which the eponymous hot spell occurs, although they do refer to meteorological emanations from nearby “Martinique” and “Jamaica.” Reference to the

³¹⁰ Ibid., 146.

³¹¹ Quoted in Warren G. Harris, Lucy & Desi: The Legendary Love Story of Television’s Most Famous Couple (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 151.

³¹² Quoted in Ibid., 109.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Benschhoff, 146.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

latter island may well have evoked associations with black Jamaican American singer Harry Belafonte, whose first wide-release single was “Matilda,” recorded in April 27, 1953, one year before the release of There’s No Business Like Show Business.³¹⁶ A lament about a gold-digging, two-timing woman, “Matilda” is a calypso song, a “style of Afro-Caribbean music that subsequently became a world-wide craze with the release of the ‘Banana Boat Song’ . . . [on Belafonte’s] 1956 album Calypso.”³¹⁷ In contrast to the doubtful racial alterity of a Latino, then, Jamaican American Harry Belafonte was, by virtue of his skin color, nationality, and music, unquestionably black and racially Other, a status demonstrated by the public reception of Island in the Sun (Robert Rossen, 1957), a film in which Mavis Norman (white actress Joan Fontaine) expresses a romantic interest in young black politician David Boyeur, played by Belafonte. In some parts of the south, the film was banned because of its depiction of interracial romance, even though this depiction “stops short of even a kiss for fear it might offend.”³¹⁸ Moreover, “[f]or every letter that praised the film as a means to promote ‘brotherhood,’ there were a dozen that spoke against it as ‘propaganda’ on behalf of a ‘mongrel’ nation.”³¹⁹ The eponymous site of these “mongrel”-producing relationships is “Santa Marta, an imaginary island [se] in the British West Indies” and therefore, like “Heat Wave,” in the Caribbean as well.³²⁰ Assuming, then, that “Heat Wave” puts into play even a fraction of the aforementioned apprehensions regarding Latino and/or racial Otherness, why, one wonders, did reviewers fail to express shock or dismay with respect to the dark-skinned men of “Heat Wave”’s male chorus?

³¹⁶ I am indebted to Lucy Fischer for suggesting the Belafonte connection.

³¹⁷ “Calypso music,” Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calypso_music> (14 May 2009).

³¹⁸ Variety, 1 January 1957, <<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117792043.html>> (26 May 2009).

³¹⁹ Thomas Cripps, Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil Rights Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 265.

³²⁰ Variety.

In response to this question, I would propose that the extent of Monroe's scandalous dress and behavior located her beyond the protection of the white patriarchy that deemed her wholly blameworthy for this racial transgression. Although this proposal may initially seem self-evident, it warrants further investigation, I believe, because of the rarity of such an event—namely, the indictment of a white female in deference to the acquittal of a male Other. The near impossibility of such a finding is most graphically exemplified, I believe, by a key event in Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning novel of 1960 To Kill a Mockingbird. Set in the early 1930s in the small town of Maycomb, Alabama, Lee's book was adapted into an Oscar winning film in 1962 by director Robert Mulligan with a screenplay by Horton Foote. The story concerns the family of widower and lawyer Atticus Finch (Gregory Peck), who defends black laborer Tom Robinson (Brock Peters) against charges of raping Mayella Violet Ewell (Collin Wilcox), a white, 19-year-old and the oldest of the eight children of impoverished drunkard Robert E. Lee "Bob" Ewell (James Anderson). As presented by Atticus at Tom's trial, the evidence unmistakably proves that Mayella has cried "rape" in order to destroy Tom Robinson, who represents, in Atticus' words, "the evidence of her offense[: namely,] . . . tempting a Negro." In his summation to the jury, Atticus continues:

[Mayella] did something that in our society is unspeakable: she kissed a black man. Not an old Uncle, but a strong young Negro man. No code mattered to her before she broke it, but it came crashing down on her afterwards [when her father] . . . savagely . . . beat [her and then] . . . did what any God-fearing, persevering, respectable white man would do under the circumstances—he swore out a warrant [for Tom Robinson's arrest].

Yet although the all-white, all-male jury unprecedentedly resists an immediate and automatic decision against Tom Robinson, it finally issues a guilty verdict and an implicit death sentence as

well, since rape, at the time, was a capital offense in Alabama. Thus, although the jury's lengthy deliberation indicates it has heeded Atticus' admonition against "the cynical confidence [of the plaintiff's witnesses] . . . that you gentlemen [will] . . . go along with them on the assumption . . . that all Negro men are not to be trusted around [white] . . . women," the jury ultimately submits to the following challenge that Mayella issues in her final declaration to the court: "That nigger yonder took advantage of me an' if you fine fancy gentlemen don't wanta do nothin' about then you're all yellow stinkin' cowards, stinkin' cowards, the lot of you. Your fancy airs don't come to nothin'—your ma'amin' and Miss Mayellerin' don't come to nothin.'" Thus, this excerpt from To Kill a Mockingbird shows that, to the detriment of the male racial Other, the white patriarchy resolves to give the benefit of the doubt to the white female, despite the preponderance of evidence against her and despite her poor, white-trash background as well.

Unlike Mayella, though, Monroe, despite her not-quite-as-humble beginnings, fails to receive from the white patriarchy a similar dispensation for her racial transgression. Thus, in terms that Diane Negra uses to discuss past perceptions of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, Monroe, although of "undeniable physical whiteness," demonstrates, by virtue of her "Heat Wave" attire and behavior, "a failure to conform to the unstated social norms associated with that category."³²¹ "Whites in these kinds of 'border spaces,'" Negra continues, "often threateningly disconfirm the inevitability and desirability of whiteness as a form of social capital."³²² By virtue of her "failure to conform to [white] . . . social norms," then, Monroe not only undermines "whiteness as a form of social capital" but also—in spite of what Dyer deems her "platinum (peroxide[d]) bloneness, the ultimate sign of whiteness"—ceases to represent

³²¹ Diane Negra, Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom (London: Routledge, 2001), 6.

³²² *Ibid.*

“the white woman [who] is . . . the most prized possession of white patriarchy.”³²³ Indeed, rather than a “prized possession,” Monroe becomes instead a censured cast-off. A more recent example of the patriarchy’s dismissal of a blonde, white, lower class female performer can be found in the Nancy Kerrigan/Tonya Harding controversy of 1994. Public perception of the two, Negra observes, “illustrat[es] the way in which performing female bodies . . . can incarnate notions of classed whiteness[—that is,]—‘white trash’ Harding [vs.] . . . assimilated Irish-American Kerrigan.”³²⁴ Assessed in terms of the Harding/Kerrigan standard, then, Monroe would appear to be even more reprehensible than her figure-skating counterpart, for the object of Monroe’s transgression is not merely a more culturally acceptable white female like Kerrigan but rather a culturally *verboten* male Other. Finally, Negra argues that the public discourse surrounding the Kerrigan/Harding controversy is informed by cultural “determinations of who qualifies to represent both whiteness and the nation.”³²⁵ With respect to her “Heat Wave” number, Monroe can represent neither, for her white face belies the non-white behavior that, in turn, disqualifies her as a national representative.

Indeed, beyond positing Monroe, in Negra’s previously discussed phrase, as a “[w]hite in [patriarchally unprotected] ‘border space,’ “ Monroe’s sexual suggestiveness in “Heat Wave” also conflates associations of her with “the ethnic woman [who] is [similarly] located outside of dominant cultural values . . . [and who similarly] def[ies] . . . the social order of white patriarch[y] . . . [with her] disruption, unruliness, excess, and innovation.”³²⁶ In fact, Monroe’s sexual transgressiveness in “Heat Wave” may even evoke comparisons of her with “[w]omen of

³²³ Dyer *Heavenly*, 43, 44.

³²⁴ Negra, 102.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

color, [who] are [perceived as] more sexually promiscuous than other women.”³²⁷ In either case, then, Monroe’s perceived assumption of ethnic or racial unruliness and promiscuity would appear to negate her bloneness, the characteristic that Dyer describes as “racially unambiguous [because it] keeps the white woman distinct from the black, brown, or yellow, and at the same time it assures the viewer that the woman is the genuine article.”³²⁸ Within the context of this passage, “the genuine article” seems to refer to an idealized and alluring white woman who, while inciting desire in others, expresses no desire of her own. But because Monroe flagrantly expresses her desire for male Others in her “Heat Wave” costume and movements, she necessarily surrenders her bloneness-implied status as “the genuine article.” By acting as “Heat Wave” ‘s sexual aggressor, moreover, Monroe emphatically refuses to do what Mayella Ewell does: play the victim. The vulnerability implicit in this role, according to Susan Brownmiller, increases a female’s sexual desirability”; in fact, she identifies Monroe as “the most famous and overworked example [of] the beautiful victim syndrome.”³²⁹ Thus, until Monroe is recuperated into white patriarchy’s protection by her other films in which, as previously discussed, she essentially plays “the victim”—that is, the untroublesome, unthreatening, and all-accepting female—she necessarily surrenders the white female’s patriarchally conferred privilege of blame-free association with the male Other. Stripped of this privilege, Monroe thus serves as the offender singled out to bear not only the explicit censure of “Heat Wave” ‘s sartorial and terpsichorean vulgarity but also the tacit condemnation of its ethnic/racial transgression.

The patriarchy similarly withdraws its protection from a racially tainted female in The Searchers (John Ford, 1956). In that film, Natalie Wood plays the young adult version of

³²⁷ Bevacqua, 59.

³²⁸ Dyer Heavenly, 44.

³²⁹ Susan Brownmiller, Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975), 333, 335.

Debbie, a frontier child kidnapped by Comanche Indians who also burn down her home; murder her parents; and kidnap, rape, and kill her teenage sister.³³⁰ Yet although Debby herself is not a Comanche Indian, many of the film's other characters consider her irremediably tainted by her association with her captors, especially since they anticipate her sexual appropriation by the Comanche Chief Scar when she comes of age. Indeed, the prospect of this event so repulses Debbie's Uncle Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) that he remains unable to articulate it in words. Instead, he simply alludes to it when he mutters, "They'll keep Debby and raise her as one of their own till she's. . . ." Subsequently, he makes the claim, "Debbie . . . ain't . . . blood kin . . . anymore. . . . She's been livin' with a buck." A former neighbor, Laurie Jorgensen, refers to Debbie as "the leavin's of Comanche bucks sold time and again to the highest bidder with savage brats of her own. . . . If he has a chance[,] . . . Ethan'll . . . put a bullet in her brain. I tell you, [Debbie's deceased mother] Martha would want him to." Presumably, then, Debbie's mother would share the sentiments Ethan articulates when he witnesses the traumatized behavior of three white women who have been rescued from Indian captivity. One of the women moans repeatedly while rocking back and forth as she clutches a doll to her breast; another, younger female giggles at Ethan's male companion Martin with nervous excitement of a presumably sexual nature; and the third victim wordlessly clings to the second while staring fearfully at Martin. "It's hard to believe they're white," a bystander says of the women. Ethan replies, "They ain't white anymore. They're Comanch." When Martin and Ethan eventually find Debbie, however, they discover that even though Scar has taken her as one of his wives, she fails to exhibit any aberrant behavior similar to that of the three traumatized women. In fact, she recognizes Ethan and Martin and relates that she has dreamed of rescue. At the film's

³³⁰ Wood's younger sister Lana portrays the younger version of Debbie.

conclusion, then, Ethan abandons his plan to kill his niece and instead gently returns her to the Jorgensen home, where she will presumably be recuperated into white domesticity.

In several of her other roles, Wood portrays a character distinctly removed from a cultural center of pure and uncontested whiteness. In The Burning Hills (Stuart Heisler, 1956), for example, she plays a “half-Mexican spitfire”; in Marjorie Morningstar (Irving Rapper, 1958), an aspiring Jewish actress; in Kings Go Forth (Delmer Daves, 1956), a mulatto; and in West Side Story (Robert Wise, 1961), a Latina.³³¹ These roles, then, partially undermine Diane Negra’s claim that because Natalie Wood Anglicized her given name (Natasha Zacharenko-Gurdin), she--like Rita Hayworth, Doris Day, and Paulette Goddard--was a star “whose manufacture involved the suppression of ethnic nomenclature in favor of [a] less problematically white identit[y].”³³² In many of her roles, then, Wood, the daughter of Russian immigrants, occupies a space on the outskirts of whiteness rather than at its center. Thus, Natalie Wood represents one of the many ethnic stars whom Negra fails to identify but to whom she attributes an “all-purpose ethnicity [that] could be directed toward characters of various national identities.”³³³

Katy Jurado, on the other hand, had only her Spanish ethnicity to direct toward her roles. In High Noon (Fred Zinnemann, 1952), for example, she plays Helen Ramirez, the owner of a saloon and the mistress of (in chronological order) villain Frank Miller, Sheriff Will Kane (Gary Cooper), and his deputy (Lloyd Bridges). Steadfastly in love with Kane, Helen wisely and selflessly delivers a lesson in true womanhood--“Stay and fight for your man!”--to Will’s new bride Amy (Grace Kelly), a violence-hating Quaker who has vowed to leave Will because he

³³¹ Gavin Lambert, Natalie Wood: A Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 114.

³³² Negra, 6.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 84.

postpones their honeymoon in order to confront the avenging murderer Frank Miller, newly released from the prison where Kane has sent him. Heeding Helen's advice, Amy rushes back to town where, despite her Quaker beliefs, she picks up a gun and shoots one of Miller's men who threatens her husband. Having vanquished the villains together, Amy and Will ride out of town at the film's end and head toward a presumably peaceful future as owners of a general store. Helen thus secures the film's happy ending by virtue of the wise counsel she gives Amy. Presumably, though, she has gained her wisdom regarding man-woman relationships as a result of her experience with multiple lovers. Moreover, when Helen decides to leave town for fear that her former lover Miller will kill her in a jealous rage over her sexual relationship with his nemesis Kane, she obtains the financial means to do so by selling her property, the saloon. Thus, with her multiplicity of sexual partners, Helen shows that, in Negra's words, "[t]he ethnic woman has often symbolized excess and exaggeration."³³⁴ And by financing her escape and resettlement via the sale of her property, Helen also represents, again in Negra's words, "th[e] . . . unusually active and empowered [ethnic] female."³³⁵ Indeed, Helen's ethnicity places her outside the patriarchy to the extent that it exempts her from the sexual and financial restraints that patriarchy imposes upon a proper white woman like Amy. As portrayed by Grace Kelly, the slim, blonde, white, virginal Amy provides the "comparative element" to Katy Jurado's buxom, brown-skinned, lusty Helen. By thus counterposing the ethereal Amy and her culturally learned pacifism with Helen's earthiness and her acceptance of the sometimes violent ways of men, the film posits Helen, the ethnic woman, as the more credible and reliable dispenser of advice about the basic nature of man-woman relationships.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

Ultimately, though, Helen, as the ethnic woman, cannot win the white hero, Will Kane. For, in Dyer's words, "the white woman is offered as the most highly prized possession of the white man, and the envy of all other races."³³⁶ Based on this perception, Dyer reasons that Monroe--whose "[b]londeness, especially [her] platinum (peroxide) blondeness, is the ultimate sign of whiteness[,] . . . the most unambiguously white you can get"--represents the ideally "white woman [who] is . . . the most prized possession of white patriarchy."³³⁷ In reliance, moreover, on the "light and dark imagery . . . [evoked by] the associations of darkness with masculine sexuality and of fairness with female sexuality," Dyer concludes that "the blonde woman comes to represent not only the most desired of women but also the most womanly of women."³³⁸ While this reasoning may apply to blondes in general, though, it fails to consider the particularity of blondeness that Marjorie Rosen presumably envisions, for example, when she refers to the "coarse and blowsy . . . buxom . . . blond . . . [as the] dirty joke ideal."³³⁹ With these words, Rosen essentially describes the so-called "dumb blonde" whom jokesters presumably deem too witless to understand that their laughter occurs at her expense. In On Blondes, author Joanna Pitman argues that the "concept of the dumb blonde that emerged in 1950s America in the unforgettable shape of Marilyn Monroe was--consciously or not--a creation of [the] men . . . who ran Hollywood . . . for [the] men . . . [who, after returning from war, wanted to see onscreen not the] career woman role models from wartime movies [but rather] . . . Monroe . . . the subject of men's dreams."³⁴⁰ By thus referring to Monroe's "unforgettable shape," Pitman foregrounds the importance of Monroe's body--versus her hair

³³⁶ Dyer Heavenly, 44.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 43-4.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

³³⁹ Rosen, 302.

³⁴⁰ Joanna Pitman, On Blondes (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), 225-6.

color--in the viewer's understanding of her as a dumb blonde. That is, her perceived "dumbness" is not solely the function of her hair color but of her body as well. For as a woman who made her body the object of the gaze, Monroe positioned herself at the negative extreme of "the ideological polarizations that . . . position the body as the material 'other' [in opposition] to the transcendence of the mind."³⁴¹ In the following passage, Judith Butler discusses the logical outcome of such reasoning:

By defining women as "Other," men are able through the shortcut of definition to dispose of their bodies, to make themselves other than their bodies. . . . From this belief that the body is Other, it is not a far leap to the conclusion that others are their bodies, while the masculine "I" is the noncorporeal soul. . . . [As the other, then, women] come to embody corporeality itself.³⁴²

As the embodiment of corporeality, furthermore, "women . . . have historically been tied to the material conditions of their bodies[, which in turn structures their identities] as oppressively and basely physical, as . . . lack[ing in] . . . selfhood . . . [and] moral, spiritual, and social agency."³⁴³ The latter half of this polarity--namely, male-as-mind versus female-as-body--finds particularly dramatic resonance in the instance of Monroe, since her body emphatically announces its presence by virtue of its voluptuous curves and the attention-demanding manner of pose and (un)dress in which Monroe highlights them. Thus constructed and perceived as all-female and all-body, Monroe necessarily rejects any associations with the polarity's other extreme: the male-as-mind. Monroe's perceived "mindlessness," then, represents the viewers' binaristic reaction to her emphatic corporeality and perhaps further accounts for the sense of incongruity associated with the marriage of Monroe--all-female and all-body--to intellect and male-as-mind Arthur

³⁴¹ Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997), 6.

³⁴² Quoted in *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁴³ Albright, 6-7.

Miller. Moreover, a public that viewed Monroe's marriage to Miller as an attempt on her part to remedy her own non-intellectual and non-elite status might consider this perceived social-climbing as further evidence of Monroe's mindlessness. In conjunction with her hair color, then, this dim-wittedness allows Monroe to embody fully the persona of the dumb blonde and, in turn, the dirty joke ideal, hardly the "most prized possession of the white man," as Dyer claims.

Unlike Monroe, other starlets of the 1950s, despite their yellow tresses, fail to qualify as dumb blondes. Doris Day and Sandra Dee, for example, represented "bland[,] . . . sweetly snub-nosed[,] . . . chirpy, peppy girls-next-door, [while the blondes Hitchcock chose for his films were] "slim, elegant[,] . . . fine-boned, [and] ethereal"³⁴⁴ --or, in the words of Hitchcock himself, " 'the . . . black velvet and pearls type[:] . . . blonde, subtle and Nordic.' "³⁴⁵ In this case, "Nordic" connotes what Diane Negra, in speaking of the Scandinavian ethnicity of Norwegian-born skater/actress Sonja Henie, terms "purified whiteness."³⁴⁶ As such, "Nordic" represents not an ethnicity, per se, but rather an ordinary and thus authentic whiteness, even though such authenticity does not apply to hair color. That is, like Monroe, who dyed her hair a shade of blonde called "Dirty Pillow Slip," Hitchcock blondes Janet Leigh, Grace Kelly, and Tippi Hedren each dyed her hair the patently unnatural, unvariegated shade of blonde on display in Psycho, To Catch a Thief, and The Birds, respectively.³⁴⁷ But because the Hitchcock blonde's "slim" and "fine-boned" body resists the associations with mindlessness evoked by Monroe's insistent corporeality, it exempts her from categorization as a dumb blonde by virtue of its class markers. That is, the Hitchcock blonde's slim, elegant, fine-boned body, which posits her as the "subtle, black velvet and pearls type," connotes a woman of higher social status than that of

³⁴⁴ Pitman, 232, 229.

³⁴⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 230.

³⁴⁶ Negra, 92.

³⁴⁷ Pitman, 224.

Monroe, whose boldly curvaceous body--posed provocatively in or out of revealing costumes--announces her subordinate status as a dumb blonde. Thus, the kind of blondes that upper-class gentlemen would genuinely prefer would appear to be the “black velvet and pearls” Hitchcock blonde rather than the dumb blonde Marilyn Monroe.

Dyer, however, attempts to rescue Monroe from the dumb blonde persona by demonstrating that Monroe understands the joke. He cites, for example, the following lines that Monroe delivered to the troops in Korea in February 1954: “I don’t know why you boys are always getting so excited about sweater girls. Take away their sweaters and what have they got?”³⁴⁸ Dyer argues that this “sweater girl gag is . . . funny . . . not because the blonde is being dirty about herself without knowing it, but because it is a play on words that cheerfully acknowledges her sexual impact.”³⁴⁹ True, but while Monroe cheerfully acknowledges her sexual impact, how does the male audience perceive her? In order to respond to this question, I suggest a consideration of another public appearance that Monroe made: as the purported mistress of President John F. Kennedy, Monroe, stitched into a skintight gown the color of her flesh, famously lisped “Happy Birthday, Mr. President” at his gala birthday salute at Madison Square Garden. Her presence there was not unanimously welcomed, for “a last minute flurry of calls protesting Monroe’s appearance [had come] . . . from Cabinet members, . . . a senior member of the President’s White House staff, and . . . the highest levels of the Pentagon.”³⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Monroe went on; introducing her before her entrance, presidential brother-in-law and procurer Peter Lawford extravagantly declared, “ ‘Mr. President, never in the history of the

³⁴⁸ Quoted in Dyer *Heavenly*, 36.

³⁴⁹ Dyer *Heavenly*, 36.

³⁵⁰ Peter Harry Brown and Patty B. Barham, *Marilyn: The Last Take* (New York: Dutton Books, 1992), 149.

world has one woman meant so much . . . ‘³⁵¹ When Monroe dramatically revealed her provocative gown by “shrug[ing off] . . . the ermine wrap [and] . . . letting it fall backward into Lawford’s hands[, w]histles and shrieks followed[, and the President exclaimed to] . . . writer Gene Schoor, “What an ass . . . WHAT an ass.’³⁵² Noticeably absent from this “yelling and screaming” crowd of 15,000 well-wishers, however, was the President’s wife, the svelte, haute-coutured Jacqueline Kennedy, who, as “soon as she found out that Monroe was going to sing . . . took the children to Virginia for a weekend of horseback riding.”³⁵³ On this occasion, then, the manner of Monroe’s appearance and the audience’s reception of it evokes images of a strip club, where a minimally clad and seductively performing female is objectified by lusty males and where no well-bred and self-respecting female would deign to cross the threshold. Indeed, in Breakfast at Tiffany’s (Blake Edwards, 1961), charmer and upwardly aspiring call-girl Holly Golightly—played by Audrey Hepburn though author Truman Capote preferred Monroe in the role—watches an offscreen exotic dancer and comments on her resemblance to Monroe. Monroe, however, did not interpret the audience reaction as sexual objectification; she understood it rather as “ ‘approval . . . [that] was like an embrace.’³⁵⁴ Thus inspired by what she perceived as the crowd’s love for her, Monroe overcame her rising fever and dizziness and tried to “ ‘sing [her] . . . way into every heart in Madison Square Garden.’³⁵⁵ Yet in spite of this romantic earnestness on her part, Monroe’s post-performance tryst with the President marked “the last time” he would require her sexual services.³⁵⁶ Accordingly, the President’s wife returned with their photogenic children from the weekend of horseback riding to which the

³⁵¹ Ibid., ellipsis in the original.

³⁵² Ibid., emphasis in the original.

³⁵³ Ibid., 149-150.

³⁵⁴ Quoted in Ibid., 149.

³⁵⁵ Quoted in Ibid., 150.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 150.

family's financial resources and social connections had given them access. Thus, while Monroe was cast off, the President's wife resumed not only her cosseted life at the White House but also her duties as wife, as hostess, and—in a consummate demonstration of the “classed whiteness” that, as previously discussed, determines “who qualifies to represent . . . the nation”—as First Lady.³⁵⁷ Thus cast in high relief by the sartorial and corporeal classicism of her marriage-worthy rival, Monroe's “blonde, buxom” body, characterized as the “coarse and blowsy . . . dirty joke ideal,” becomes, for the married or unmarried playboy, eminently dismissable.³⁵⁸

Though Jacqueline Kennedy spoke in the same breathy tones as Monroe, she resembled Audrey Hepburn in both background and bearing and the bodies of both women share the same upper-class valence. In Bakhtinian terms, in fact, Hepburn's model-slim body, garbed in the simple and elegant haute couture of her favorite designer, Hubert de Givenchy, might be described as closed and classic in contradistinction to Monroe's open and permeable body that transgressively dispenses with foundation garments in a carnivalesque absence of self-discipline. Indeed, descriptions of Hepburn abound with allusions to her royal mien and thereby suggest that the distinction between her and Monroe was not only one of body type and costume choice but one of class. One reviewer, for example, opined that Hepburn's brief costume in the 1954 stage play Ondine failed to cause the anticipated outcry because “it's unthinkable that anyone would dare point a finger at a[n] . . . aristocratic . . . girl who acts like a Queen every waking

³⁵⁷ Negra, 102-3.

³⁵⁸ American Movie Classics' *Mad Men* is a television series set in the early 1960s that focuses on the corporate and domestic lives of a group of Madison Avenue advertising executives. In Episode No. 206 entitled “Maidenform,” the agency proposes an ad for Playtex undergarments based on the perception that all women aspire to be either Jackie Kennedy or Marilyn Monroe. By thus juxtaposing these two women within the context of bras and girdles, The show reveals a kind of retrospective, undergarment-based understanding of the two women's distinctive body types and the cultural meanings they convey.

moment.”³⁵⁹ Similarly, Life praised her “poised, regal elegance.”³⁶⁰ In Affairs to Remember, moreover, authors Bruce Babington and Peter Evans observe that Hepburn possessed “in abundance . . . [the] qualities [of a] Swiss Finishing School,”³⁶¹ including perhaps her “not quite British” accent.³⁶² Instead of Givenchy haute couture, moreover, Hepburn could wear even a black turtleneck and pedal pushers and still achieve an “upscale beatnik look”³⁶³ in a style “that seemed the embodiment of sophisticated, existentialist Europe.”³⁶⁴ Thus, in contrast to the sexualized and declasse image of Monroe, Hepburn conveyed an aristocratic, European aura that, to a large extent, exempted her from criticism and thereby implicitly conferred upon her a singular degree of authority and agency.

In distinct contrast to Hepburn, Monroe’s unpindownable effluence and all-subsuming permeability disallow her any similar sense of authority or agency, for both qualities are predicated upon an implicit demarcation between one’s own boundaries and the rest of the world’s. But, as Dyer points out, Monroe conveys an “oceanic” sexuality, and such overflow, while pleasurably hypnotic for onlookers and temporarily gratifying for the source, does not allow the latter to distinguish herself from the former.³⁶⁵ In this respect, then, Monroe, in spite of her sexually adult body, more closely resembles the polymorphously perverse infant, whose libido and sense of self are similarly unbounded and “oceanic.” Ultimately, then, Monroe may qualify as the ideal playmate not simply because of the sexually inviting accessibility and

³⁵⁹ Hart Perry, “Audrey Hepburn,” Seventeen (January 1965): 79.

³⁶⁰ Mark Shaw, “Audrey Hepburn, Many-Sided Charmer,” Life (7 December 1953): 29.

³⁶¹ Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans, Affairs to Remember (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 34.

³⁶² Dabrina Anne Taylor, “Fair Lady, Huckleberry Friend: Femininity and Freedom in the Image of Audrey Hepburn, 1953-1967” (Ph. D. diss., University of Maryland, 1997), 29.

³⁶³ Rick Marin, “Ever a Goddess, Ever a Dream,” New York Times, 26 April 1999, B8.

³⁶⁴ Elizabeth Wilson, “Gamine against the Grain,” Sight and Sound 3 (1998): 30-32.

³⁶⁵ Dyer Heavenly, 56.

postcoital disposability that she embodies but also because she seems always awash in and subsumed by a generously engulfing sexuality.

5.0 THE EX-GI IN THE GRAY FLANNEL SUIT

According to a 1958 independent survey of fifty magazines, Playboy readers “rivaled only [those of] . . . The New Yorker and U.S. News and World Report in most upscale indicators, including median income and . . . expenditures [for] . . . travel, appliance[s,] . . . automobile[s, and] . . . clothing”³⁶⁶ With respect to the latter expense especially, these statistics reveal that, within the course of a decade, a rapid upswing had occurred in the postwar male’s sartorial consciousness. For in 1948, when former infantry man Allan Howerton mustered out of the Army, “[h]is civilian clothes felt strange and wrong; he could not wear them for any length of time, and so he stayed in uniform, as did many newly discharged G.I.s.”³⁶⁷ Feeling themselves “caught between two worlds, neither soldier nor citizen,” they considered “reenlist[ment in order] . . . to return to the security of barracks and friends [to whom they had entrusted their lives,] . . . to orders and orderliness to avoid that most awful question lurking out there in the open air: Now what?”³⁶⁸ For Howerton and his fellow male veterans, the answer to that question required a surrender of their wartime masculinity, one that relied upon male camaraderie with one’s fellow soldiers and upon unrelenting slaughter of the enemy on foreign battlefields of war. In place of wartime’s urgent, active, and fraternal masculinity, postwar America required a masculinity based instead on the familial domesticity of wife and children and on the corporate, consensus-building job

³⁶⁶ Nadel, 130.

³⁶⁷ Humes, 8.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, emphasis in the original.

that would comfortably support them, their suburban home, and their upwardly mobile aspirations.

As demonstrated by the newly discharged soldiers who nevertheless continued to wear their uniforms as they apprehensively wondered “What now?”, this shift in masculinities required, at the most essential level, a change of clothes--from combat fatigues to civilian dress. Reflecting the postwar male’s discomfort with and ignorance of the latter, various magazine advertisements devote much of their text to instructions regarding appropriate sartorial choices for men. For example, Esquire, “the nation’s leading men’s magazine [until] . . . Playboy dethroned” it in 1956, features a 1957 advertisement for City Club shoes that, like many women-directed advertisements, relies on a Hollywood endorsement--in this case, from actress “Jarma Lewis, featured in MGM’s ‘Raintree County.’”³⁶⁹ As subsequent discussions in this chapter indicate, Lewis’ direct address to the male viewer represents somewhat of an anomaly, since most male-themed advertisements feature either a male or neuter voice addressing either the male viewer directly or a female viewer presumed to be responsible for the proper care of the men in her life. Nevertheless, by advising the male reader that the “ ‘movie star’ in your life dresses correctly for every occasion . . . and her leading man (you) must fit smartly into every scene,” Lewis explicitly refers to the gender-based role-playing required of postwar females and males. Moreover, her claim that “City Club shows you how to be well-dressed and well-heeled, too,” acknowledges the male consumer’s need for expert assistance in order to successfully dress the part as escort of his “movie star” wife. Finally, Lewis’ instructions--“select a smart casual [pair of shoes] for leisure, a distinctive business shoe[,] and a well-bred dress shoe . . . [in order] to have the right shoe for every occasion[:] . . . for Dress[,] for Play[,] and for Every Day”--not

³⁶⁹ Nadel, 130.

only reflect, as postwar advertisements for female undergarments do, the need for a variety of choices appropriate to particular occasions but also an insistence upon a personal standard that is “smart,” “distinctive,” and “well-bred.”³⁷⁰

A pair of March 1956 Life advertisements for Jarman shoes similarly expounds upon the product’s variety and its smartness, a quality that extends to the shoes’ wearer). The first ad, for example, redundantly promises the male reader “You always look smarter in shoes of the right style and color; whatever the occasion. . . . [Jarman shoes] are unusually smart-looking, too. The second ad similarly repeats to its male audience the reassurance that “you’ll look extra smart in shoes of the right style and color . . . [and with Jarman shoes] you can have the head-to-toe smartness so important to the man who wants to step ahead.” As with the City Club shoes, though, the smartness achieved by wearing Jarman shoes of the “right style and color” may prove elusive without expert guidance. The first ad, for example, features “correct [shoe] styles to go with your brown or tan sports outfit, while the second devotes itself to footwear appropriate for “your blue or gray suit.” But lest the reader conclude from these headlines that he can simplify the chromatic elements of the postwar male’s dress code to “blue or gray suits for business” but “brown or tan sportswear for leisure,” the fine print of both advertisements refers to “other basic outfits” that completely contradict this code: namely, a “brown or tan [business] suit” as well as “blue or grey sports clothes.” Confronted with this array of colors and styles, the postwar male might well need to consult not only the knowledgeable Jarman shoe salesman but also “the free Jarman ‘Style-O-Scope,’ “ described in both advertisements as a “handy colorful chart with a ‘magic arrow’ that automatically shows you correct shoes to wear at all times.” This

³⁷⁰ Indeed, since the latter adjective “well-bred” accurately modifies persons rather than footwear—for who, one might ask, is responsible for parenting and rearing the “well-bred” shoe?—it necessarily refers to the wearer rather than that-which-is-worn.

repeated insistence on “correctness” is echoed in a Champ Hats advertisement in the October 1957 issue of Esquire. The advertisement celebrates the hat’s “tightly telescoped crown and correct width brim [which] creates that younger and more alert look” and thus implies that any variation from the unspecified “correct width brim” of a hat apparently confers upon its wearer not a younger and more alert look but rather an older and more somnolent one. Thus confronted with advertisements that purveyed an economy-spurring variety of sartorial choices even as they alluded to esoteric strictures governing such choices, bewildered veterans accustomed to the relative simplicity of their government-issued uniforms may understandably have relied upon the “authentic information” offered by “the free Jarman ‘Style-O-Scope’ “ so that they could always be “right”--that is, current and correct--in style.

Or, as a more comprehensive reference source, they could consult a “how-to” manual like Right Dress: Success through Better Grooming, which promises that “the well-groomed man gets the best table [at a restaurant,] . . . the girl[, and] . . . the job.”³⁷¹ Indeed, an April 1956 Life advertisement for Burlington Industries reflects the validity of the latter two claims, for it indicates that “[o]ur rising young executive . . . [can’t wait to] get to a phone . . . to tell her. . . [about t]he big promotion” he has just received in recognition, presumably, of his correct sartorial choices, for he “wears his new light-gray Pacific worsted flannel” and in this way emulates the “ ‘top brass’ [who] also wear suits of Pacific fabrics.” By thus referring in italics to the female presence in the life of the rising young executive, the Burlington advertisement reflects the fact that failure to marry carried financial repercussions for the postwar male, since “[l]ack of a suitable wife could mean [for him] the loss of a job or promotion.”³⁷² As further

³⁷¹ Bert Bacharach, Right Dress: Success through Better Grooming (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1959), 12, 11, 10.

³⁷² Coontz, 33.

evidence of postwar America's need for and insistence upon maritally committed heterosexual couples, a series of Pendleton advertisements in Esquire during November and December of 1957 show a husband and wife wearing matching robes on "Christmas Day" and matching shirt-jackets for their "happiest . . . Fall . . . hours." Similarly, a Chippewa Woolens advertisement from the December 1957 issue of Esquire also shows a husband and wife wearing matching shirt jackets, but Chippewa further visualizes the advantages of connubial partnership by depicting this couple resting against the thigh-high brick wall that bounds the lawn of the suburban home made possible by the well-dressed husband's ever-rising position in the corporate world. Perhaps to add the illusion of foreign travel and adventure to the postwar scenario of suburban domesticity, Pleetway advertisements in the October and December 1957 issues of Esquire respectively feature matching "Jamaica-Jama pajamas for him and her" and "Yokohoma pajamas for him and her . . . [with] Imported Oriental Rubber-Soled Sandals" to complete each partner's Japanese-flavored ensemble.³⁷³ And since, ideally, children also feature in postwar suburban domesticity, they also wear pajamas that match those of the male breadwinner. In a Weldon Pajamas advertisement in the December 1957 issue of Esquire, for example, movie star John Raitt, "co-starring in The Pajama Game, a Warner Bros. production," models three different pajama styles with his son Steve, who wears identical boy-sized versions of his father's sleepwear. In the final frame of The Pajama Game (George Abbott & Stanley Donen, 1957), Raitt, in the role of Sid Sokoloff, also models pajamas, but in this instance, he assumes a more sexually suggestive pose. He appears bare-chested, in pajama bottoms only, beside his girlfriend

³⁷³ With respect to the first Pleetway ad's associations with Jamaica, please see the section in Chapter 4.0 regarding Harry Belafonte and calypso. The Japanese influenced pajamas in the second Pleetway ad seem indicative of the United States' postwar regard for its wartime foe "the Japanese[, now deemed] . . . benevolent and friendly" in contradistinction to America's postwar Oriental enemy, the Chinese, "figured as evil and diabolical" (Benshoff, 124).

Babe (Doris Day), herself clad only in the matching pajama top. Perhaps the filmmakers refused to recreate this scene for the magazine, or perhaps Esquire, whose “claim to ‘respectability’ mandated its divorcing men’s interest from its sexual focus,” refused to publish such a recreation.³⁷⁴ These possibilities notwithstanding, the absence from a men’s magazine of an image that strict 50s’ censorship apparently deemed unprovocative enough for inclusion in the film seems curious, unless and until one considers that such an advertisement, abstracted from its diegetic context, might valorize a sexual license detrimental to postwar hegemony. Indeed, even absent a beddable female in the image, Raitt’s naked torso would, in and of itself, mark him as a non-hegemonic male and therefore as an undesirable endorser of Weldon pajamas. For as Cohan observes, “representations of the breadwinner did not need to translate his hegemony into a healthy, powerful body, [for] . . . the bland uniform attire of the gray flannel suit, white dress shirt, and fedora was the primary visual index of the breadwinner’s social position.”³⁷⁵ This image, he continues, marked a “contradistinction to the exposure of the male body . . . especially in the movies, where muscles, more than money, functioned to mark deviations from the norm.”³⁷⁶ Yet even though the exposure of his naked torso thus jeopardizes Sid’s hegemonic masculinity in The Pajama Game’s final frame, the film recuperates it not only with an implication of Sid’s and Babe’s imminent marriage, which serves as an indicator of postwar monogamy and domestication, but also with a diegetic conflict that pits Babe, a factory worker and union representative, against Sid, a member of management whose position as her superior thus suggests the correct status of their postwar gender roles. Restricted to only a one-page image, however, the Weldon advertisement necessarily lacks this recuperative potential of the

³⁷⁴ Nadel, 129-130.

³⁷⁵ Cohan, 60.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

feature-length film and therefore, in accordance with postwar America's hegemonic signifiers, depicts Raitt as an emphatically domesticated family man posing with his son in matching pajama pants AND tops. Ultimately, then, the advertisements for Jamaica-Jamas, Yokohoma Pajamas, and the matching father-son sleepwear uphold the comfy and upwardly aspiring domesticity of postwar hegemony rather than any libertine adventurism that might subvert it. By thus providing instruction--from Hollywood stars and other perceived experts--in making correct sartorial choices and by associating such choices with professional success, suburban domesticity, and marital and parental commitment, these advertisements directed the American male toward his postwar roles as corporate conformer; upwardly-aspiring breadwinner, homeowner, and head-of-household; committed spouse; and role-model father.

Again, in Cohan's words, the representation of the male as a "healthy, powerful body" was perceived as a "deviation from the[se] norms."³⁷⁷ As evidence of Cohan's observation, the members of the men's Olympic swim team in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Howard Hawks, 1953) remain completely oblivious to the curvaceous Dorothy Shaw's (Jane Russell's) plaintive, musical question "Aint There Anybody Here for Love?" and instead proceed to display their "healthy, powerful bod[ies]"--barely covered in almost indecently short, tight swim trunks--as they perform a series of acrobatic feats in sexually suggestive poses that surely represent a "deviation from the [heterosexual] norm."³⁷⁸ Partly for this reason, perhaps, representations of males engaged in vigorous exercise or athletics rarely appeared in advertisements of the time, even though such activities might have reduced the occurrences of "[h]igh blood pressure, ulcers, alcoholism, boredom and depression, and heart disease [that] all testified to the dangers of [the

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ I am indebted to Lucy Fischer for reminding me of this scene and of its significance to the perceived deviance of a healthy male body in postwar America.

postwar male's] job-related stress."³⁷⁹ A 1955 advertisement in Harper's Bazaar, in fact, noted that "[t]he American Heart Association reported 51.7% of deaths last year were from heart attacks. Insurance companies say that tensions of modern business, overweight and overwork contribute to this condition. If [your husband is] . . . overweight . . . overworked and underexercised . . . he's headed for that 'Business Man's Waterloo.' " As a solution, the advertisement suggests the "gentle, soothing passive exercise" provided by the Stauffer Office Gym, since it requires "[n]o effort on his part . . . no disrobing or getting 'hot under the collar' . . . he just relaxes, the motor does the exercise for him." Like the Stauffer Home Plan advertised for female use discussed in Chapter 2, the Stauffer Office Gym resembles a webbed patio chaise lounge with some sort of rotating or vibrating device positioned in the middle. Like the previously discussed advertisement also, the Office Gym advertisement remains obscure regarding the actual nature or mechanisms of the weight-reducing apparatus but stresses the lack of work required for the user to obtain successful results. Finally, the Office Gym advertisement, entitled "What Every Woman Should Know About Her Husband," pictures a peignoir-clad female lounging on a double bed with satin headboard. This female "Every Woman" lies on her stomach next to the satin nightgown she has already doffed, and she uses her elbows to brace her torso upwards so that her cleavage threatens to spill out of its diaphanous confines as she gazes out at the viewer. Visually, then, the advertisement seems to indicate that the wife who provides her husband with the Office Gym assures him of conquering the "Businessman's Waterloo" and herself of increased male vigor in the boudoir. A Barcalounger advertisement in the December 1957 issue of Esquire addresses this same concern regarding male stress from overwork. It depicts not the seductively-dressed and seductively posed Every Woman of the Stauffer

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

advertisement but rather an adoring wife and daughter who look down fondly upon their family breadwinner as he reclines beneath the Christmas tree in a Barcalounger and happily unwinds from the rigors of the office. While it is less sexually suggestive than the Stauffer advertisement (even though it appears in Esquire, a men's magazine), the Barcalounger advertisement articulates a more explicit threat regarding male overwork, for the smiling daughter carries a sign that asks, "Guess who wants you to live forever?" Like their female counterparts, then, postwar males were dissuaded from performing the type of exercise that, at least temporarily, could potentially liberate their containment culture bodies.

Yet the Stauffer advertisements geared for the postwar female addressed her directly and exclusively and featured only a single female in the image. As the most recently discussed ads indicate, though, advertisements for Stauffer apparatus intended for male usage address and/or depict the woman in his life or even the rest of his immediate family. These advertisements thus suggest that male health is the responsibility of the female in particular and the family as a whole. Moreover, another Stauffer advertisement, from the October 1956 issue of Mademoiselle, suggests that the couple who "Stauffers" together stays together and also enjoys the attractive life and appearance of Hollywood celebrities Gordon and Sheila MacRae. In the advertisement, Sheila confides that when her husband, who plays Curly in Oklahoma! (Zinnemann, 1956), "doesn't have time for outdoor exercise . . . he . . . comes home from the studio [and] lies down on the Stauffer unit . . . [which] helps him maintain just the right proportions and seems to relax him completely." With this claim, Sheila MacRae implicitly acknowledges the active nature of "outdoor exercise" by counterposing it with the Stauffer unit, which, as noted previously, relies on what one of its advertisement's describes as "passive" exercise. Yet advertisements depicting men indulging in active, outdoor exercise occur

infrequently. In fact, even advertisements bearing action-connoting headlines--“Spirited . . . like the men who wear them” and “Men of Action Prefer Wings Shirts for Men and Boys”--contain visuals that belie the words. For example, while Mom and the kids play outside in the snow, the allegedly “spirited” men in the December 1957 Esquire advertisement engage in relaxed gift-giving, which perhaps accounts for the pair of hockey skates that one man idly holds as he rests his elbow on another man’s shoulder. Similarly, the “men of action”--grandfather, father, and son--in the November 1957 Esquire advertisement assume static and staged hunting poses and seemingly confine their hunting to an indoor preserve, since they wear neither jackets, hats, nor gloves. Even the hunter who does venture outdoors, though, remains similarly and stolidly posed. For example, despite the energetic headline “For Every State of Action. . . of Catalina Sweaters,” a 1958 advertisement in Playboy depicts a hunter who, wearing a polo-collared Catalina sweater as protection against the elements, merely looks into the distance as he holds his rifle, unaimed, obliquely across his body. Indeed, the purported “action” performed by each of the models in the frames flanking the one in which the hunter appears consists similarly of a stare into the middle distance while holding a not-particularly-hefty implement. One model in a V-neck cardigan, for example, holds binoculars, while a model in a hooded sweater carries a stopwatch. Thus, the very nature of both these devices reveals that, despite the advertisements’ repeated insistence on action--”for every state of action,” ”focus on action,” “geared for action”--the men are nevertheless passive observers--watching birds? timing a racer?--rather than active participants.

Indeed, from the end of 1956 to the end of 1959, the Playboy advertisement that features the most energetically employed male models is one that appears in the March 1959 issue and that depicts two men engaged in the winter sport of curling. Yet the sport’s most strenuous

action--sweeping a path that optimally propels the polished granite stones down the ice toward the concentric circles of the target--has apparently already been completed, for two stones rest inside the target area. Within its circle, one player, supported by his broom, bends slightly at the waist to consult with his teammate, who crouches on the ice over one of the stones. In the left foreground, a third man, chapeau-ed, like the other two, in a Scottish tam-o-shanter with pom-pom, stands observing them and holding a glass of the advertised product, Hiram Walker's Whiskey. Finally, the caption--"people by Imperial because they have an educated taste"--indicates that Hiram Walker wishes to attract male consumers not by appealing to their athletic aspirations but rather by suggesting that drinking this product will grant them entree to an elite male fraternity whose distinguished members share not only a distinctive form of headgear representative of Scotland, where curling originated, but also an esoteric knowledge of a fairly obscure sport--and an intellectual-vs.-physical one, "whose "complex [strategies] of stone placement and shot selection ha[ve] led some to refer to [it] . . . as 'chess on ice.'"³⁸⁰

Indeed, even those images featuring actual athletes of the time fail to foreground the active physicality of the men upon whose name recognition the advertisements rely. Instead, the advertisements focus on appearance rather than performance. An August 1959 advertisement in Playboy, for example, features "[a] new series of articles by baseball's famous left-hander [Warren Spahn] expressing his personal views on everything from fast balls to fall fashion." Yet despite this claim, the text focuses completely on the latter to the exclusion of the former. Also, like many of the advertisements previously discussed, Spahn's article lectures the male consumer about the correct mode of dress, specifically warning that "nothing can ruin a man's smart appearance faster than an old, frayed, cracked belt"; and to remedy this sartorial gaffe, Spahn

³⁸⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/curling> (12 February 2008).

recommends “ ‘Paris’ Tallow Leather Belts.” And again, like many of the previously discussed advertisements, Spahn’s article also educates the male consumer regarding styles appropriate to the occasion, for even though he contends that “Paris” belts are “perfect for wear with fabrics such as tweed, worsted, or shetland,” only the “custom-link style [is suitable] for dress, [while] the 1” width [should be reserved only] for casual wear.” Moreover, Spahn’s one allusion to his athletic career--”[t]allow leather is rugged as the leather cover on a baseball, yet as supple as my glove”--takes less space than his reference to his post-sports pursuit: “I have a herd of fine Hereford cattle in Oklahoma, and I don’t think any of those cows have hides good enough for these ‘Paris’ Belts.” Besides foregrounding Spahn as a now-settled and prosperous businessman (“with a herd of fine Hereford cattle”) rather than as a less-hegemonic sports figure, these words also neutralize the energetically rough-and-tumble, ropin’-and-rustlin’, cowboy-like connotations of cattle ranching by positing its raw material--cows--as the substandard aesthetic for gentlemen’s leather accessories.

The two Jantzen advertisements from the September and August 1959 issues of Playboy similarly foreground aesthetics rather than athletics. In one ad, for example, Frank Gifford, despite his status as “star halfback for New York Giants,” engages in nothing more energetic than the perusal of a golf club held up for his inspection by the similarly inactive “great golf pro” Ken Venturi. Gifford wears a pullover, while Venturi wears the matching cardigan, each of which the advertisement designates as “an after-golf sweater.” This nomenclature thus indicates that an additional wardrobe choice still confronts the postwar male: a during-golf sweater. And, in the other ad, Venturi models such a sweater, which differs from its post-golf counterpart because the former boasts “[t]he give in the shoulders[,which] was designed for a free and easy swing, according to Ken’s requirements.” Yet rather than visually demonstrating this claim by

depicting Ken Venturi in mid-swing, the advertisement shows him leaning against a tree with his bag of golf clubs resting, unused, beside him. Again, then, despite its use of an actual sports professional, the advertisement valorizes appearance over performance. Moreover, as a warning against casual dress that fails to comply with exacting postwar standards, the advertisement notes that “well-dressed golfers seldom are mistaken for jockeys at work.” This caveat thus seeks to insure that the man who doffs his gray flannel suit for more casual wear should not similarly relieve himself of the upwardly-mobile aspirations and corporate uniformity that the suit represents. Finally, the advertisement’s assumption--“if you can’t . . . play golf like the professionals . . . you’ll settle for looking like a pro”--reaffirms the overarching message of many of these advertisements: males should first strive to look the part before they attempt to perform it.

Indeed, Cohan makes a similar point about the character of Tom Rath (Gregory Peck) in The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit (Nunnally Johnson, 1956). Cohan begins by quoting an exchange between Tom and his fellow commuter Bill Hawthorne, who has advised him about a job opening up in the Public Relations Department of United Broadcasting Company (UBC). Tom protests, “I don’t know anything about PR.” “Who does?” Hawkin replies. “But you have a clean shirt. You bathe every day. That’s all there is to it.” Cohan analyzes this conversation as follows:

Hawthorne’s remark puts forward the value of packaging over contents, as if a position in Public Relations on Madison Avenue were already indistinguishable from both its task, advertising consumption to the middle class, and its object, mass-produced commodities. As a consequence, in order to succeed at his job Tom simply has to put on his gray flannel suit and look the part.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ Cohan, 76.

And, after completing his analysis of The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, Cohan identifies a more extreme scenario that arises from the “value of packaging over contents,” for he concludes: “the film shows that, if you take away the suit, you will have trouble finding the man.”³⁸²

Various advertisements of the time, I believe, anticipated viewers’ belief in this perception--no man exists beneath the suit--and sought to persuade them of its falsity in order to reassure the American male that even as he assumed his gray- flannel, postwar masculinity he would simply camouflage rather than surrender his wartime virility. For example, two Hanes advertisements that appeared in Life in March 1956 depict a man’s short-sleeved undershirt tucked into a pair of boxer shorts and a child-sized version of the same ensemble. In each advertisement, the man’s underwear and the boy’s appear as a photograph, but the bodies inhabiting them are cartoon renderings respectively of a male fox--or foxy male--and his son, holding a hammer and saw respectively and thus engaged in the manly art of home repair; and a male lion and his cub, each holding a fishing pole and thus signifying their manly role as hunters versus gatherers. This odd disjunction of cartoon animals wearing “real” underwear implicitly recognizes that a human male head-of-household, stripped of his corporate, breadwinning Gray Flannel Suit--and the “social if not moral authority [with which it] invest[s its wearer]”--and clothed only in Hanes underwear, might well appear undignified, unmanly, and unworthy of his exalted rank in the family hierarchy.³⁸³ On the other hand, the T-shirt, by the time both these advertisements appeared in 1956, had accrued a potentially erotic valence. For unlike the T-shirts of the early 1950s, which were “typically worn loose, with sleeves down to the elbows,” the Hanes T-shirts in both these advertisements are relatively fitted to the bodies of the fox and

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 78.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 19.

his kit and the lion and his cub.³⁸⁴ As such, they more closely resemble the T-shirt worn by Marlon Brando in his role as Stanley Kowalski in A Streetcar Named Desire (Elia Kazan, 1953). Susan Bordo recounts that “[f]or Stanley’s clothing in the play, costumer Lucinda Ballard . . . shrank the T-shirts to cling,” and her torso-hugging innovation was retained for the movie.³⁸⁵ Indeed, the T-shirt features prominently in what is probably the film’s most erotic scene: after a violent quarrel with his wife Stella (Kim Hunter), Stanley cries out to her from the bottom of the stairs and falls to his knees. Stella, “visibly aroused,” descends toward Stanley, “his wet T-shirt clinging to his body and torn open to reveal the expanse of his muscular back.”³⁸⁶ Brando thus “made the torn undershirt a symbol of male virility.”³⁸⁷ Cohan, moreover, argues that in “contrast to the gray flannel uniform of hegemonic masculinity, Brando’s torn T-shirt appeared to signify a more authentic expression of ‘pure’ masculinity”;³⁸⁸ and he quotes Donald Spoto to this effect: “[Brando] stands for everything that is primitive and untamed in the masculine psyche and that will survive in spite of a repressive and ordered society.”³⁸⁹ As a symbol, then, of erotic and unrepressed masculinity, the Brando-style T-shirt was “copied by James Dean, Paul Newman, and others”--not only for its sexually spectacularizing effect on a taut, muscular male torso but also for its perception as “a required uniform for many would-be teen rebels.”³⁹⁰ The Hanes ads, then, neutralize the Brandoesque shirt’s transgressively erotic valence by showing it modeled on a cartoon animal rather than on that of a human male. Yet despite his neutralized

³⁸⁴ Susan Bordo, The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and Private (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999), 138.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 138, 136.

³⁸⁶ Cohan, 44.

³⁸⁷ Maurice Zolotov, “Brando—The Real Story,” Los Angeles Examiner, 6 January 1957, 14; quoted in Cohan, 244.

³⁸⁸ Cohan, 246.

³⁸⁹ Donald Spoto, Camerado: Hollywood and the American Man (New York: New American Library, 1978); quoted in Cohan, 246.

³⁹⁰ Bordo, 133.

sexuality and his rendering as a cartoon, the adult male lion nevertheless appears engagingly appropriate to his informal attire yet sufficiently hirsute and leonine to qualify as a benign King of the Jungle and as an exemplary model of masculinity for his son, whose fish and phallic fishing pole are miniaturized version's of his sire's.

Relegated to the lower left corner of the advertisement, the third member of the pride, the lioness, beams proudly as she surveys the clothesline bearing the underwear of her menfolk. Approximately one-tenth the size of the males, the lioness and her laundry are rendered wholly as a cartoon. An apron covers the lower half of her body, and she crosses her arms/paws demurely over the upper half. In contrast to her decorum, however, the underclothes that flank her as they depend from the clothesline are not the short-sleeved T-shirts and boxers that the males wear in the larger picture but rather a sleeveless undershirt and an anatomically designed pair of briefs--which the small print identifies as "Fig Leaf." A lion-hearted ruler and protector of his family, the male lion, in or out of his Brandoesque T-shirt and Fig Leaf undershorts, is apparently a tiger in the bedroom, judging by his mate's satisfied smile. Presumably, then, the lioness' meager allotment of print and space is intended not simply as a diminution of her position within the pride but also as a way of including sexually monogamous subject matter with discretion. The largest print in the advertisement--"your family has men who'd like Hanes, too!"--directly addresses the reader and implicitly constructs this reader not only as female, wife, and mother but also as the person in charge of her family's consumer spending, even as it relates to intimate male apparel. By thus imagining any adult male with underwear needs as the leonine ruler and protector of his offspring and his sexually-satisfied, consumer-spending hausfrau, the Hanes advertisement verbally and visually constructs as a social and cultural norm the nuclear family and the gendered division of labor that sustains it.

Similarly, an August 1956 advertisement in Mademoiselle features a woman “snar[ing] . . . a foxy fellow,” portrayed by a man on his hands and knees and wearing a *papier-mache* fox head, while a Life advertisement for Clipper Craft suits depicts the sketch of a man’s business suit worn by a creature with the hands and feet of a human but with the head of a tiger. While the tiger’s expression is not altogether menacing, neither is it the benign visage of the Hanes underwear lion discussed previously. One might describe the tiger’s expression as restfully formidable--the way, perhaps, a shrewd and astute businessman would look if his gray flannel suit did not confer upon him a look of bland conformity. Perhaps, then, in anticipation of the suit’s capacity to render the human face of the organization man as blandly unremarkable, the advertisers chose instead the rather oversized head of a tiger to suggest the efficiently predatory and sleekly dangerous business man’s body that stealthily lies in wait beneath the Clipper Craft suit.

Indeed, throughout the 1950s, the media used references to and images of tigers to denote a kind of macho power. In 1952, for example, Tony the Tiger became the cartoon mascot for Kellogg’s Sugar Frosted Flakes breakfast cereal, growling “They’re Grrreat!” in the “deep bass voice” of his vocal portrayer Thurl Ravenscroft.³⁹¹ And in 1959, an advertising copywriter in Chicago came up with the advertising slogan “Put a tiger in your tank” to indicate the “extra power” of Enco Extra Gasoline.³⁹² Also in 1959, teen idol Fabian released his million-selling hit single “Tiger,” in which he compares himself to the eponymous beast because he is “ready to growl,” “on the prowl,” “wild,” “[un]tamed.” Finally, the following dialogue, excerpted from The Seven Year Itch (Billy Wilder, 1955), permits a glimpse into the postwar reader’s understanding of the tiger-as-signifier. In this speech, which was discussed in the preceding

³⁹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_the_Tiger (3 March 2009).

³⁹² http://www.exxonmobil.com/Corporate/history/about_who_history_alt.aspx (3 March 2009).

chapter, *The Girl* (Marilyn Monroe) affirms to her married admirer Richard Sheridan (Tom Ewell)--and, by extension, every male heterosexual in the audience--her willingness to accept the non-ideal Everyman as her romantic and sexual partner:

You and your imagination. You think every girl's a dope. You think a girl goes to a party and there's some guy, a great big lunk in a fancy striped vest, strutting around like a tiger, giving you that "I'm so handsome, you can't resist me" look. And from this she's supposed to fall flat on her face. Well, she doesn't fall flat on her face . . . But there's another guy in the room. Way over in the corner. Maybe he's kind of nervous and shy and perspiring a little. First you look past him. But then you kind of sense he's gentle and kind and worried, and he'll be gentle with you, nice and sweet. That's what's really exciting. . . . If I were your wife, I'd be very jealous of you. I'd be very, very jealous.

Thus, although *The Girl* denigrates the strutting male partygoer and, by extension, the tiger he resembles, the context of her speech suggests that the tiger connotes confident, attention-getting, and handsome virility, a quality that *Clipper Craft* would presumably like to exploit via the advertisement's tiger iconography. Once again, then, an advertisement's reliance on an animal model instead of a human male not only acknowledges the latter's belief in his inability to transcend conformist erasure as the *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* but also seeks to reassure him that a virile beast lurks beneath it.

Like these advertisements, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, I believe, similarly anticipates viewers' belief in the perception that no man exists beneath the suit and thus seeks to reassure them of its falsity. Consequently, I would like to propose and discuss an alternative interpretation to the one that Cohan, as previously discussed, cites as his conclusion: "the film shows that, if you take away the suit, you will have trouble finding the man."³⁹³ On the contrary, I believe that the film takes Cohan's conclusion as its starting premise and then commits itself to

³⁹³ Cohan, 78.

negating it. The theatrical trailer, for example, features Gregory Peck, in his Tom Rath business suit, stepping out from the cover of the Sloan Wilson novel on which the film is based, and directly addressing the audience with these words:

Hello. America took this great best-seller to its heart because it could be the story of any American: your husband or wife, your mother or father, your boss, or even yourself. Here is the story of a man's hidden lives, of intimate secrets he feared to share with any one, of the two women he loved. . . . Here are the once-in-a-lifetime dramas that crowd the fascinating life of The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.

For Tom, these “once-in-a-lifetime dramas” occur during World War II, depicted in the film via flashbacks, one of which occurs while Rath, as part of his job interview with UBC, deliberates over the assignment given to him: in an hour, write your autobiography, and end it by completing the statement: “The most significant thing about me is. . . .” On a single sheet of paper, Tom types a short paragraph, whose individual words remain indiscernible, and then pauses to think after he types the very visible words, “The most significant thing about me is. . . .” Lost in thought, Tom recalls accidentally killing his best buddy with a grenade he has tossed in a successful effort to demolish the Japanese bunker that has pinned down and slaughtered many members of his unit. This juxtaposition of wartime flashback and postwar job application thus sets up the expectation that at least a partial account of the former will feature in the latter, but instead, Tom destroys the existing draft of his autobiography and instead submits only the following paragraph to UBC:

The most significant thing about me, as far as the United Broadcasting Corporation is concerned, is that I am applying for a position in its public relations department, and after a reasonable period of learning, I believe I could do a good job. I will be glad to answer any other questions relevant to this

application for employment, but after giving it serious thought, I am unable to convince myself that any further speculation on my importance could be of any legitimate interest or value to United Broadcasting Corporation.

In conjunction with the film's depiction of his bravery in battle and his heartbrokenness at the death of his friend, Tom's decision to write the affectless autobiography cited above represents, I believe, a reaffirmation of the reassuring message conveyed by the previously discussed advertisements and by the film's theatrical trailer: beneath the corporate erasure of the gray flannel suit exists an intensely vital man who, as the trailer indicates, lives a "fascinating life." Moreover, Tom's refusal to divulge to his employer any extraneous information about himself negotiates an ingenious balance between the contending forces of postwar American culture--whose economic, domestic, and political infrastructure relied on the organization man--and of the postwar American male, whose domesticated masculinity required acknowledgment of its underlying virility. Thus, even as Tom, in his autobiography, defines himself publicly only in terms of his (possible) corporate job and its gray-flannel emblem, he also shows, by virtue of his wartime memory, the intensely dramatic events that colored his personal life. By deliberately and consciously choosing to omit an account of these battlefield events from his autobiography, then, Tom simultaneously confirms his--and by extension, every male's--wartime virility even as he shows, by his refusal to publicize it, that such virility, irrelevant in corporate postwar America, requires the shrouding of a gray flannel suit. Similarly shrouded—or "repressed," as Cohan argues—is the violence inherent in that wartime virility.³⁹⁴ Indeed, postwar anxiety concerning this violence or the repression of it led to "news stories . . . [in which] the angry vet was depicted either as . . . a brutal killing machine set loose on city streets . . . or as . . . a shell-

³⁹⁴ Cohan, 71.

shocked bundle of nerves, unable to hold down the responsibilities of breadwinning.”³⁹⁵ As an upwardly aspiring breadwinner, Tom, as Cohan observes, works toward the “repression of that [wartime] violence, committed not in acts of valor but in the normal mixed-up course of events,” and that repression “motivates his present passivity.”³⁹⁶ Cohan concludes that Tom is “now so repressed . . . that . . . the site where his anger appears to reveal its masking is, symptomatically, his own surname: *(w)rath*.”³⁹⁷ Thus, by withholding from his autobiography any mention of his war service, Tom simultaneously and successfully shields his personal life from corporate scrutiny even as he presents himself as the blandly cooperative corporate conformist whose gray flannel suit shrouds the sometimes dark, sometimes colorful fabric of his life.

With his tersely abbreviated autobiography, moreover, Tom confounds UBC’s head of public relations, Gordon Jenkins (Arthur O’Connell), who, upon accepting it, protests, “Is this all? . . . But you’ve still got about twelve minutes [before your one-hour deadline expires]!” In a deft and ironic turnabout, then, Tom—even in advance of his employment with UCB—defies corporate expectations by submitting a self-description reflective of the self-effacing organization man firms generally prize rather than the self-affirming individual this particular firm anticipates. Once hired, Tom again risks disfavor when he visits the office of his immediate superior Bill Ogden (Henry Daniell) in order to hear the latter’s comments on the latest draft of a speech Tom has written for Ralph Hopkins, UBC’s president. While Ogden sits at his desk facing Tom, also seated, the two men share the following exchange:

Ogden. This is awful, worse than the others. Aren’t you interested in this project?

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Rath. Are you asking that seriously?
Ogden. This doesn't do at all.
Rath. Why doesn't it?
Ogden. It just misses, that's all.
Rath. If you don't mind my saying so, that's not a very helpful form of criticism. Can't you TELL me what's wrong with it?
Ogden. It's got no oomph.
Rath. "No oomph."
Ogden. You know what I mean.
Rath. Why don't you let Mr. Hopkins take a look at it and decide for himself whether it's got "oomph" or not?
Ogden. What? Are you trying to be funny?
Rath. No, I'm only trying to get a little intelligible help on this assignment.
Ogden. You mean you can't handle it by yourself?
Rath. I haven't been asked to do that. I was told to work with you. And this is the fifth time I've been here now, and the best I've been able to get out of you so far is "no oomph"--a meaningless piece of crud out of a movie ad 15 years ago. I could get better than that out of my six-year-old son.
Ogden. If you're not careful, Mr. Rath, you may find yourself thinking about it out on Madison Avenue.
Rath. Well, that's all right with me. But first I'd like to see you break that word down in English.
Ogden. I think you'd better drop the whole matter. *Still seated, he turns away from Rath and toward the phone on his desk.* I'll do it myself. *Speaking into the phone:* Get me Charlie Merrick. I'll hold.
Rath. *Rising from his seat.* You mean I'm fired?
Ogden. *Ignoring Rath and speaking into phone:* Charlie? *He smiles for the first time in this scene.* What happened after I left? *Rath stalks out of Ogden's office.* Uh-huh. He did?

In this exchange, then, Tom jeopardizes his position with UBC by repeatedly insulting his superior's "unintelligible" criticisms, by discounting the corporate chain-of-command with the suggestion that he work directly with company president Hopkins rather than with his intermediary Ogden, and by confronting the threat of dismissal with "that's all right with me" rather than with an apology. Also, by again defying corporate expectations, Tom exhibits a virility that is further enhanced by Ogden's effeteness. For the way in which Ogden (London-born actor Henry Daniell) prissily articulates his words with the hint of an upper-class British accent subtly effeminates him. At the scene's end, moreover, this subtle effeminacy grows more

pronounced when Ogden picks up his phone--not to make a business call or to find out the latest sports scores but rather to snub Tom rather than manfully confront him and to girlishly check on the latest tidbit of juicy gossip: "What happened after I left?" Ogden's effeminacy thus serves to offset and thus further guarantee the uncowering virility that Tom exhibits in the course of their confrontation.

Notably, though, Cohan fails to identify Ogden as an instigator of Tom's ire; instead, he identifies Edward Schultz (Joseph Sweeney), the caregiver to Tom's now deceased grandmother, as "the only character in the film who incites Tom into expressing his anger."³⁹⁸ In the scene to which Cohan refers, Tom and his wife Betsy (Jennifer Jones) visit grandmother's house, their legacy, in order to assess its potential as a new home for themselves and their three children. While there, Tom assures Schultz, "You'll always have a home in this house." Schultz, however, rejects Tom's "charity" and instead insists that grandmother left the house to him in a will dated more recently than Tom's. In addition, he refers to Tom's grandmother as a "crazy old woman . . . [who was] filthy [and] never bathed." Enraged, Tom stalks toward Schultz and grabs him by the tie, momentarily choking him. He then pushes him forcibly away and orders him to leave the premises within the hour. Particularly in view of Schultz's German surname, this scene recalls an earlier wartime flashback in which Tom, on a freezing night in Europe, strangles a young German soldier in order to steal his coat. The similarity of both acts of violence and of the ethnicity of the victims subjected to it seems to indicate that, in moderation, the postwar male may be required to rely upon wartime strategies in order to protect his home. In peacetime, however, Tom can rely on American justice to settle disputes, so after ejecting Schultz, he consults Judge Bernstein (Lee J. Cobb) about the validity of his claim to his

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

grandmother's house. Happily for Tom, "the judge uncovers Schultz's fraud and confirms Tom's honesty, which Betsy has challenged when she berated her husband for trying to play all the angles at work."³⁹⁹ In the course of that conversation between husband and wife, Betsy listens while Tom tells her about his work dilemma: since he must critique a speech that UBC president Ralph Hopkins (Fredric March) has written, he wonders if he should take the most prudent course and offer his superior only flattering feedback. "This is a loaded situation with all kinds of angles to it," Tom tells Betsy. "I didn't want to get into this rat race, and I'd be a fool not to play it the way everyone else does."⁴⁰⁰ Betsy, on the other hand, protests that she doesn't want her husband "to turn into a cheap, slippery yes-man." Ultimately, Tom refuses to engage in this deceit that he has briefly considered. Instead, he treats Hopkins with the same forthrightness that he has exhibited in his previously discussed corporate encounters with Gordon Jenkins and Bill Ogden.

As the recipient of Tom's honest opinion, Hopkins, despite his position as company president, serves as a cautionary figure, for the price he pays for his business success is divorce from his wife and estrangement from his wastrel daughter. As such, he offsets the figure of Tom as a caring family man who helps his wife with the dishes and who stops at the drugstore to buy his chickenpox-stricken daughter a stuffed animal. Another minor family crisis occurs when

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ In referring to the "rat race," Tom uses a term that—according to *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8th ed., Paul Beale, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002)—came into public use around 1945, at the end of the war, when, presumably and understandably, the need arose for a term that means "fierce competition to make a living." Ten years later in the spring of 1955, Lauren Bacall coined another rodent-based term—"rat pack"—to describe the unkempt, alcohol-fueled group of carousers organized by Frank Sinatra to celebrate, with a four-day gambling binge, Noel Coward's appearance at the Desert Inn in Las Vegas. According to Nathaniel Benchley's account in his book *Humphrey Bogart* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975), Bacall "surveyed the wreckage of the party and said, 'You look like goddam rat pack' " (216). According to *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 17th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), *Time* magazine would subsequently use the same term to refer to the "showbiz entourage [that was led, once again, by] . . . by Frank Sinatra [and that included] Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Lawford[,] and Joey Bishop.

Tom's son 6-year-old son Petey (Mickey Maga), upset because dirt-conscious Betsy forbids him to take the family dog to bed with him, spurns Tom's usual form of address--"Old Pal"--telling his father, "I'm not your pal." That night, Petey, in his French Legionnaire's uniform, attempts to run away from home, but he quickly returns when the sound of quarreling cats frightens him. After watching his son sorrowfully reenter the house, Tom takes the dog outside, hoses her off, and then takes her upstairs to join Petey in his bed. Their bond restored, Tom tells Petey, "Good night, Old Pal," and his son responds, "Good night, Old Pop." By thus empathizing with and remedying his son's hurt feelings, Tom demonstrates an other-oriented outlook stereotypically gendered as feminine and generally required of postwar males who served in the corporate workplace and wore its gray flannel uniform. Finally, Petey's choice of running-away attire--a French Legionnaire's uniform--suggests that recourse to the military as a means to escape the indignities of domesticity is as childish and unproductive a venture as Petey's.

Although Tom's actions in soothing his son's hurt feelings do not require wartime bravado, they nevertheless represent a kind of quotidian heroism that Bosley Crowther alludes to in this excerpt from his review of the film:

The headaches, responsibilities and anxieties that weigh upon Tom Rath, the hero, are not the sharp dilemmas that usually emerge in a story or a play. They are the complex accumulations of little pressures, crises, and concerns that creep up on an average fellow trying to get along in this geared up world and can atomize him and his family if he isn't sensible and hasn't some help⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰¹ Bosley Crowther, "Mature, Tender and Touching: 'Man in Gray Flannel Suit' is at Roxy"; New York Times, 13 April 1956. The word "atomize," in existence, according to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, since 1845, nevertheless must have had particular resonance with postwar readers who likely attributed the end of World War II to the 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings that marked the dawn of the atomic age.

Happily, Tom is sensible and does have help--his wife Betsy, Judge Bernstein, UBC president Ralph Hopkins--yet the overarching trouble that continues to plague him arises from the experiences of his wartime past. Cohan identifies Tom's problem variously as "moral paralysis," "anger which remains as the residue of his war experience," "anxiety about taking risks," "repress[ed] . . . violence," and "failure of nerve."⁴⁰² In general, though, Tom's problem, I believe, can be summarized in three words: lack of optimism. As evidenced by the postwar baby boom, for example, "Americans felt freed from the social anguish of the past . . . and had begun to feel that the future held infinite promise."⁴⁰³ In addition, "children would also be a connection to [a more utopian] future and a means of replenishing a world depleted by war deaths."⁴⁰⁴ In the Rath household, however, the children themselves, far from serving as sources of optimism, instead "reflect [Tom's] . . . own morbidity."⁴⁰⁵ When Tom's daughter comes down with chickenpox, for example, she tells her father she has contracted an infinitely more fatal disease: smallpox. In addition, her sister maintains macabre vigilance over her sibling and persists in uttering death-themed questions and comments regarding her condition: "Is she going to die?", "I think she's going to die," "I think she's dying now," "Is she dead?" Petey, too, contributes his own variation on the death theme, telling his family, "I don't care if you die, I want you to die, I want everybody to die." Similarly, Tom asks Betsy, "Did you ever stop to think about what might happen to you if I drop dead some morning?" As the one optimistic member of the Rath family, however, Betsy urges Tom, "You've got to believe that things are going to get better." But Tom's pessimism has taken root during the war, when, even on leave in an Italian village, he only reluctantly accompanies his army pal Caesar Gardella (Keenan Wynn) for a night on the

⁴⁰² Cohan, 69, 70, 71, 78.

⁴⁰³ Quart, 13-14.

⁴⁰⁴ May, 23.

⁴⁰⁵ Cohan, 70.

town. Moreover, even when Gardella introduces Tom to Maria (Marisa Pavan), Tom indicates his attraction to her in unsettlingly morbid terms. During their first date, for example, he asks, “[C]ould [I] interest you in a proposition to be my widow?” Even after they have enjoyed several days and nights together, moreover, Tom continues to rely on gallows humor, happily commenting, “I may instruct my attorneys to draw up a will and leave my entire estate to you.” Only when they spend their last afternoon together does Tom express a more affirmative outlook. As he and Maria lie together, they utter the following words:

Maria. You don’t still believe that when you get out to the Pacific. . . ?

Tom. About being killed?

Maria. You don’t believe that anymore, do you?

Tom. No, I don’t THINK like that anymore. I don’t think anything at all about the future, or the past either. Just what’s now, this minute.

Maria, then, has relieved Tom of his pessimism, but the concentrated focus on the present that he espouses in its place cannot sustain him when, on an island in the Pacific, he accidentally kills his best friend. Rather than an unthinking, live-for-the-moment optimism, then, Tom, in order to fulfill his role in postwar America, needs a temporally-conscious one that accepts the past and looks forward to the future. Ultimately, he acquires this optimism when, after confessing his wartime adultery to Betsy, she agrees they should help with the financial support of the child born as a result of it. At the film’s conclusion, then, this optimism allows Tom to accept the past instead of retreating into it and to embrace the future instead of fearing it. Thus, in the visual terms of the film’s advertisement, the white-on-black sketch of Tom in the military uniform of his wartime past no longer overshadows his corporately-clad self in the postwar present; instead, the latter has incorporated the former and the result is not, as Cohan suggests, an uninhabited gray flannel suit but rather a fully integrated man.

From Here to Eternity (Fred Zinnemann, 1953) also explores this conflict between military masculinity and the domesticated version. Neither Milt Warden (Burt Lancaster) nor Robert E. Lee Prewitt (Montgomery Clift), soldiers stationed in Hawaii in the days before the United States enters World War II, is willing to give up the military for the woman he loves. Milt, for example, cannot even agree to the request of his married lover Karen (Deborah Kerr) that he enter officers' candidacy school, for he wishes to remain an enlisted man rather than emulate Company Commander Dana Holmes (Philip Ober), his superior and Karen's husband. In the words of Jackie Byars, Holmes "move(s) among the Organization Men who put on airs as they conform to the expectations of peers more concerned with socioeconomic status than with individualism."⁴⁰⁶ Byars attributes Milt's aversion to becoming an Organization Man to his view of masculinity, which, she says, is "tied to what he perceives as freedom within a system, freedom he must forfeit [if he chooses] to become an officer."⁴⁰⁷ The evidence she presents, however, allows for the identification of a much more specific motivation on Milt's part. Namely, in rejecting an officer's position, Milt in effect rejects the masculinity associated with suburban, corporate America, for his perception of military officers as conformist, status-seeking Organization Men indicates that he envisions them not in military uniforms but rather in gray flannel suits.

Prewitt, too, intends to remain an enlisted man, though his girlfriend Alma (Donna Reed) has upwardly mobile aspirations just as Karen does; unlike Karen, though, Alma intends to realize them on her own, at least initially. Thus, rather than marrying Prewitt, Alma intends to

⁴⁰⁶ Jackie Byars, All That Hollywood Allows: Re-reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 104. Byars, however, fails to acknowledge that she prospectively uses the postwar, corporate designation "Organization Man" in order to identify his pre-war, military counterpart Company Commander Dana Holmes.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

continue working as a hostess at the New Congress Club until she accumulates enough money to return home, build a house, and join a country club, where she will meet “the proper man with the proper position . . . [and make him] a proper wife who can run a proper house and raise proper children.” Ultimately, though, Alma agrees to marry Prewitt if he will leave the military, but he is adamant in his decision to remain a soldier. Neither man, then, wishes to exchange his military uniform, either figuratively or literally, for a gray flannel suit. Nor does he wish to trade in his bunk in the barracks for the social-climbing, consumer-culture suburbia to which Karen and Alma aspire.

Thus unflatteringly gendered as feminine, postwar suburbia seemed the potential site for the emasculation of the postwar male, for his “weak body [could always be] masked by the bland uniform of attire of a gray flannel suit.”⁴⁰⁸ Such corporeal weakness, moreover, could have a variety of causes: the sexual demands of wives who, as Kinsey’s 1953 report noted, have a constantly high capacity for sex even as their husbands’ plummets; the medical revelation that the female body outlasts the male’s in terms of both sexual stamina and longevity; and the physical, psychological, and sexual damage that the breadwinner’s economic ambition inflicted upon his body. Intuitively, Milt and Prewitt apparently realize that the gray flannel suit, fraught with these dismaying implications, not only allows less room for psychic movement than the military uniform but also invests the wearer with effeminate characteristics rather than martially masculine ones. Presumably to offset this sartorial effeminization, two separate cigarette advertisements in 1956 issues of Playboy depict a close-up of a “Marlboro Man” whose effeminizing suit is trumped by the military tattoo prominently displayed on his hirsutely virile hand. While the first of these advertisements depicts a male model wearing a business suit, the

⁴⁰⁸ Cohan, 60.

second depicts, in a formal white shirt and black bowtie, another model, who affixes a boutonniere to the lapel of his white dinner jacket. Yet the enhanced feminizing potential of the male's formal wear and self-installed floral accessory is transcended with emphatic machismo by the cigarette that angles from the corner of his mouth and the military tattoo just beneath the wrist of his darkly hirsute arm.

Similarly, in The Best Years of Our Lives (William Wyler, 1946), the wife of the returning military hero asks him to wear his bomber jacket when they go out in public rather than a suit jacket, and her request thus represents an implicit acknowledgement of the former's macho valence. As another returning veteran attempting to negotiate an appropriate postwar masculinity, Jason Taylor (William Holden) in Apartment for Peggy (George Seaton, 1948) alternates between two courses. As discussed previously in Chapter 1, he abruptly leaves college to take a position as a used car salesman in order to assume his postwar role as the family breadwinner. In an attempt "to trace the consequences of masculinity of . . . [this] particular historical upheaval--that of World War ii and the recovery period," Kaja Silverman has identified the following Hollywood films that depict masculinity subjected to the "historical trauma" of this period: Pride of the Marines (Delmer Daves, 1945), Hail the Conquering Hero (Preston Sturges, 1944), State Fair (Walter Lang, 1945), Those Endearing Young Charms (Lewis Allen, 1945), Lost Weekend (Billy Wilder, 1945), The Guilt of Janet Ames (Henry Levin, 1947), Spellbound (Alfred Hitchcock, 1945), Gilda (Charles Vidor, 1946), It's a Wonderful Life (Frank Capra, 1946), and The Best Years of Our Lives (William Wyler, 1946).⁴⁰⁹ In addition, she identifies the following commonalities that these films share:

⁴⁰⁹ Kaja Silverman, Male Subjectivity at the Margins (London: Routledge, 1992), 52.

[I]n order to shore up the ruins of masculinity, many of these films are obliged to confer upon a female character the narrative agency, which is the usual attribute of a male character, thereby further undermining sexual difference. . . . Not surprisingly, given the preoccupation with male lack, these films are also characterized by a lack of faith in the familiar and self-evident. The hero no longer feels “at home”. . . and[, in fact,] resists cultural (re)assimilation. . . . About half the films . . . explicitly attribute the crises of male subjectivity to the cataclysmic events of the 1940s[,] . . . for in these films, the hero returns from World War II with a physical or psychic wound which marks him as somehow deficient and which renders him incapable of functioning smoothly in civilian life.⁴¹⁰

For the most part, Apartment for Peggy exemplifies these features of the postwar film that Silverman describes. As the galvanizer of the film’s action, for example, Peggy (Jeanne Crain), rather than her husband Jason, assumes the film’s narrative agency. As head of the Taylor household, moreover, Jason resists not only the economic constraints of his government-financed education but also the academic rigor upon which his chemistry professor, in particular, insists. In these two respects, then, Jason struggles with forces that escape his control and that prevent him from “functioning smoothly in civilian life.” As dysfunction-producing forces, however, straitened finances and scholarly discipline represent the consequences of Jason’s chosen postwar status as a college student financed by the G.I. Bill. As such, they cannot reasonably be equated with the “physical or psychic wound[s]” that the heroes of the previously cited films incur, even though both sets of stimuli--the economic/academic forces beyond Jason’s control and the physical/psychic wounds of the war heroes--similarly problematize the return of these men to civilian life after the cataclysmic events of the war. Rather than a war-incurred physical or psychic wound, in fact, Jason has experienced instead a war-induced epiphany--one that inspires him not only to identify ignorance as the root of humanity’s self-destructive propensity

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 52-3.

for war but also to become a teacher in order to eradicate such ignorance. Jason recounts to Professor Henry Barnes (Edmund Gwenn) the circumstances surrounding this incident:

I was floating around the Pacific one day, and I kept asking myself how I could wind up 6,000 miles away from home hanging onto a hunk of life raft. Then I sort of figured it [out]. . . . From ignorance to suspicion, from suspicion to fear, from fear to hate, from hate to destruction. And it all starts with ignorance. So right then, I promised a flock of seagulls that if I ever got out of that spot, I was going to do what I could [to put an end to that ignorance].

Jason, then, returns from war not with an injury that threatens his assimilation into postwar culture but rather with a goal that clarifies his life's path. Thus intent on becoming a teacher in order to enlighten others, Jason shows that he has returned from battle not with a physical or psychic wound but rather with an intact body and newly idealistic spirit. Despite his wartime fight for survival "hanging onto a hunk of life raft," then, Jason represents a comparatively anomalous postwar male whose body and mind are neither "deficient" nor "[dys]function[al]" but rather self-affirming, engaged, and engaging. Thus enlightened rather than traumatized by his life-threatening experience of war, Jason idealistically aspires to rid the world of ignorance. With these sentiments, Jason seems particularly ill-suited for a career in sales; and, indeed, he soon leaves Careless Carson's Used Cars to return to college. His reason for doing so, however, remains unclear, for when Professor Barnes tries to persuade Jason to return to college by reminding him that "You once promised a flock of seagulls you were going to teach and try to make people more understanding," Jason responds:

Sure, lots of others made promises, too. When I got out of the service, there were millions of them. This time it was going to be different. The parade went on for miles. But suddenly I look around and everybody's gone home. Now why should the finger point at me?

Having thus shrugged off college, his teaching aspirations, and his government-issued bomber jacket, Jason instead assumes not only a position in the business world but also the uniform of a gray flannel suit (or, in his case, brown) and the attitude of circumspect conformity that such a world requires: “I look around and everybody . . . [else has] gone home. Now why should the finger point at me [to bear the sole responsibility for global enlightenment]?”. As soon as Jason finishes this speech, a car salesman summons him to the showroom, thereby denying Henry the opportunity for a rejoinder. Thus, since Jason’s resistance to the professor’s argument effectively concludes the conversation, it seems that Professor Henry Barnes has failed in his mission to convince Jason to return to college--and, indeed, no subsequent dialogue within the film contradicts this impression. The frame that immediately follows, however, depicts Jason at the college arranging to take some make-up exams. In marked contrast to Jason’s words, then, this sequence of scenes visually implies a cause-and-effect relationship between the Professor’s appeal to Jason and the latter’s decision to return to college. A review of the movie at the time of its release, however, refers to a scene that does not appear in the American Movie Classics version of the film. In this missing scene, according to the review, Jason apparently “quits his job on a used-car lot because he suspects his employer of overcharging his customers.”⁴¹¹ Such a scene, then, not only provides the missing motive for Jason’s return to college but also reaffirms his idealism and the impossibility of his success as a corporate yes-man.⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ Review of Apartment for Peggy, Good Housekeeping, 127 (November 1948): 260.

⁴¹² The basis for Seaton’s script is Faith Baldwin’s novelette “An Apartment for Jenny,” published in the March, 1947 issue of Cosmopolitan, and in the latter, Jason never even considers leaving college (62-88). On the other hand, in Seaton’s “Script Treatment of Apartment for Peggy” (photocopy, Manuscripts Archive, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin, Madison), Jason returns to college because he overhears Careless Carson telling his child how to manipulate his friends, some of whom are “wop kids” whose acquaintance Carson discourages (112). And despite the original film’s apparent inclusion of the scene in which

Back at college, Jason handily passes most of his make-up exams, but in the midst of a laboratory experiment he is conducting as part of his chemistry exam, he succumbs to the silent pressure exerted by the stony stare of the unsympathetic Professor Collins. Apparently convinced of the futility of his effort, Jason sweeps his hand across the countertop and sends all his laboratory paraphernalia crashing to the floor. Calmly, Professor Collins observes, “You dropped something, Taylor. Here’s a new set-up over here--let’s try this one.” While Collins moves to the counter with the new set-up, Jason remains where he is so that ultimately the two men are standing back-to-back. From this simultaneously intimate yet distanced position, Collins initiates the following exchange:

Collins. You were in the Navy, weren’t you, Taylor?

Jason. Yes, sir.

Collins. What kind of duty?

Jason. I was on the Vincennes until she went down and then--

Collins. I heard that was a little tough. I was on the Wasp.

Collins. I heard that wasn’t exactly a picnic either.

Collins. Nothing that’s worthwhile ever is, Taylor.

At the end of this conversation, Jason takes a step that places him side-by-side with Professor Collins. Then, for the first time in the scene, Jason and the professor look squarely at each other; and for the first time in the film, Professor Collins smiles. Jason returns the smile, apparently understanding from the clipped and understated words of the conversation that, even in comparatively quotidian endeavors like chemistry tests, he must continue to exert in civilian life the same determination, courage, and idealism that have sustained him throughout his heroic

Jason quits because he suspects Careless Carson of overcharging customers, at least two contemporary reviews credited Professor Henry Barnes with Jason’s return to college. For example, Commonweal (22 October 1948) noted that “Peggy and the professor finally teach the husband how to face things” (41), while the National Education Association Journal (December 1948) described Henry as “the retired professor who helps Peggy save her husband for the teaching profession” (608).

wartime service. In this encounter, then, Jason's struggle to find for himself a new masculinity appropriate to postwar America is resolved via the agency of Professor Collins.

Unlike Jason's other professors who have anxiously fussed over him and subtly facilitated the passing grades he receives on his make-up exams, Professor Collins has never coddled Jason. When Jason tells him of his decision to leave school for financial reasons, for example, Professor Collins reminds his student of the teaching assistant job he has promised to secure for him, but Jason protests that such a position "wouldn't pay enough." "Wouldn't pay enough," Professor Collins repeats. "Maybe it's just as well you DO quit. Feeling that way, you wouldn't make a very good teacher." Even as he withholds sympathy, then, Professor Collins nevertheless attempts to alleviate Jason's financial problems by securing him a job in his chosen field. By focusing on Jason's desire to teach, moreover, Professor Collins reveals an understanding of and appreciation for the far-reaching ramifications of the choice that Jason must make between college and employment. In contrast, Jason's other professors celebrate his return to college simply because they feel that the Taylors' return will cheer Professor Henry Barnes and thus insure his continued participation as the irreplaceable viola player in their musical sextet. Compared to the grandfatherly members of this sextet, moreover, Professor Collins appears to be closer to Jason's age, for like Jason, he has served in the Navy during World War II. His current status as a professor, however, indicates that in advance of his wartime service, he has already completed his college education and embarked upon his teaching career. Yet although he thus appears just old enough to be Jason's father, Professor Collins, alone among Jason's instructors, is not representative of an earlier generation: a generation who, Jason feels, "haven't given us much reason to respect them"--and a generation whose wisdom[, moreover,] would be of little help to postwar Americans who were looking toward a radically

new vision . . . and trying . . . to avoid the paths of their parents.”⁴¹³ And unlike this unhelpful earlier generation--represented, in part, by Henry Barnes, the antiquated Professor of equally antiquated Philosophy--Professor Collins teaches chemistry, a discipline exceedingly relevant to a postwar world in which “science and technology . . . invaded virtually every aspect of life.”⁴¹⁴ Senior to Jason in age, experience, and wisdom, yet young enough to have devoted himself to modern science and wartime service with his student and comrade-in-arms, Professor Collins is uniquely qualified to initiate Jason into an appropriate postwar manhood.

Indeed, Jason immediately demonstrates his newfound masculinity by upbraiding Professor Henry Barnes, for the latter, depressed by the Taylors’ expected departure from his home, has attempted suicide. In contrast to Peggy’s hysterical concern, Jason challenges Henry, “using some soldierly leverage”:⁴¹⁵

Jason. So you’re going to pick up your toys and go home, huh? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. This morning you told me about MY responsibility--what about YOURS? You’ve got what millions of people are begging for--education, knowledge--and you’re trying to destroy it with a few lousy pills. You’re no better than a book-burner.

Peggy. Jason, stop talking and make him walk! If he doesn’t keep walking, he’ll die!

Jason. Yeah, but he’s got to want to keep walking whether he’s alone or not. I can think of an awful lot of fellows that would have liked to have had the choice that you have now. Maybe your son [a casualty, presumably, of World War II] was one of them. Well, what are you going to do: walk or sleep?

By thus contrasting Henry’s self-involved suicide attempt with the selfless, ultimate sacrifices of wartime soldiers, Jason shames the professor into a manful assumption of his responsibility. By comparing Henry to a Nazi book-burner, moreover, Jason defines the professor’s unmanliness as

⁴¹³ May, 26.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Will Holtzman, William Holden (New York: Pyramid Publications, 1976), 64.

seditionally un-American. Fresh from his own lesson in manliness, then, Jason is now qualified to exert his own manly influence as and wherever he deems necessary. Thus, like other “male warriors who could come home . . . after the war was won . . . and reassert social power on the domestic front,” the newly empowered Jason imposes the Law of the Father upon his own domestic front.⁴¹⁶

Indeed, Jason’s mature, contemporary masculinity now qualifies him to serve as father figure to Professor Henry Barnes, whom the film often posits as a fogyish, effeminate, and/or infantile character. When Jason berates the professor for his suicide attempt, for example, he immediately taunts him with an allusion to his childishness: “So you’re going to pick up your toys and go home.” Peggy, on the other hand, mothers Henry, serving him breakfast in bed and doing his laundry. Henry, in contrast, appears physically incapable of helping Peggy, for when he arrives home to hear a baby crying, he hastens up the stairs to the Taylors’ attic alcove, fearing that Peggy has prematurely given birth. Yet when Henry reaches the apartment to find that Peggy is simply babysitting for the child whose cry he has heard, his breathless and enfeebled collapse casts doubt on his ability to minister to Peggy in an emergency. Nevertheless, Peggy confides to the professor that she and Jason intend to name their child after him: “If it’s a boy, we’re going to call him Henry Barnes Taylor, and if it’s a girl, she’s going to be Henrietta.” Henry, too, implicitly conflates himself with the Taylor child, for after Peggy’s miscarriage, he tells her:

I don’t know if it’s any consolation or not, but I just want you to know that although you’ve lost a child, a life wasn’t lost--it was merely exchanged. That day we met in the park and talked about Mr. Hypothetical wanting to commit suicide--well, I want you to know I was Mr. Hypothetical. . . . My hopes are your

⁴¹⁶ Combs, 94.

hopes now, Peggy, and with you and Jason to help me, maybe Henry Barnes can be everything you wanted Henry Barnes Taylor to be.

Thus, in exchange for the child they have lost, the Taylors acquire Henry. This substitution not only negates the possible impression that Peggy serves as a surrogate wife to Professor Barnes (since she serves instead as a mother figure) but also allows Jason to demonstrate fully via the socialized Professor Barnes—rather than partially via Peggy’s newborn—the military rigor and war-born idealism that Jason will affirmatively exert on both the older generation, like Professor Barnes and his cronies, and the younger generation as well, like Jason’s future children and future students.

With respect to the latter, Jason intends to teach in order to shed a light on ignorance, while Professor Barnes, as he himself admits, “was never an educator . . . who [lit] up dark places . . . [but] only an instructor . . . who . . . [gave] lectures and examinations.”⁴¹⁷ The discipline of philosophy to which Henry has dedicated his entire academic career, moreover, proves ultimately useless to him, for it provides him with no compelling reason to live--in some respects, in fact, it even justifies his decision to commit suicide--and provides him with no answer when Jason, having learned of his child’s death, asks simply, “Why?” Jason’s commitment to chemistry, on the other hand, makes much more sense in a postwar world where “science and technology . . . invaded virtually every aspect of life. . . [and precipitated and

⁴¹⁷ Yet in Faith Baldwin’s novelette “Apartment for Jenny” on which the film is based, Professor Barnes privately tutors Jason in philosophy, since Jason’s actual professor, though “very brilliant, . . . can’t teach” (87). Professor Barnes, on the other hand, earns the following praise from Jason: “I’ve learned more from you in an hour than in weeks of class” (87). Thus, although Director George Seaton, according to Bob Thomas in Golden Boy: The Untold Story of William Holden (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), “had written [Apartment for Peggy] as a tribute to his brother, a longtime college professor,” Baldwin’s version provides a more flattering portrait of the professor, at least insofar as his teaching abilities are concerned (52).

perpetuated] the atomic age.”⁴¹⁸ Indeed, it is Professor Collins, Jason’s chemistry professor and comrade-in-arms, who guides his student into the postwar manhood that empowers Jason to discipline the obsolescent yet childish philosophy professor.⁴¹⁹ Henry himself, in fact, acknowledges the way in which he embodies these two opposing extremes of infancy and dotage when he remarks to Peggy that he “either look[s] like someone’s baby or someone’s grandfather.” Yet his grandfatherly look is the very feature that initially draws Peggy to him, for it reminds her of her own grandfather, “Pop.” Essentially adopted by Peggy, then, Henry subsequently finds himself spending much of his time with her and her female friends and their children. From a makeshift classroom in the student union, for example, he conducts a philosophy lesson for them with a pool table as his lectern; and at Peggy’s baby shower, where he is the only male in attendance, he performs the role of hostess, attending to the comfort of Peggy’s friends and serving them refreshments. Thus feminized--and foggy-ized and infantilized as well--Henry, “no better than a book-burn[ing Nazi],” presents a clear contrast to Jason, who as husband and father figure, wears “the [postwar] badge of ‘family man’ as a sign of virility and patriotism.”⁴²⁰

As previously noted, moreover, it is Jason rather than Henry who foresightedly understands an educator’s responsibility to “light up dark places” rather than simply “give lectures and exams.” Thus, when Henry attempts to persuade Jason to return to college, he concludes his speech with a reference to Jason’s self-professed motivation--enlightenment:

⁴¹⁸ May, 26.

⁴¹⁹ Ironically, the philosophy professor’s portrayer Edmund Gwenn would later appear in Them! (Gordon Douglas, 1954), as Dr. Medford, a scientist of the type beloved by cold war culture, who describes the mutant-ant invaders of America in a way that metaphorically identifies them as “of course, Communists.” (Peter Biskind, Seeing Is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties [New York: Pantheon, 1983], quoted in Cohan, 131.)

⁴²⁰ Cohan, 98.

If you're a teacher, you'll be underpaid; be taken advantage of; you'll be at the mercy of trustees; if you adhere to the educational status quo, you'll be considered archaic, and if you have any progressive ideas, there's no telling what they'll call you. You'll write a book which no one will read, and just when you're beginning to enjoy all this, you'll be retired. . . . But strangely enough, if you don't outlive your usefulness, you'll be happy. You'll leave a few people . . . a little more enlightened than when you met them. You'll feel that you made a contribution--that's all you'll get out of it.

As articulated by Henry, the tough regimen that awaits Jason if he pursues a teaching career sounds almost as difficult and thankless as his wartime military service. This implicit equation of teaching and military service, then, grants to the former some of the patriotic affirmation of the latter. In addition, this didactic/martial melding also serves to posit a teaching career as an ideal pursuit for the returning veteran who, like Professor Collins, can rely on the toughness acquired in war to shape him into a postwar enlightener of--and role model for--other American males. Furthermore, by both buckling down to studies and belt-tightening during the lean years, Jason will implicitly ally himself with a less domesticated and more militaristic masculinity that "encourage[s] self-discipline and deferred gratification."⁴²¹ Having achieved the gratifying position of teacher, moreover, Jason can enjoy prosperity even as he continues to practice a comparatively militaristic, wartime masculinity in lieu of containment culture's more domesticated version. For even as he fulfills his vow to wipe out ignorance, Jason will presumably submit his student recruits to the same toughening-up process that he himself has absorbed from Professor Collins. And by thus producing successive classes of good men, Jason will achieve in his career the personal fulfillment that his corporate yes-men counterparts can

⁴²¹ Robert J. Corber, Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 991, emphasis in the original.

realize only within the relatively autonomous confines of their suburban homes. As an inspiring teacher, then, Jason can produce what Peggy, the aspiring mother, intends to produce also: a succession of “tolerant and kind and good” people--an extended family, in fact, rather than the contained nuclear variety--to fulfill the couple’s hope for what, in 1948, was already the fast-fading hope of a postwar utopia.

In a few years after Apartment for Peggy’s 1948 release, in fact, the college campus that Jason envisions somewhat as the seminal site of postwar utopia devolves instead into another bastion of containment culture. Historians Paul Boyer and Clifford Clark summarize the political and cultural dynamics that enervated academia:

The trampling of civil liberties spawned a silent generation of college students. . . . Universities banned controversial speakers, [and] numerous surveys of college students in the 1950s described them as conservative, conformist, and careerist, . . . more interested in security and comfort than in distinguishing themselves. Campus passivity was the norm, and . . . students’ attitudes closely mirrored those of their elders in this decade of affluence and antiradicalism. Federal expenditures . . . provided stipends for education. But more than half the federal budget each year . . . went to defense expenditures. . . . [Only to insure national security—via] scientists and engineers [who were] on university faculties [and who] engaged in full-time research for the federal government, mostly on defense projects, was education spending ultimately increased.⁴²²

As visible proof that their “attitudes closely mirrored those of their elders,” students sported adult-style attire as shown in a Van Heusen advertisement that appeared in the October 1957 issue of Esquire. In the photograph, a young man on the left wears a shirt and tie identical to that of the older man on the right. The caption not only emphasizes the similarity and versatility of their outfits—“Just the ticket for school or business!”—but also heralds this conservative style,

⁴²² Boyer: 954; 982; 974, emphasis in the original; 991.

shared by both younger and older generations, as representative of “The American Spirit of ’57.” On the Taylors’ 1948 American campus, on the other hand, Jason wears as outer clothing a government-issued bomber jacket, which he exchanges for a suit and tie only when, upon leaving school for the business world, he abandons the idealistic openness of the former in order to assume the circumspect conformity of the latter.

Indeed, only a decade later, an article in the September 1958 issue of Playboy would admonish its readers: “A final word. Our campus survey [of male students regarding their preferred style of dress] suggests to us that not even in the business world is attire more significant in establishing social acceptance than in college.”⁴²³ As the overall sartorial style that will insure such acceptance, the article recommends “Ivy,” which it identifies as “the good conservative dress which ha[s] . . . always been popular in Eastern schools.”⁴²⁴ In addition to this rather generic definition of “Ivy,” numerous advertisements in Esquire and Playboy from 1957 through 1959 offered a bit more specificity, describing “Ivy,” “Ivy Look,” or “Ivy League” as, essentially, slim, trim, and tapered. In one of its first incarnations, the “Ivy Look” trousers sported a non-functional, buckled strap sewn on just below the back waistband. Subsequently, that ornamentation gave way to two back pockets with buttoned flaps, a style dubbed, in one advertisement at least, “Post Grad.”

Advertisements, in fact, used the term “Ivy” to describe not only slacks but also a variety of other items of male attire: Thunderbird Suits, for example—“the authentic Ivy League model [with] light . . . trim lines . . . created for the man who prefers the quiet to the flamboyant”; Lord West tuxedos—“this is how a distinguished Ivy tuxedo should look[:] . . . trim, slim and soft . . . with silk faille semi-peak lapel”; and Taylor Made shoes—“every man deserves a touch of Ivy

⁴²³ Frederic A. Birmingham, “The Well-Clad Undergrad,” Playboy, September 1958, 71.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

Swagger . . . [with] shoe fashions by Taylor [that] have a decided dash of the debonair . . . [and] well-bred patterns [that] are accepted basics in the college wardrobe.” Items of haberdashery similarly, and with similarly increasing degrees of extravagant incomprehensibility, qualified as Ivy. According to one advertisement, for example, the manufacturers of Paris Leathers combined the “heaviest, toughest steerhide [with a] . . . massive, metal hook buckle [in order to produce] . . . the huskiest, smartest Ivy League Belt [a man has] . . . ever worn,” while Interwoven’s socks for “the smartly dressed college man [came in] . . . authentic Ivy colors [such as] . . . light oxford, dark oxford, [and] . . . ivy brown.” Wembley, moreover, created not only “Ivy Smokies [i.e., ties] . . . [in] rich subtle stripes . . . [of] muted overtones” but also “Nor-East Ivy Prints,” that apparently relied on a geographical modifier articulated in regional dialect to enhance the neckwear’s Ivy credentials.

Indeed, advertisers relied not only on “ivy” but also on any other terms or phrases with secondary-educational resonances. Pendleton, for example, noted the abundance of their plaids in the luggage of “any college man packing to go back to school,” while Chester Laurie Ltd. Claimed their clothing exemplified “the classic expression of good taste required by the University man.” In addition, Wings created “the perfect campus sport shirt . . . [with] College Crests [patterned on the inner collar and cuffs and] embroidered [on the breast] pocket,” and McGregor produced a line of sportswear whose “Golden Key” designation evoked distinction-worthy associations with the gold key symbol of Phi Beta Kappa. Along with any one of these items of clothing, moreover, the Ivy male could wear Interwoven’s “University” or “Campus Weight” argyle socks as well as Jarman’s Shoes, “chosen by college style leaders from coast to coast.” Moreover, an application of Griffin Shoe Polish to this footwear would make University man a “Campus Standout with Microsheen Shine!”

Finally, in a surfeit of collegiate allusions both visual and verbal, an Arrow Shirts advertisement in the October 1957 issue of Esquire shows an Eton-esque institution with a crenellated tower and arched entranceway and casements. Against this evocative backdrop, the advertisement features, for the “Class of ’58,” two styles of “Campus Compatible” shirts made of “Arrow Cambridge Cloth[,] . . . a new shirt fabric destined to become as popular as Arrow Oxford cloth.” Not satisfied, then, with Wembley Neckwear’s suggestion of association with the Ivy League colleges of the American “Nor-East,” Arrow encourages instead transatlantic identifications with England’s upper-crust “Oxbridge” milieu. Lastly, in order to insure that these shirts of distinction will become a family tradition, Arrow notes that they are “available in boys’ sizes” as well as men’s. Thus expanding the scope of the previously discussed advertisements of the early 1950s that had lectured male readers regarding the correct choice of attire and its importance in achieving corporate, social, and romantic success, the ubiquitous Ivy advertisements of the latter part of the decade indicated that these male readers’ school-age sons, who constituted a brand-new consumer market for identically formal and conservative clothing, would follow in their fathers’ upwardly mobile footsteps and attend college, from whence they too would proceed into corporate employment and suburban-family domesticity. As the advertisement implicitly anticipates, then, the sartorial legacy handed down from one generation to another would continue to (con)form the wearer’s body in accordance with the one-dimensional, uniform design of America’s containment culture.

6.0 JIMMY STEWART: THE MAN IN THE WHITE PLAYTEX GIRDLE

Steven Cohan's book Masked Men: Masculinity and Movies in the Fifties presents compelling evidence regarding Hollywood's postwar male stars and the ways in which their received personae and their film roles recognized new postwar masculinities. Curiously, however, the book omits any extensive discussion of Jimmy Stewart. In Cohan's book, in fact, the lengthiest reference to Stewart occurs in a footnote to the author's paraphrase of a claim made in 1957 by Photoplay columnist Sidney Skolsky that "the new star person[---as exemplified] . . . first by Clift, and then by Brando, Dean, Presley, Newman and others in their mold[---] . . . is . . . a diminished version of the rugged, physical masculinity still being personified on screen by those old working war horses, Cooper, Gable, Stewart, and Wayne."⁴²⁵ Apparently anticipating debate over the appropriateness of including in the Cooper/Gable/Wayne stable of "rugged, physical . . . warhorses" an actor like Stewart—whose "gangling, scrawny physique . . . [precluded his reception as] a he-man or sex symbol"—Cohan appends the following footnote, in which he refers to the writing of Dennis Bingham:⁴²⁶

Arguing [on page 11 of Acting Male] that Stewart acts out "the psychic trouble and oppression proliferated by phallic masculinity," . . . [author Dennis Bingham] offers an account of this star's persona that would seem to distinguish him from

⁴²⁵ Quoted in Cohan, 201-2.

⁴²⁶ Dennis Bingham, Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 25.

the company of John Wayne and the others mentioned by Skolsky. However, while clearly resonant, as Bingham shows, in the films Stewart made in the fifties with Hitchcock and Anthony Mann, these elements in the star's persona were ignored by fan discourse, illustrating the complexity with which the personae of all the established male stars were continually being negotiated following the end of World War II.⁴²⁷

Yet although he has thus identified a distinctive, non-he-man type of 1950s' movie masculinity, Cohan relegates this brief account of it to a footnote, thereby reducing it to an ancillary status based on its failure to resonate in terms of "the fan discourse" indicative of fifties' audience reception. This chapter, then, aims to expand on Cohan's footnote with an investigation of several postwar films that feature the Stewart-played protagonist as representative of an alternative to both the "rugged, physical masculinity . . . [of John] Wayne" and the "diminished version . . . [of such masculinity, as exemplified by Marlon] Brando . . . and others in . . . his mold."

Uniquely, I believe, Stewart, in the majority of his postwar films, portray characters who reflect, in Bingham's words, "the uneasy readjustment of World War II veterans to civilian and domestic life."⁴²⁸ Bingham rightly describes this readjustment as "uneasy," for it involved the reconciliation of several pairs of antithetical values. Emerging from the all-male camaraderie and "hard" masculinity of war, for example, the returning veteran was expected to become a husband, father, suburban homeowner, and corporate businessman, roles that required him to embrace the stereotypically female domestic realm and the other-oriented mindset essential in the workplace. A further aspect of this readjustment, moreover, was paradoxical as well as antithetical, for as Lucy Fischer observes, "one [civilian-based] fear of the returning G. I. involved inordinate violence; another expressed the inverse: weakness and nervousness. While

⁴²⁷ Cohan, 317 n. 2.

⁴²⁸ Bingham, 79.

the first problem might be culturally imagined as an excess of masculinity, the other might be conceived as its paucity.”⁴²⁹ These oppositions—male/female; warrior/family man; military hero/corporate drone; excessive masculinity/eviscerated masculinity—suggest other binaristic pairings that similarly include conditions gendered as hyper-masculine, including, but not limited to: adventure/domesticity; repression/emotionalism; individual/society; resolve/dissolution. Accordingly, the attempt to arrive at some sort of accommodation between paired extremes like these represents the enterprise of the returning veteran and of Stewart’s protagonist as well.

In most cases, moreover, the body and mind of this protagonist exhibit afflictions indicative of the exhausting physical and mental toll exacted by his adaptive enterprise. Indeed, Stewart’s “gangly, scrawny physique” reveals a body too insufficiently robust to endure such injuries.⁴³⁰ Accordingly, producers hesitated to cast Stewart in Westerns for fear “he would seem to weak and irresolute to carry off the role of a tough western hero, but they were [ultimately] persuaded by the thought of his war record.”⁴³¹ In fact, at the sneak preview of Winchester ’73 (1950), Stewart’s first western with director Anthony Mann, “the minute Jimmy Stewart’s name came on the screen, everybody laughed,” presumably at the incongruity of Stewart as a cowboy.⁴³² Because of this incongruity, “Stewart’s body [in Mann’s westerns] is effaced,” except to the extent that it serves as a site of either “homoerotic” or “masochis[tic]” spectacle.⁴³³ While Bingham elaborates on the homoerotic and masochistic elements incarnate in Stewart’s cowboy, I would like to cite some instances of his bodily effacement in that role. In

⁴²⁹ Lucy Fischer, “Mama’s Boy: Filial Hysteria in White Heat,” in Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema, ed. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Clark (New York: Routledge, 1995), 78, emphasis in the original.

⁴³⁰ Bingham, 25.

⁴³¹ Allen Eyles, Jimmy Stewart (New York: Stein & Day, 1984), 99.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴³³ Bingham, 55, 61.

Bend of the River (Anthony Mann, 1952), for example, Stewart as Glyn McClyntock, leader of a wagon train, goes with Emerson Cole (Arthur Kennedy) on a nighttime Indian-scouting expedition into the forest surrounding their encampment. The men split up briefly, and during this time, the viewer sees Emerson murder an Indian but only hears the two gunshots that indicate Glyn himself has killed two more. Subsequently, Glyn performs similarly invisible and heroic acts, which are reported and commented upon by others. For example, although he is wounded, unarmed, horse-less, and abandoned in the wilderness by thieves who have made off with the wagons and the people and supplies in them, Glyn nevertheless manages to keep pace with the band's progress, for Glyn's girlfriend Laura (Julie Adams), looking back from her perch in the covered wagon, observes "I thought I saw Glyn [following us]. . . . He won't stop trying [to save us], not while he lives." And, indeed, in a series of separate forays, one or two members of the gang of thieves, each professing their fearlessness because Glyn is "only one man," venture out to kill him, but Glyn kills them instead. Like Glen's Indian victims, though, the thieves' murders occur offscreen; only the sound of gunshots and their failure to return indicate that Glyn has outsmarted and outfought them. The film's insistence on Glyn's offscreen—versus depicted--acts of bravado, then, would seem to indicate an implicit acknowledgment of the insufficiency of Stewart's body to execute the heroic feats of a conventional he-man.

Yet even when Stewart's character engages in activity that is depicted onscreen, his body, vis-à-vis that of another character, often proves insufficient for the task at hand. In The Naked Spur (Anthony Mann, 1953), for example, Stewart, as Howard Kemp, attempts to scale a rocky cliff with the help of a rope but, failing at one point to gain a foothold, he plummets to the ground, burning his hands on the rope in the course of his precipitate descent. Unable to try another ascent because of his bleeding hands, Howard defers instead to Lieutenant Roy

Anderson (Ralph Meeker), who successfully scales the cliff on his first attempt. As a cattle foreman for Kate

Canaday (Aline MacMahon) in The Man from Laramie (Anthony Mann, 1955), moreover, Will Lockhart (Stewart) comes under fire from Dave Waggoman (Alex Nicol) and his hired hands, who want to brand as their own the Canaday cattle that have strayed onto Waggoman land. In the exchange of gunfire, Will shoots Dave in the hand, but, outnumbered, can only struggle futilely when Dave's men overpower him and then hold him with his hand outstretched so that Dave can shoot it in vengeance for his own wound. But while Will immediately returns to the Canaday ranch to seek the soothing, feminine ministrations of his employer Kate and his girlfriend Barbara (Cathy O' Donnell), Dave, although similarly wounded, manfully gallops off instead to a mountaintop where, with his one good hand, he discards boughs and branches that cover a wagon load of repeating rifles and then builds a fire so that he can send smoke signals to the Indians who are the intended recipients of this hidden arsenal. Furthermore, almost all of the Mann westerns include at least one scene in which Stewart's character wrestles with another male for supremacy. In such a scene, Stewart's opponent invariably clenches his teeth in a grimace of fierce and resolute determination, while Stewart's character, in contrast, widens his eyes in an expression of lively apprehension and fear. Indeed, in a scene from Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), Stewart's body looks manifestly less robust even when juxtaposed with that of a female. Thus, after Stewart's character Scottie Ferguson saves Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak) from drowning in San Francisco Bay, he must carry her, dripping wet and unconscious, to his car. Yet the length and weight of her voluptuous body, combined with her spike heels, beehived hair, and bouffant skirt, render the image of her dead weight in his arms almost risibly unbalanced. In fact, of Stewart's two filmic pairings with

Novak,⁴³⁴ Steve Cohan observes that “[o]ne could never . . . claim [--as Will Holtzman does of Kim Novak and William Holden in Picnic (Joshua Logan, 1955)--] that ‘it’s a toss-up for the more photogenic chest[,]’ . . . [especially] after seeing . . . [Stewart] take off his shirt in Rear Window” (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954).⁴³⁵ Cohan thus refers to an early scene in that film in which Stewart’s character L. B. Jeffries (“Jeff”), a globetrotting photojournalist temporarily confined to his apartment and to a wheelchair by a broken leg, submits to his nurse’s brisk alcohol rub, which requires the removal of his pajama top and thus affords a view of his unprepossessing chest. Stewart’s body, then frequently appears subordinate, in terms of both athleticism and aesthetics, to that of another male or even a female.

In spite of his less-than-formidable physique and his physical infirmity, however, Jeff professes to need a woman who can keep up with the demanding exertions of his peripatetic profession, for after his alcohol rub, he declares to his nurse Stella (Thelma Ritter), “I want a woman who can go anywhere, do anything, and love it.” Dennis Bingham notes the irony of this statement, for he says, “Stewart delivers it while being therapeutically slapped by [his] . . . nurse[, and he] . . . punctuat[es] . . . the statement with an under-his-breath “Hold it” as he catches himself from falling backward into his wheelchair. The line . . . sounds like the egoistic fantasy of a helpless man denying his immobility and reliance on women.”⁴³⁶ In Vertigo, Stewart’s character Scottie Ferguson experiences a similarly diminished mobility and a similar reliance upon women. While in a rooftop pursuit of an escaping criminal, Scottie has slipped and, clinging desperately to a gutter, watched helplessly as a would-be rescuer has instead plummeted to his own death. After his undepicted rescue, Scottie visits his friend Midge

⁴³⁴ The other is Bell, Book and Candle (Richard Quine, 1958).

⁴³⁵ Cohan, 179.

⁴³⁶ Bingham, 78.

(Barbara Bel Geddes), who describes to him, as noted previously, the aerodynamic design of a brassiere she is sketching for a newspaper advertisement. During this visit, Scottie attempts to begin to remedy his traumatizing fear of heights by climbing the fold-out steps on Midge's kitchen chair; ultimately, however, he subsides in terrified failure into Midge's waiting arms. And while Scottie's impaired mobility does not require a full leg cast like Jeff's, it does require a cane as well as a girdle.⁴³⁷ Thus, even as Vertigo begins, Stewart, as Scottie, returning from a war-like encounter in which he has not only risked his own life but seen a comrade die as well, finds himself encircled not only in a female embrace as a retreat from his psychic wound but also in the confines of a female undergarment as treatment for his physical wound. While this theme—of injury-inducing and male-waged struggles between conventionally gendered domains—recurs throughout most of Stewart's postwar films, this chapter will subsequently focus extensively and exclusively on It's a Wonderful Life (Frank Capra, 1946) and Rope (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948), Stewart's two earliest postwar films that introduce this foundational theme, and The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (John Ford, 1962), the Stewart film that consummately and simultaneously rationalizes and questions postwar America's warrior-effacing masculinity.

In Stewart's first postwar film It's a Wonderful Life, "the first thing we ever learn about George [Bailey, played as an adult by Jimmy Stewart and as an adult by Bobby Anderson] is that[, as a child of twelve,] he lost the hearing of one ear when he saved his [younger] brother

⁴³⁷ Indeed, in Anatomy of a Murder (Otto Preminger, 1959), Laura Manion (Lee Remick) produces from her handbag and presents to Paulie (Stewart) a "souvenir": a girdle that is intended to commemorate Paulie's successful defense of Laura's husband Frederick Manion (Ben Gazzara) against charges of having murdered the man who raped her. As previously discussed, Paulie, anticipating the need to prove to the jury that attractive, sensuous, bar-hopping Laura has indeed been the victim of a rape rather than a participant in consensual, adulterous sex, has insisted that Laura must begin wearing a girdle in order, presumably, to signify her genitals' resistance to foreign penetration. On this occasion, when Laura presents him with her girdle as a memento, Paulie graciously insists that she keep it because, he says, "You might need it again sometime—you never know."

[Harry] from drowning in an icy pond.”⁴³⁸ Weeks later, moreover, while employed in his job as clerk to local druggist Mr. Gower (H. B. Warner), who is drunkenly grief-stricken over the loss of his son to influenza, 12-year-old George stops the pharmacist from accidentally filling a child’s prescription with poison. The distraught Gower, however, initially misunderstanding George’s intervention, roughly cuffs the boy’s already damaged ear until it bleeds. As Gower subsides into sobs upon realizing his mistake, George reassures him that he understands the reason for his error-prone distress and that he will never reveal to anyone Gower’s near-fatal mistake.

George continues on this painfully selfless path into adulthood, repeatedly forfeiting his own satisfaction for that of others. On the evening of his long-awaited trip around the world, for example, George’s father Peter Bailey (Samuel S. Hinds) suffers a fatal stroke, and George remains at home to settle the affairs of his father’s business: Bailey Brothers Building and Loan of Bedford Falls, a financially struggling yet highly principled institution committed to granting home loans to the working poor. At the end of this period, George again prepares to leave Bedford Falls, this time for college, but the board of Bailey Brothers Building and Loan votes to keep the institution in business only if George consents to remain as the bank’s executive secretary. Realizing that the closure of Bailey Brothers will leave the residents of Bedford Falls at the mercy of childless, wheelchair-bound Henry F. Potter (Lionel Barrymore), the richest and most rapacious man in town, George gives his tuition money to his brother Harry (Todd Karns) so that he may go to college while George stays on at the family bank in Bedford Falls. Four years later, upon the occasion of his brother’s return from college, George again prepares to travel, expecting the newly graduated Harry to assume the position that George will vacate.

⁴³⁸ Silverman, 102.

When he and Uncle Billy (Thomas Mitchell) welcome Harry at the train station, however, they meet his brother's new bride Ruth (Virginia Patton), who happily confides that her father has offered her new husband a promising job well-suited to his talents, since "he's a genius at research." Unable to bring himself to ruin his brother's prospects, George again cancels his travel plans in deference to Bailey Brothers Building and Loan and to the working people who depend upon it.

Seeking to ameliorate her son's disappointment, Mrs. Bailey (Beulah Bondi) recommends that George visit Mary Hatch (Donna Reed), whom she describes as "the kind [of woman] who will help you find the answers." Four years ago, on the occasion of Harry's high school graduation and the eve of his own curtailed trip abroad, George has enjoyed an evening with Mary, a childhood friend with whom he becomes reacquainted in the course of the Harry's graduation party. At that time, however, the possibility of any relationship between the two has been abruptly suspended by George's summons to the bedside of his fatally stricken father. Now, four years later, finding himself again reluctantly recalled into the patriarchal legacy he has been trying to escape, George attempts to resist the invitation to matrimonial domesticity that Mary represents even as he finds himself loitering outside her house in response to it. Spying him there, Mary summons him inside where, in the words of Kaja Silverman, the following events occur:

[George] squirms unhappily in Mary's living room, and when her mother asks him what he wants there he angrily responds: "Not a thing, I just came in to get warm" This refusal to invest in the obligatory heterosexual narrative, and to have "needs" which only the family can satisfy, cannot be tolerated [by him]. George's desires are subsequently orchestrated with terrifying precision. Mary tells her mother that "He's making violent love to me," and then coerces him into doing just that through an ingenious deployment of triangulation. . . . Mary receives a phone call from Sam Wainwright, a childhood friend and suitor. Feigning a

rather exaggerated enthusiasm, she summons George to the receiver, which she holds between them. Sam (Frank Albertson) is full of news about the nascent plastic business, but after a moment or two neither George nor Mary listens to anything he says. He figures only as a rival through whom George's desire for Mary is forcibly mediated; thus, although he ostensibly invites George to enter the world of high finance [via "the ground floor"], he in fact helps to interpellate him into the heterosexual scenario the other has resisted for so long. But even as he is being involuntarily inserted into the paternal position, George rebels once again against the notion that his desires must come to him from the dominant fiction[the] . . . ideological "reality" [that] solicits our faith above all else in the unity of the family, and the adequacy of the male subject . . . [George] throws down the phone, grabs Mary, and shouts his protest against the imperatives of capital and the family: "I don't want any plastic, I don't want any ground floor, and I don't want to get married—ever—to anyone . . . I want to do what I want to do!" The next shot shows George and Mary becoming man and wife.⁴³⁹

In this scene, then, George enacts a tortuous struggle between the claims of domesticity and the freedom of the individual—the same struggle that confronted the returning World War II veteran. George first resists this struggle by pretending that he is not engaged in it, that chance rather than volition has brought him to Mary's threshold. He twice mentions that he "just happened to be passing by," for example, and he checks his watch to indicate he has more pressing demands on his time. In a matter of minutes, however, George's feigned indifference toward Mary erupts into a desperate and simultaneous renunciation/embrace of her. When, in accordance with Sam's instructions, Mary tells George, "It's [the proffered job's] the chance of a lifetime," he casts the phone's receiver to the floor, where it lands with an audible clunk, grasps Mary roughly by her upper arms and shakes her, alternately snarling and sobbing, "Now you listen to me! . . . I don't want to get married—ever—to anyone . . . I want to do what I want to do! . . . and you're, you're—oh, Mary, Mary!" And he pulls her to him, kissing her tear-stained face and clinging to her in a passion fraught with anguish. Thus, as George Bailey, reluctant

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 98-99, emphasis in the original; 15-16.

bridegroom and reluctant heir to his father's philanthropically-based ideals and business, Stewart enacts the struggle of the returning veteran who attempts to reconcile the conflicting aims of freedom and domesticity and freedom, self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment.

Indeed, the latter two extremes—self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment—would appear to be antithetical only in the insular civilian world of Bedford Falls that George inhabits; in the military, on the other hand, self-sacrifice seems less diminishing and more assumable. In discussing The Best Years of Our Lives (William Wyler, 1946), for example, Kaja Silverman observes that the disability of Navy veteran Homer Parish (Harold Russell), who has lost both hands in an aircraft fire during the war, has “seemed a minor sacrifice while he was in the service [but] now assumes a very different meaning [since he] . . . fells himself the constant object of a horrified gaze, held at scopic remove from his family, his neighbors, and his girlfriend Wilma (Cathy O’Donnell).”⁴⁴⁰ Indeed, in the company of fellow veterans Al Stevenson (Frederic March) and Fred Derry (Dana Andrews), Homer enacts a confident adaptability that serves to reassure the other two men. As Homer and Fred go to the airport desk to sign the passenger list, for example, Homer reveals for the first time the hooks that now serve as his hands. Though Fred first registers shock at the sight of them, Homer smilingly and nonchalantly hold the passenger list steady with one hook while signing it with the pen he maneuvers in the other hook. Then, joined by Al, the men board the plane back to their hometown of Boone City, and Homer offers a cigarette and light to each of his traveling companions. Only when he anticipates the civilian reaction to his disability does Homer’s confidence ebb. “They don’t know what these [hooks] look like,” he worries. “Wilma’s only a kid. She’s never seen anything like these hooks.” Thus, Homer’s loss of both hands, “which seemed a minor sacrifice while he was in the

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 68.

service,” now seems a condition that will, for the rest of his life, estrange him from the friends and family who await his return to civilian life.

In It's a Wonderful Life, moreover, military-based sacrifice, instead of being mutually exclusive to civilian self-fulfillment, seems rather the genesis of it. Thus, because of his life-threatening and life-saving exploits in World War II, George's brother Harry returns to civilian life as a presidentially decorated and acclaimed war hero. The ear impairment George has suffered in childhood, however, renders him ineligible for military service that might similarly have accorded to him, as it has to his brother, an opportunity for sacrifice informed by self-affirmation rather than self-effacement. Thus permanently entrenched in the civilian world of Bedford Falls, George nevertheless endures struggles akin to those of the readjustment-minded veteran who attempts to negotiate between domesticity/adventure and sacrifice/fulfillment. Uncle Billy, in fact, accords a military valence to the civilian service that George has provided to Bedford Falls by maintaining Bailey Brothers Building and Loan as a generous, homestead-funding alternative to the collateral-demanding bank owned by Mr. Potter. To that hard-hearted banker, Uncle Billy pointedly remarks, “George had to stay at home [rather than serve in the military]—not EVERY heel was in Germany and Japan!” Unlike his actual military counterpart, however, George never experiences a period in his life when the latter extremes of domesticity/adventure and sacrifice/fulfillment supersede the former.

In fact, matters take a distinct turn for the worse on the Christmas Eve when Harry will return to Bedford Falls to celebrate receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor for his wartime heroism. Before Harry's arrival, Uncle Billy absent-mindedly leaves in a newspaper \$8,000 of Bailey Brothers Building and Loan money that he has intended to deposit in Mr. Potter's bank. In possession of both the newspaper and the cash, Mr. Potter spitefully withholds the latter from

the frantically searching Uncle Billy, who finally confesses his loss to George. Patiently at first, George accompanies his uncle in a painstaking yet ultimately futile search for the missing money. Finally, under the pressure of George's desperately insistent questioning, Uncle Billy breaks down, overwhelmed with uncertainty as he tries in vain to reconstruct with any clarity the circumstances surrounding his misplacement of the money. Confronted with his uncle's sobbing helplessness, George suffers a breakdown of his own. Roughly, he grabs Uncle Billy by his lapels, yanks him to a standing position, and shakes him, shouting in his face, "Where's that money, you silly, stupid fool? Do you realize what this means? It means bankruptcy, scandal, and prison, that's what it means! One of us is going to jail—well, it's not going to be me!" Then he throws Uncle Billy back into his chair, kicks away the obstacles in his path, and proceeds home, where he see-saws erratically between tenderly cherishing his family and furiously railing at them. As his younger son Tommy sits on his lap, for example, George tearfully embraces and kisses him, even as he exasperatedly appeals to Mary, "Must she keep playing that?" as his older daughter Janie practices "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" on the piano in preparation for the family gathering that will take place that evening. George further protests that doesn't "want the families over here," complains about the drafty house and the insular town, and asks Mary, "Why do we have to have all these kids?" Yet when Mary tells him that their younger daughter Zuzu is in bed with a cold, George immediately rushes upstairs to see her and tenderly humors her by pretending to reattach the petals that have fallen from the flower she was shielding beneath her open coat on the way home from school. Assuming this exposure to the snowy weather has caused her to catch cold, George grabs the phone from Mary when he learns that she is speaking to Zuzu's teacher Mrs. Welsh, who has called to inquire after the health of her student. "Let me handle this," George tells Mary, and he then proceeds to browbeat

Mrs. Welsh for sending Zuzu home from school “half-naked.” Once he has thus reduced to Mrs. Welsh to tears, George then threatens Mr. Welsh, who has come on the line in defense of his weeping wife. After slamming down the phone, George then yells at Janie to stop playing the piano and violently overturns his drafting table and all the equipment on it. Breaking the frightened and tearful silence that follows his outburst, George apologizes to his family, but Mary responds, “George, why must you torture the children? Why don’t you--? As she leaves this last sentence unfinished, George rushed out the door, and Mary phones Bailey Brothers Building and Loan, apparently in an attempt to discover the reason for her husband’s disturbed behavior.

Having thus left his family in anxious upheaval, George visits Mr. Potter to beg him for a loan to replace the \$8,000 that, he says, he himself has lost. “You’ve misplaced it?” asks Mr. Potter, who alone has witnessed, but meanly refused to disclose, Uncle Billy’s ruinous oversight in leaving the cash in the newspaper, both of which remain in Mr. Potter’s possession. When George confirms that he himself has misplaced the money, Mr. Potter asks what collateral George has to secure the loan. When George can offer only his \$15,000 life insurance policy that has little accumulated cash value, Mr. Potter observes that George is “worth more dead than alive.” Moreover, Mr. Potter also accuses George of having embezzled the funds he professes to have misplaced, and he warns George, “I’m going to swear out a warrant for your arrest.” Upon hearing this threat, George bolts from Mr. Potter’s office and ultimately finds himself on a bridge, contemplating suicide as he peers into the roiling waters below. On this Christmas Eve, then, George’s lurching-between-extremes behavior resembles a previously discussed conflict: his simultaneous renunciation/embrace of Mary, itself emblematic of the returning veteran’s attempt to reconcile the conflicting aims of domesticity and freedom, self-sacrifice and self-

fulfillment. Similarly-- but more intensely—conflicted on this occasion, George is at once not only the ranting disciplinarian to children he professes not to want as well as the loving father who tearfully embraces and patiently humors them but also the violent threatener of Mr. Welsh and Uncle Billy as well as the one who assumes the financial and legal responsibility for the latter's ruinous oversight. Thus, as George Bailey, Stewart once again enacts the struggle of the returning veteran who attempts to reconcile conflicting aims—this time, of family and self, aggression and martyrdom.

But George is saved from suicide by the intervention of his guardian angel, Clarence Oddbody, who throws himself into the river, correctly anticipating that the selfless George, confronted with the choice of drowning himself or saving Clarence, will once again subordinate his own wishes in deference to another's. In the following excerpt, Kaja Silverman recounts and analyzes the aftermath of George's rescue of Clarence:

Under the guise of fulfilling George's dream of escape (a dream which has reached such an intensity that it is now articulated as the desire never to have been born), the film has Clarence lead him on a tour through a strangely defamiliarized Bedford Falls, isolating him in the process from all objects he has never learned to value sufficiently—his family, his house, his neighbors, the Building and Loan, and all the other landmarks that define his hometown. As George moves through Bedford Falls, now become Pottersville, no one calls out to him or "hails" him; indeed, no one seems to know him. He has been deprived, not only of Mary, his children, his home, his business, and his town, but of his subjectivity (or so Clarence would have him believe). At a critical moment in the nightmare sequence George's guardian angel tells him that outside Bedford Falls he has no identity: "You're nobody. . . . You have no papers, no card, no driver's license, no 4F card, no insurance policy." This form of terrorism proves so effective that George literally begs to be reinterpellated, no matter what the cost. The chief aim of the nightmare sequence is to reconcile George (and the viewer) to the dominant fiction . . . [--]which solicits our faith above all else in the unity of the family and the adequacy of the male subject[--] . . . by proving that[, since] there is no life outside its boundaries[, . . . the desire for escape is nothing more than the desire for extinction. It's a Wonderful Life thus seemingly holds out the dominant fiction as a refuge from the death drive. . . . Threatened with non-representation, .

. . . [George] longs for the return of the “reality” he has previously scorned. . . . [Consequently, h]e not only accepts . . . [his physical and psychic] “wounds” as the necessary condition of cultural identity, but takes pleasure in the pain they induce in him. . . . [For example, he] even welcomes the seeming outcome of Uncle Billy’s negligence [by greeting the sheriff with the words,] “I’ll bet it’s a warrant for my arrest [that you have in your hands.] Isn’t it wonderful? I’m going to jail!” . . . George thus steps over the narrow boundary separating exemplary male subjectivity from masochism, or to state the case slightly differently, the masculine norm from its perversion.⁴⁴¹

In Silverman’s analysis, then, George’s lifelong conflict between society and self ultimately forces him to confront the most foundational and most extreme elements of the latter: masculinity and masochism, life and death.

I would like to examine more closely, however, what Silverman designates as “George’s dream of escape (a dream that has reached such intensity that it is now articulated as the desire never to have been born).” Presumably, Silverman understands this “dream of escape” as an escalation of George’s apparent contemplation of suicide as he overlooks the roiling waters of the river from his position on the bridge. While part of George’s intent to commit suicide may indeed arise from a desire to escape the seemingly unfulfillable demands made of him, the pitiless gibe Mr. Potter directs at George regarding his \$15,000 life insurance policy—“you’re worth more dead than alive”—indicates that George’s intended suicide has a financial motive as well, since his death will thus secure the funds necessary to save the family’s Building and Loan and all those who depend on it. In the course of the following post-rescue conversation with Clarence, in fact, George repeats with utter sincerity and belief Mr. Potter’s cruel words:

George. Only one way you can help me. You don’t happen to have 8,000 bucks on you, do you?

Clarence. Oh, no, we don’t have money in heaven.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 101-102; 15-16.

George. Oh, that's right. I keep forgetting. It comes in pretty handy down here, Bub.

Clarence. Oh, tut, tut, tut.

George. But I found it out a little too late. I'm worth more dead than alive.

Clarence. Now look, you mustn't talk like that. I won't get my [merit-earned angel's] wings with that attitude. You just don't know all that you've done.

George. Yeah, if it hadn't been for me, everybody'd be a lot better off. My wife and my kids and my friends--

Clarence. Yeah, so you still think killing yourself would make everyone feel happier, eh?

George. Well, I don't know. I guess you're right. I suppose it'd be better if I'd never been born.

Clarence. What'd you say?

George. I said I wished I'd never been born.

Clarence. . . . All right, you've got your wish.

As this exchange between George and Clarence indicates, it is the verbal legerdemain on the part of the latter that illogically skews the conversation from George's immediate and urgent need of a disaster-averting \$8,000 to the far less pressing concern of George's ostensible lack of self-esteem, a condition Clarence refers to when he says, "You just don't realize all that you've done." Thus, Clarence essentially—and unaccountably—identifies George's problem not as a dire financial emergency but rather as a crisis of confidence! Moreover, when Clarence accuses George of thinking that "kill[ing] himself would make everyone feel happier," he attributes to George a motive for suicide not suggested elsewhere in the narrative. That is, George, may feel, as previously discussed, that suicide offers an escape from life's demands, and he certainly understands that it offers a solution the Building and Loan's financial crisis, but George has never indicated a belief that is death would "make everyone feel happier"—until, that is, he fails to dispute Clarence's accusation to that effect. But if, in fact, George has entertained such a belief, then why, one wonders, doesn't he simply proceed to "suicide bridge" as soon as Mary asks him, "Why must you torture the children? Why don't you--?" Instead, though, he goes to

Mr. Potter, where in the course of his futile appeal for a loan, George discovers two very substantive motives for suicide: he is not only marked for arrest but also “worth more dead than alive.” Now, though, Clarence skillfully articulates the question of suicide—“So you still think killing yourself [is the solution]?”—as a belittling accusation in order to goad George into his correctly negative response. Having thus dismissed the possibility of suicide in response to Clarence’s verbal cues, George almost immediately suggests an alternative: “I suppose it’d been better if I’d never been born at all.” Not surprisingly, Clarence’s shocked response—“What’d you say?”—provokes the by-now cruelly overwhelmed George into a more emphatic restatement. Accordingly, George abandons his tentative, introductory “I suppose” and his awkward, evasive conditional—“it’d been better if I’d never been born”—and defiantly shouts, “I said I wish I’d never been born!” And it is this declaration, spoken by George but essentially scripted by Clarence, that inaugurates the nightmare sequence whose “terrorism proves so effective that George literally begs to be reinterpellated, no matter what the cost.”⁴⁴²

As Silverman points out, then, the nightmare sequence functions as a strategy to convince George that he should embrace rather than resist the often painful dominant fiction. In fact, I would venture to say that this transformation of George into an elated martyr to the dominant fiction is the sequence’s ONLY function. For, as previously discussed, the inclusion of the nightmare sequence is justified only by the final, anguished claim that Clarence’s artfully orchestrated conversation ultimately solicits from George: “I wish I’d never been born!” Indeed, in terms of narrative cause-and-effect, the nightmare sequence is completely disposable, since it does nothing to change the diegetic reality to which George returns. For while George has been engaged in Clarence’s divinely administered psychotherapy, his wife Mary has, with down-to-

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 101.

earth matter-of-factness, resolved the financial crisis that has galvanized George's potentially suicidal breakdown. Resourcefully, she has solicited the disaster-averting funds from plastics tycoon Sam Wainwright and from the grateful townspeople of Bedford Falls. Thus, if George had returned to his family shortly after his futile interview with Mr. Potter, he would have been able to celebrate straightaway this upturn in his fortunes. Instead, though, Clarence artfully contrives to engage George in a narratively irrelevant "what-if-I'd-never-been-born" fantasy, whose only apparent purpose is to terrorize George until he embraces the dominant culture. As Silverman observes, moreover, George submits to this subjectivity-deprived terrorism by reveling in the wounds it inflicts "as the necessary condition of cultural identity."⁴⁴³ Not surprisingly, then, this dominant culture, which posits death as its only alternative, permits only a subjectivity that exercises little agency—a subjectivity, in fact, like that of Stewart's protagonist George Bailey and like that of the returning war veteran, each of whom is called upon to undertake, unquestioningly, struggles between freedom and domesticity, aggression and cooperation, and self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment in order to conform with the accommodating masculinity required of the postwar American male.

In Rope (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948), Stewart's character Rupert Cadell similarly grapples with binaristic extremes encountered by returning veterans. In the diegetic past, Rupert has served as the Nietzsche-espousing housemaster to the homosexual lovers and prep-school students Brandon Shaw (John Dall) and Philip Morgan (Farley Granger). After the film's opening credits appear against the background provided by an overhead shot of a multi-storied apartment building that looks out onto a quiet, sunlit, well-maintained city street, the camera pans to the left over a parapet to show the exterior of an upper-story apartment's wide, curtained

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 102.

window. The calm serenity of this scene is suddenly shattered by a brief but agonized scream. The next frame then reveals the apparent source of this sound: a young man, whose head, shown in close-up, rolls forward in death as the rope around his neck tightens fatally. The camera then tracks backward to reveal, on either side of their victim, Philip; and Brandon, who now use their gloved hands to inter the corpse of their schoolmate David Kentley (Dick Hogan) in a table-high chest until the darkness of nightfall allows them to remove the body from the apartment. In the course of their subsequent conversation, Philip and Brandon reveal their motive for strangling David: to prove their privileged status as Nietzschean supermen, whose “intellectual and cultural superiority,” Brandon declares, exempts them from “the traditional moral concepts of good and evil, [and] right and wrong” that constrain “the ordinary, average man . . . [who] needs them.”

Thus unbound by conventional morality, Brandon and Philip appear to enjoy as well a freedom from financial constraints. For example, Brandon’s apartment, which serves as the scene of the crime, appears to qualify as a penthouse, since it consists of several large, well-appointed rooms with original works of art hangin on the walls and an expansive window revealing a breathtaking view of the New York City skyline. The apartment is maintained, moreover, by Mrs. Wilson (Edith Evanson), the housekeeper who matter-of-factly alludes to the sleeping arrangements therein when she confides to Rupert that “both [Brandon and Philip] . . . must have got up on the wrong side of the bed.” While her observation may simply indicate that Philip is Brandon’s guest or roommate who sleeps in a bed or bedroom of his own, Richard Dyer observes that, in terms of iconographic décor, “male homosexuality . . . [is] ideological[ly] pair[ed] . . . with luxury and decadence.”⁴⁴⁴ Following their interment of David, moreover, Brandon and Philip indicate through their words and actions that the shared murder in which

⁴⁴⁴ Richard Dyer, The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation (New York: Routledge, 1993), 65.

they have just engaged represents the coded equivalent of coitus. Breathing heavily for their exertions, for example, Brandon and Philip, their hands braced on top of the chest, slump over it until their heads are almost touching. When Brandon turns on the light, moreover, Philip entreats him, “Don’t! . . . Let’s stay this way for a minute.” In response, Brandon lights a cigarette instead and then exhales its smoke luxuriously. Once they have roused themselves from this representation of post-coital languor, Brandon tells Philip, “The power to kill can be just as satisfying as the power to create” and thereby likens the orgasmic pleasure of murder to that of sex. He further elaborates on this theme in response to Philip’s “was-it-good-for-you” question, “Brandon, how did you feel during it?” “[When] his body went limp,” Brandon replies, “I felt tremendously exhilarated.”

In consideration of these queer codings that the film abundantly provides within its opening minutes, then, Amy Lawrence’s investigation into Patrick Hamilton’s stage play on which the movie is based, while offering an intriguing glimpse into the cinematic adaptation process, nevertheless seems extraneous with respect to the possible carryover to the film of the play’s less cryptically coded gay subtext. For few 1948 American filmgoers would have seen the 1929 play, which opened as Rope in London in March of 1929 and on Broadway as Rope’s End in mid-September 1929, where it ran for only 100 performances, closing in mid-December of the following year. Consequently, virtually no contemporary American moviegoer, consciously or unconsciously, could attribute to the film the more transparently gay sub-text of the nearly twenty-year-old London-based stage version. Although Lawrence admits that these transparencies have been eliminated or changed in the film, she nevertheless professes that their “trace remains” by virtue of the following filmic evidence: “Brandon stands very close to Rupert, who makes no attempt to move”; the chest wherein David lies “literalizes the closet, a signifier if

hiddenness bearing witness to what is inside”; and the movie’s omission of the word “queer” from Rupert’s line in the play—“This is a very queer, dark and incomprehensible universe”—indicates that “in the film the world is still ‘dark and incomprehensible,’ if not quite so queer—or at least more securely closeted . . . [since t]he film substitutes code words for the original code and mise-en-scene for the unspeakable.”⁴⁴⁵ Thus, Lawrence relies on rather strained and subjectively reasoned evidence to the exclusion of the more immediately accessible evidence provided by the film itself.

This preference recurs in her investigation into Stewart’s portrayal of Rupert Cadell. Specifically, Lawrence investigates Stewart’s postwar persona via a survey of his films and concluded, correctly, I believe, that as a result of his “troubled depictions of heterosexuality,” Stewart reveals that “the problem [is postwar] . . . masculinity [itself].”⁴⁴⁶ Yet, since Lawrence’s survey necessarily includes several of Stewart’s films that postdate *Rope*, their relevance to the persona that Stewart brings to his role in that film remains unclear. In addition, Lawrence also investigates not only Jimmy Stewart’s World War II military service as wing commander of a bomber squadron but also is postwar refusal “to talk about the war to reporters, . . . [to] play soldiers in combat in any . . . film[, or to appear as] . . . the subject of any publicity . . . that . . . mentioned his service in the war.”⁴⁴⁷ Lawrence then uses Stewart’s bomber-pilot experience and his postwar reticence about it to argue Stewart’s conflicted status as, simultaneously, “war hero” and “killer.”⁴⁴⁸ According to Lawrence, this conflict arises when a former World War II pilot like Stewart recognizes that, as a result of bombing missions whose “targets were not exclusively

⁴⁴⁵ Amy Lawrence, “American Shame: *Rope*, James Stewart, and the Postwar Crisis in Masculinity,” in *Hitchcock’s America*, ed. Jonathan Freedman and Richard Millington (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 67.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴⁴⁷ Marc Eliot, *Jimmy Stewart: A Biography* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006), 190.

⁴⁴⁸ Lawrence, 72.

military,” he has committed murder.⁴⁴⁹ In the course of constructing her argument that Stewart has committed and feels guilt for wartime crimes, Lawrence cites the following anecdote:

[During the filming of *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), Director Frank] Capra sensed that Stewart still had doubts about whether acting was an important enough profession for someone who had experienced what he had in the war, so the director asked the old pro, Lionel Barrymore, to give the star a pep talk. . . . When Stewart told Barrymore that he didn't think acting was “decent,” Barrymore asked him if he thought it was more “decent” to drop bombs on people than to bring rays of sunshine into their lives with his acting talent.” Stewart told [Capra] that Lionel's barbs had knocked him flat on his ass, and that now acting was going to be his life's work.⁴⁵⁰

From this anecdote, Lawrence concludes that “lingering ambivalence about . . . massive [wartime] destruction . . . was perhaps most keenly felt by veterans themselves.”⁴⁵¹ As one of these veterans, Stewart, Lawrence continues, “was trapped by a contradiction which, in the wake of the officially sanctioned postwar euphoria, produced psychological turmoil that veterans were left to negotiate alone.”⁴⁵² In general, this claim makes historical and psychological sense, but in terms of Jimmy Stewart specifically, it seems invalid when examined in light of other evidence that indicates an alternative reason for the actor's postwar “psychological turmoil.” As the leader of several bombing raids, for example, Stewart said:

“I was really afraid. . . . Our group had suffered several casualties even before I knew I was going to have to lead a squadron deep into . . . Germany. . . . I feared

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴⁵⁰ Joseph McBride, *Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), k525-6, quoted in Lawrence, 69.

⁴⁵¹ Lawrence, 70.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

the worst.⁴⁵³ Fear is an insidious and deadly thing. It can warp judgment, freeze reflexes, breed mistakes. And worse, it's contagious. I felt my own fear and knew that if it wasn't checked, it could infect my crew members."⁴⁵⁴

After what would turn out to be his last raid, in which he and his squad encountered a cadre of Luftwaffe who engaged them in an hours-long battle, Stewart returned to base, exited his plane, and collapsed to the ground. He subsequently "spent several weeks in a hospital suffering from emotional trauma, until his military doctors felt he was well enough to be released."⁴⁵⁵

Moreover, Stewart "told friends that he would never fly again, not as a pilot or, unless absolutely necessary, a passenger."⁴⁵⁶ These accounts of Stewart's reaction to the dangerous bombing raids that he led during the war thus indicate that his postwar "emotional trauma" may well have arisen from repeatedly risking high-altitude and incendiary death to his crew members and to himself and not, as Lawrence claims, from guilt over killing the enemy, be they civilians or Luftwaffe pilots. By thus arguing that Stewart enacts his recognition of this personal guilt in his portrayal of Rupert, Lawrence again defers to less-than-compelling evidence from extra-diegetic sources to the exclusion of more immediately available and reliable diegetic evidence.

Accumulating such evidence, however, requires the following extensive examination of dialogue and, frequently, the cinematographic context in which it occurs. Except for the brief, opening exterior shot previously described, the film's onscreen action takes place in the interior of Brandon's apartment, wherein Brandon and Philip host a party to celebrate their status as murderous supermen. To this end, they assemble together a number of their acquaintances, who remain unaware not only of David's murder but also of his interment within the chest that serves

⁴⁵³ Donald Dewey, James Stewart (Atlanta: Turner Publishing Company, 1996), quoted in Eliot, 186.

⁴⁵⁴ As told to Richard M. Schneider, Guideposts, n. d., quoted in Eliot, 186.

⁴⁵⁵ Eliot, 190.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

as the party's buffet table. These guests whom Brandon has ghoulishly invited include not only David (that is, the dead man himself) but also David's mother—although his aunt Mrs. Atwater (Constance Collier) comes in her stead—his father Mr. Kentley (Sir Cedric Hardwicke), his fiancée Janet Walker (Joan Chandler), and his rival for Janet's affections Kenneth Lawrence (Douglas Dick). In addition, Brandon has also invited his and Philip's former housemaster Rupert Cadell, since this man, Brandon acknowledges, is responsible for having introduced him to the Nietzschean superman philosophy that he and Philip have just put to the test. In advance of Rupert's arrival, Brandon and his housekeeper Mrs. Wilson, who has formerly served in a similar capacity to Rupert as well, offers further information about him. For example, Mrs. Wilson's thrilled reaction to Rupert's inclusion on the guest list and her subsequent primping in anticipation of her arrival indicate her fondness for him, although she admits that "some people say he's a little peculiar." According to Brandon, moreover, Rupert is now a publisher of philosophy books, a profession that allows him the "extremely radical" approach of "select[ing] . . . books on the assumption that people cannot only read but actually . . . think." Furthermore, Brandon confides to Philip:

I once thought of inviting [Rupert] . . . to join us [in the murder of David, but I reconsidered] . . . because he hasn't the nerve. Oh, intellectually he could've come along. He's brilliant. But he's a little too fastidious. He could've invented, he could've admired. But he never could have acted. We're superior. We have courage, Rupert doesn't.

For the larger part of Brandon's speech, he and Philip remain alone in the apartment's living room, but just as he utters the last sentence—"We have courage, Rupert doesn't"—Mrs. Wilson sidles between them with a tray of party food and defends this overheard slur on her beloved Rupert with the comment, "Mr. Cadell got a bad leg in the war for his courage, and you've got

your sleeve in the celery, Mr. Philip.” Presumably, the war in which Rupert has incurred this injury is World War II, not only because Rope’s year of release—1948—follows by three years the end of that war but also because, during the course of the party, David’s father Mr. Kentley refers to Adolf Hitler—a primary instigator of the war—as an infamous practitioner of Nietzsche’s superman theory. Moreover, after strangling David, Brandon offhandedly makes a distinction between his apparently disposable victim and those “good Americans [who] usually die young on the battlefield.” With these words, then, Brandon also makes a distinction between himself—who, with Philip, has apparently gone on to college rather than off to war—and Rupert who, although neither “young” nor dead, has nevertheless served in the military like a “good American” and, in the course of such service, bravely incurred a war wound. Rupert, then, has risked his life to vanquish the Nietzschean creed’s brutal enforcers, who are not only America’s enemies but also the very men his two former students emulate.

In consideration of his heroic military service, then, one would expect that the Rupert Cadell who arrives at the party will reflect war-wrought changes in the man Mrs. Wilson and Brandon have described, that he will indicate somehow the reverse effect that the actions and exigencies of wartime have brought to bear on his pre-war cerebralism and advocacy of Nietzschean philosophy. As the last guest to arrive, however, Rupert engages in speech and behavior that, initially at least, resists definitive ethical and social categorization. Amy Lawrence provides the following list of examples:

Like Brandon, Rupert uses a private humor which often puts others at disadvantage. When he first enters, he undercuts the social niceties with unexpected twists. Kenneth says, “It’s nice to see you again,” [for example,] and Rupert shoots back, “Why?” [Similarly w]hen Janet [tells him that she] hopes David’s descriptions of her have done her justice, [Rupert asks,] . . . “Do you deserve justice?” [Sometimes, however, Rupert’s] . . . rudeness is softened by

after-the-fact disclaimers and the judicious employment of charm. [When] Mrs. Wilson tells him she has his favorite pate[, for example, he] . . . says, “I don’t like it anymore,” . . . [but w]hen she wilts with disappointment, he whispers, “Just teasing.” . . . [In other instance, he parrots] . . . the forgetful dowager Mrs. Atwater[, who has previously attempted to identify movies and plays whose names escape her by unhelpfully referring to them as either “the something something” or “just something.” In a similar manner, Rupert explains that] the title of a Mary Pickford movie he saw once . . . was “ ‘the something something.’ Or was it ‘just something.’ “ On the last line, he shares a [knowing] look with Janet as his smile widens, giving away the joke[, which he nevertheless makes at the expense of the unaware Mrs. Atwater.]⁴⁵⁷

By virtue of these offputting comments, then, Rupert evades any definitive resolution regarding his character and instead raises more questions concerning it. For example, when Rupert, in response to Kenneth’s “nice to see you” and Janet’s hope that David has done her justice, responds respectively with “Why?” and “Do you deserve justice?”, do his questions indicate an academic cerebralism that takes even social chitchat literally and ponders its content as intensely as it would an encrypted hieroglyphic? Or do Rupert’s responses suggest an intentional desire to discomfit the persons at whom they are directed? If so, does this desire arise from Rupert’s own discomfort in the company of others or simply from delight in making people squirm?

While Rupert’s engagement in a subsequent and more extensive conversation fails to answer conclusively any of the foregoing questions, it nevertheless suggests an emerging estrangement between Rupert and Brandon. This conversation takes place after Brandon has attempted to relate an anecdote about Philip’s chicken-strangling skills, and Philip, increasingly traumatized by his strangulation-murder of David, hysterically discounts Brandon’s story and falsely professes never to have strangled a chicken:

Rupert. Is it [i.e., the argument] over?

⁴⁵⁷ Lawrence, 58-9.

Brandon. I'm afraid so, Rupert.

Rupert. Oh, what a pity. In another moment you might have been strangling each other instead of a chicken.

Mrs. Atwater. Mr. Cadell, really!

Rupert. But a man's honor was at stake. And personally, I think a chicken is as good a reason for a murder as a blonde, a mattress full of dollar bills, or any of the customary unimaginative reasons. (*He sits next to Mrs. Atwater on the couch beneath the window.*)

Janet. Now you don't really approve of murder, do you, Rupert, if I may [call you by your first name]?

Rupert. You may, and I do. Think of the problems it would solve: unemployment, poverty, standing in line for theater tickets.

Mrs. Atwater. I must say, I've had a perfectly dreadful time getting tickets for that new musical—what's it called? You know.

Rupert. "The something," with what's-her-name? (*Janet laughs offscreen.*) My dear Mrs. Atwater, careful application of the trigger finger and a pair of seats in the first row is yours for the shooting. And have you had any difficulty getting into our velvet rope restaurants?

Mrs. Atwater. Frightful!

Rupert. A very simple matter. A flick of the knife, Madame, and if you'll kindly step this way—oh no, step OVER the head waiter's body! (*Mrs. Atwater laughs delightedly.*) Thank you, and here's your table.

Janet (*From offscreen*) Rupert, you're the end!

Brandon. (*From offscreen*) There's a hotel clerk I could cheerfully flick a knife at.

Rupert. Oh no, sorry. Knives may not be used on hotel employees. They are in the death by slow torture category . . . along with bird lovers, small children, and tap dancers. Landlords, of course, are another matter. You seeking an apartment? Call on our own Miss Sash Weight, of the blunt instrument department. (*From offscreen, Janet laughs.*)

Mrs. Atwater. What a divine idea! If it suits your purpose, merely—but then we'd all be murdering each other!

Rupert. Oh no, oh no. After all, murder is, or should be, an art. Not one of the seven lively, perhaps, but an art nevertheless. And as such, the privilege of committing it is reserved for those few who are really superior individuals. (*As Rupert utters the last eight words, the camera pans to Mr. Kentley who, as he sits on the window couch on the other side of Mrs. Atwater, shifts in his seat and looks out the window directly in front of him. The camera then pans to include Brandon, who sits next to Mr. Kentley on the same couch.*)

Brandon. (*Earnestly.*) And the victims, inferior beings whose lives are unimportant anyway.

Rupert. (*From offscreen.*) Obviously. (*Camera pans to three-shot of Rupert, Mrs. Atwater, and Mr. Kentley.*) Mind you, I don't hold with the extremists who feel that there should be open season for murder all year round. No, personally, I would prefer to have "Cut-a-throat-Week" or "Strangulation Day." (*Mrs. Atwater laughs.*)

Mr. Kentley. Probably a symptom of approaching senility, but I must confess I really don't appreciate this morbid humor.

Rupert. Well, the humor was unintentional.

Mr. Kentley. You're not serious about these theories?

Brandon. *(From offscreen.)* Of course he is. *(The camera pans to a two-shot of Mr. Kentley and Brandon.)*

Mr. Kentley. Oh, you're both pulling my leg.

Brandon. Why do you think that?

Mr. Kentley. Well, Brandon, the notion that murder is an art that a few superior beings should be allowed to practice—

Rupert. *(From offscreen.)* In season!

Mr. Kentley. *(Smiling toward Rupert offscreen left.)* Now I know you're not serious.

Rupert. *(From offscreen.)* But I am. I'm a very serious fellow.

Mr. Kentley. Then may I ask: who is to decide if a human being is inferior and therefore a suitable victim for murder? *(He looks for an answer from Rupert at offscreen left.)*

Brandon. The few who are privileged to commit murder.

Mr. Kentley. *(Turning from Rupert to Brandon.)* And who might they be?

Brandon. Oh, myself, Philip, possibly Rupert.

Rupert. *(From offscreen.)* I'm sorry, Kenneth, you're out! *(From offscreen, Mrs. Atwater laughs.)*

Mr. Kentley. Gentlemen, I'm serious. *(He looks toward Rupert at offscreen left.)*

Brandon. So are we, Mr. Kentley. The few are those men of such intellectual and cultural superiority that they're above the traditional moral concepts. Good and evil, right and wrong were invented for the ordinary, average man, the inferior man, because he needs them.

Mr. Kentley. *(Directs the remainder of his remarks to Brandon.)* Then you obviously agree with Nietzsche and his theory of the superman.

Brandon. Yes, I do.

Mr. Kentley. So did Hitler.

Brandon. Hitler was a paranoid savage. His supermen, all his supermen, were brainless murderers. I'd hang any who were left. But then, you see, I'd hang them first for being stupid. I'd hang all incompetent fools, too. There are too many in the world.

Mr. Kentley. Then perhaps you should hang me too. I'm so stupid, I don't know whether you're all serious or not. In any case, I'd rather not hear any more of your, forgive me, contempt for humanity and for the standards of a world that I believe is civilized.

Brandon. Civilized?

Mr. Kentley. Yes.

Brandon. Perhaps what is called "civilization" is hypocrisy.

Mr. Kentley. Perhaps.

Brandon. Well, I'm sure Rupert, fortunately—*(camera pans to Rupert and then tracks backward to include as well Mrs. Atwater, Mr. Kentley, and Brandon.)*

Rupert. *(With dismay.)* OK now, gentlemen.

Brandon. (Continuing stridently.)—has the intelligence and imagination—
Mr. Kentley. Please, Brandon, I think we’ve had just about enough! (An uncomfortable silence ensues.)

Rupert. (Rising and attempting to defuse the situation with a change of subject.) Philip, where did you put those books you set out for Mr. Kentley? I’d very much like to see them myself, if I may.

Philip. Of course. They’re in the dining room. Mr. Kentley, wouldn’t you like to see the books now?

Brandon. I apologize, sir. Again, I’m afraid I let myself get carried away.

Mr. Kentley. That’s quite all right, my boy. . . . May I use the phone first? I’d like to talk to my wife first. She may have some word of David. (He walks out of the living room.)

Philip. (Accompanying Mr. Kentley.) Of course, it’s this way. (Brandon starts to follow them, but Rupert stops him. They remain in a two-shot near the entrance to the living room and isolated from the others.)

Rupert. (With furrowed brow.) You were really pushing your point rather hard. (Smiling.) You aren’t planning to do away with a few inferiors by any chance, hmmm?

Brandon. I’m a creature of whim, who knows?

Rupert. Oh, I see. (He follows Philip and Mr. Kentley offscreen. Apparently addressing them, he asks,) Did you think Brandon was serious before?

(Subsequent offscreen comments are rendered indecipherable by the loudness of the simultaneously occurring onscreen conversations.)

Initially, Rupert’s references to murder in the preceding conversation sound justifiably light-hearted for several reasons. When he opines, for example, that “a chicken is as good a reason for murder as a blonde [or] a mattress full of dollar bills,” Rupert implicitly identifies “customary” motives for murders that might occur within the “unimaginative plots of fiction or films noirs. Furthermore, Rupert’s suggestion of murder as a solution to “unemployment [and] poverty” has a literary precedent dating back at least as far as 1729 to “A Modest Proposal,” in which essayist Jonathan Swift, in a similarly satiric tone, also suggests murder—specifically, infanticide—as a solution to poverty. Indeed, Rupert himself refers to infanticide when he assigns to the “death by slow torture category” not only “small children” but also “hotel employees[,] . . . bird lovers, . . . and tap dancers” with a comic misanthropy akin to that of Robert Benchley or W. C. Fields. Moreover, with Wildean archness and concern for the finer things in life, Rupert endorses

murder as a means to obtaining a seat in the first row of a theater or at a table in a “velvet rope restaurant,” and he proclaims that “murder is, or should be, an art—not one of the seven lively, perhaps, but an art nevertheless.” Thus, these comments that Rupert makes seem imbued with a humorous versus serious intent, not only by virtue of their associations with the laughter-inducing sources of amusement just cited—“unimaginative” fiction, “A Modest Proposal,” Robert Benchley, W. C. Fields, Oscar Wilde—but also because of the delighted response the comments elicit from Rupert’s audience. Both Mrs. Atwater and Janet laugh in response to Rupert’s *bons mots*, for example, and even Mr. Kentley, who explicitly objects to the “morbid humor” that amuses these ladies, smiles when he professes to “know [that Rupert is] not serious.”

On an imaginary continuum measuring the value of human life, in fact, Mr. Kentley occupies the “all-human-life-is-precious” position at one extreme, while Brandon locates himself at the other by virtue of his advocacy and enactment of Nietzsche’s superman theory. For much of the film, Rupert resists definitive placement on this continuum, although within the context of this conversation, he seems more closely allied with Mr. Kentley than with Brandon. For since Rupert’s words resonate with humor, albeit that of the “morbid” variety, they contrast emphatically with Brandon’s stridently earnest advocacy of Nietzschean doctrine. Moreover, as the conversation segues from the former to the latter, Rupert ceases to appear within the filmic frame, although his words continue to be heard offscreen, leavening Brandon’s Nietzschean extremism with humor. For example, as Mr. Kentley begins to admonish Brandon for his belief “that murder is an art that a few superior beings should be allowed to practice,” the unseen Rupert injects the comic proviso “In season!” and thereby elicits from Mr. Kentley a smile as well as the conclusion, “Now I know you’re not serious.” When, moreover, in response to Mr.

Kentley's inquiry as to who might qualify as "the few who are privileged to commit murder," Brandon responds, "Oh, myself, Philip, possibly Rupert," the still unseen Rupert again interrupts, this time with the comic apology, "I'm sorry, Kenneth, you're out!" Thus, even as Rupert continues with comic dialogue that sets itself apart from Brandon's strident zealotry, the camera further substantiates this estrangement by steadfastly refusing to include Rupert in the same frame with Brandon. Indeed, only when the argument between Mr. Kentley and Brandon has reached fever pitch and Brandon is loudly attempting to enlist Rupert's support—"Well, I'm sure Rupert, fortunately, has the intelligence and imagination"—does he share the same frame with his former housemaster. Yet in spite of their now shared screen space, Rupert declines to respond to Brandon's implicit solicitation of his support. Instead, witnessing the rancor between Brandon and Mr. Kentley, Rupert warns them with dismay, "OK now, gentlemen" and then, with a change of subject, attempts to defuse the uncomfortable silence that follows their argument by asking Philip if he can examine the books that have been set aside for Mr. Kentley. Finally, when he is alone with Brandon, Rupert, his brow furrowed in concern, addresses him accusingly in the second person singular—"You were really pushing your point rather hard"—in order to indicate Brandon's sole ownership of the Nietzschean cause.

Subsequently, Rupert more emphatically distances himself from Brandon and his Nietzschean sense of privilege. Initially, he leaves Brandon's penthouse along with the other guests, each of whom remains anxious over the non-appearance of David. Before his departure, however, Rupert, retreating to the hall closet for his hat, recognizes David's, which he initially mistakes as his own. Confronted with this evidence that Brandon and Philip have seen David, despite their claims to the contrary, Rupert almost immediately returns to Brandon's apartment

under the guise of retrieving his cigarette case. There, the three men engage in a bit of cat-and-mouse banter:

Rupert. I was thinking about David [and his worrying disappearance]. . . .

Brandon. Do you think [as Janet does, that] I, uh, “kidnapped” David?

Rupert. Well, it’s the sort of mischief that would have appealed to you in school for the experience, the excitement, the danger.

Brandon. But it would be slightly more difficult to pull off now.

Rupert. Oh, you’d find a way . . . [although] I don’t think for a minute that you kidnapped David. I will admit that Janet put the notion in my head, but I never would have mentioned it if it weren’t that you seem to be carrying fear of discovery in your pocket. That’s a gun, isn’t it? That teased my suspicions more than anything else, and to tell the truth, it really scares me a little.

Up until this juncture, Rupert has surmised that perhaps mischief-making Brandon has arranged somehow for David’s temporary absence in the hope that scandalous sparks will reignite between David’s fiancé Janet and her erstwhile flame Kenneth, whom Brandon has contrived to sequester together at the party. Now, however, Rupert realizes that Janet’s theory—that Brandon has kidnapped David—has substantial merit, for he tells Brandon “[that] sort of mischief would have appealed to you in school for the experience, the excitement, [and] the danger,” and even though the non-school venue of the diegetic present might present additional obstacles to the implementation of such a scheme, “you’d find a way [to overcome them].” In addition, Rupert’s reasoning further estranges him from Brandon who, as a student, enacted the mischief-making, obstacle-surmounting antics that the housemaster Rupert merely and ruefully observed. Finally, as the most compelling substantiation of Janet’s foul play theory, Rupert fearfully detects the presence of a gun in the pocket of Brandon’s suit jacket.

Brandon, however, laughingly tosses the gun on the table and rationalizes its presence as a necessary protection against burglaries in the Connecticut countryside to which he and

Brandon intend to retreat after Rupert's departure. However, when Rupert subsequently pulls from his pocket the rope that Philip and Brandon have used not only to strangle to David but also to tie together the books they have presented to David's father Mr. Kentley, Philip grabs the gun from the table. Rupert lunges at Philip and wrests the gun from him, shooting himself in the hand in the process. As he simultaneously maintains his hold on the gun and wraps his bleeding hand in his pocket handkerchief, the following conversation takes place:

Brandon. I'm sorry, Rupert.

Rupert. It's all right. If you really want to kill, you don't miss, especially at that range. . . . *(He slumps in exhaustion.)* Brandon, Brandon, I'm tired, and in a way, I'm frightened, too. But I don't want to fence anymore.

Brandon. What are you going to do?

Rupert. I don't want to, but I'm going to look inside that chest.

Brandon. Are you crazy?

Rupert. I hope so. With all my heart, I hope I'm crazy. . . . I've got to look inside that chest!

Brandon. All right! Go ahead and look! And I hope you like what you see!

Rupert. *(He limps to the chest and flings open its lid so that the stacks of books atop it crash to the floor. The camera pans upward from the falling books beyond the expanse of the chest's open lid and past its top edge—clutched by Rupert's hand in its blood-stained bandage—to Rupert's face, horror-struck.)* Oh no, no! *(He slams the lid shut.)* I couldn't believe it was true!

Brandon. Rupert, please.

Rupert. Please what?

Brandon. Let me explain.

Rupert. Explain what? You think you can explain that?

Brandon. Yes, to you I can because you'll understand.

Rupert. Understand?

Brandon. Rupert, remember the discussion we had before with Mr. Kentley?

Rupert. Yes.

Brandon. And remember we said, "the lives of inferior beings are unimportant"? Remember we said—we've always said, you and I—that moral concepts of good and evil and right and wrong don't hold for the intellectually superior? *(The camera shows a close-up of Rupert, staring down at the floor, not looking at Brandon while the latter addresses him.)* Remember, Rupert?

Rupert. *(He mutters, staring off into the distance as if in a trance.)* Yes, I remember.

Brandon. That's all we've done. That's all Philip and I have done. He and I have lived what you and I have talked. I knew you'd understand because you have to, don't you see? You have to.

Rupert. *(He walks away from Brandon, looks back at him, and slowly, dazedly lowers himself into a chair.)* Brandon, Brandon. Till this very minute this world and the people in it have always been incomprehensible to me, and I've tried to clear the way with logic and superior intellect, and you've thrown my words right back in my face, Brandon. You were right to. If nothing else, a man should stand by his words. But you've given my words a meaning that I've never dreamed of, and you've tried to twist them into a cold, logical excuse for your ugly murder. Well, they never were that, Brandon *(he rises from his chair and approaches Brandon)*, and you can't make them that. There must have been something deep inside you from the very start that let you do this thing. But there's always been something deep inside me that would never let me do it and would never let me be a party to it now.

Brandon. What do you mean?

Rupert. I mean that tonight you made me ashamed of every concept I ever had of superior or inferior beings. And I thank you for that shame because now I know that we are each of us a separate human being, Brandon *(circling him)*, with the right to live and work and think as individuals but with an obligation to the society we live in. By what right do you dare say that there's a superior few to which you belong? *(Rupert paces back and forth between the living room window in midground and Brandon, in rear view close-up in foreground.)* By what right did you decide that boy in there was inferior and therefore could be killed? Did you think you were God, Brandon? Is that what you thought when you choked the life out of him? Is that what you thought when you served food from his grave? *(Rupert's voice cracks as he utters the last word.)* I don't know what you thought or what you are, but I know what you've done. You've murdered. You've strangled the life out of a fellow human being who could live and love as you never could, and never will again. *(Rupert moves to the window.)*

Brandon. What are you doing?

Rupert. It's not what I'm going to do, Brandon. It's what society is going to do. I don't know what that'll be, but I can guess. And I can help. You're going to die, Brandon, both of you. You're going to die.

This excerpt begins with a reminder of Rupert's wartime experience—"If you really want to kill, you don't miss, especially at that range"—in contradistinction to the non-battle-scarred gun-wielders Brandon and Philip. As a wounded veteran, Rupert makes manifest through his movement and his words the enervating effect of struggle and slaughter. After grappling with Philip for possession of the gun, for example, Rupert exhaustedly slumps against the table as he

binds his bleeding hand, and he admits to Brandon, that he's "tired and frightened." And even though he confesses, "I don't want to look [inside the chest for fear of what lies within]," Rupert nevertheless limps toward David's place of interment, throws open the lid with his wounded hand, and forces himself to look inside. Moreover, Brandon's attempts to solicit Rupert's understanding, approval, and admiration evoke only a dazed reaction. For Rupert, at least initially, cannot fully engage with Brandon. He fails to sustain eye contact with him, for example, and rather than taking an equal part in the conversation, Rupert instead allows Brandon to direct its course. Consequently, Rupert limits his own contributions to simple utterances like "Yes," "I remember," and "Understand?" During this trance-like period, Rupert seems to be absorbing and processing the compound shock of two discoveries: David's murder and its motive, in which Rupert himself is implicated. Subsiding exhaustedly into a chair, Rupert finally begins to articulate his reaction. First, he confesses that "this world and the people in it have always been incomprehensible to me, and I've tried to clear my way with logic and superior intellect." This admission thus reveals a probable motive for Rupert's previously discussed remarks that put others at a disadvantage—in response to Kenneth's "nice to see you" and Janet's hope that David has done her justice, Rupert, for example, has responded respectively with "Why?" and "Do you deserve justice?" In consideration, then, of his attempt to render the world comprehensible by applying "logic and superior intellect," Rupert's offputting questions seems to represent a misguided remedy for his confessed social ineptness. Through the application of "logic and superior intellect," that is, Rupert takes literally such social clichés as "I hope his description of me has done me justice," and he responds to them in kind: "Do you deserve justice?" Moreover, Rupert has in his verbal repertoire of coping mechanisms another tactic that similarly allows him to navigate an intellectually lofty path through a world of people

he finds incomprehensible, for his previously discussed use of comparatively sophisticated Wildean, Swiftian, and Benchleyesque humor serves not only to entertain the members of his audience but also to keep them at a comfortable distance from him while they ponder the extent to which he utters truths spoken in jest. But now, confronting David's murder and his implication in it, Rupert can no longer employ his strategy of distanciation and avoidance. Instead, he forthrightly admits to Brandon, "[Y]ou've thrown my words right back in my face. . . . You were right to. If nothing else, a man should stand by his words. But you've given my words a meaning that I never dreamed of, and you've tried to twist them into a cold, logical excuse for your ugly murder." Yet Rupert seemingly undermines this stalwart declaration "to stand by his words" with his subsequent disavowal, "you've given my words a meaning that I've never dreamed of." Quoting D. A. Miller, Lawrence calls this statement on Rupert's part an example of " 'manifest stupidity.' "⁴⁵⁸ Yet Rupert has previously commented upon the "strange" evening, a remark that, at the time, elicits Philip's question, "What do you mean, 'strange' ?" In response, Rupert poses, to Brandon rather than Philip, a question of his own—"Did I say strange, Brandon?"—to which Brandon replies, "You often pick words for their sound rather than [their] meaning." Now, with the question of Rupert's "meaning" of paramount significance to an understanding of his degree of culpability in David's murder, Brandon's previous observation—"You often pick words for their sound rather than [their] meaning"—provides a possible insight into Rupert's word choice, based apparently on a subjective standard of aural aesthetics rather than on an accurate articulation of thoughtful belief. Certainly, Rupert's preference for verbal aesthetics rather than verbal accuracy represents a dangerous value system, especially for a teacher, whose credibility is essentially his professional currency. Nevertheless,

⁴⁵⁸ D. A. Miller, "Anal Rope," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diane Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 127, quoted in Lawrence, 71.

it is Brandon himself who recognizes and identifies Rupert's non-denotative style of articulation, and yet he chooses to ignore it at his peril when he murders David in apparent reliance upon Rupert's perceived endorsement of Nietzschean theory. Now, though, Rupert's verbal disavowal of the superman theory at last confirms the disavowal he has already enacted during his wound-incurring, wartime battle against Nietzsche's primary adherents. Rupert's verbal disavowal, then, is "manifest[ly] stupid" only insofar as it is long overdue, for Brandon's revelation regarding Rupert's not-necessarily-meaning-based rhetorical style has thus granted the disavowal a strangely logical credibility.

According to Lawrence, however, "[t]he vehemence with which Stewart denounces Brandon and Philip indicates the importance of projecting the bloody guilt outward, his inquisitorial zeal necessitated by the fear that the guilt lies within."⁴⁵⁹ As I have previously argued, though, Lawrence's conclusion that Stewart enacts the recognition of his wartime guilt in his portrayal of Rupert relies essentially on only one modest piece of evidence; namely, Lionel Barrymore's lecture to Stewart that acting was preferable to dropping bombs on people. Yet, as previously discussed, the evidence extrapolated from the Barrymore anecdote is refuted by other evidence to the effect that Stewart's wartime trauma resulted not from guilt over killing the enemy, be they civilians or Luftwaffe pilots, but rather from fear of the high-altitude and incendiary death that menacingly overshadowed himself and the rest of his squadron every time they flew. And, as I have just argued, Rupert, in Brandon's apartment, at last verbally disavows the supporters of Nietzsche just as he has actively disavowed them during his wartime battles against them. Consequently, what Lawrence calls "the bloody guilt . . . [that] lies within [and that Stewart-as-Rupert] project[s] . . . outward" does not exist, since Stewart's trauma results

⁴⁵⁹ Lawrence, 71.

from fear rather than guilt and since Rupert has killed Nietzschean supermen rather than supporting them.

Lawrence again refers to Stewart's guilt when she notes that, in his "performance of Rupert's final speech[, Stewart] substitutes emotion for analysis, selling access to the star, who through bravura acting exposes his deepest guilt."⁴⁶⁰ The diegetic construction of Rupert's character, however, suggests that on the occasion of his final speech (which appears above and begins with Brandon's apology to the wounded Rupert), Stewart should quite rightly "substitute emotion for analysis" in his portrayal of a character who has now climactically reached a moment of cathartic epiphany that virtually insists upon his abandonment, at last, of "logic and superior intellect" in favor, finally, of unmediated emotion. For Rupert's postwar decision to give up teaching in order to pursue a not-financially-profitable career in the publication of thought-inspiring books seems to indicate a need on his part to retreat, after the horrors of battle, to the perceived safety of a life of solitude and contemplation. Moreover, on the occasions Rupert finds he must mingle in a world that he finds "incomprehensible," he relies on the "logic and superior intellect" that, as previously discussed, keep him at a superior and safe remove from others. On this occasion, however, the enormity of the crime committed in reliance upon an inhuman philosophy that Rupert has already seen enacted in war causes him at last to give way to emotion, which in turn grants him access to a sense of empathy that alone can render people comprehensible to him by virtue of their shared humanity. Indeed, he tells Brandon, "I [now] know that we are each of us a separate human being . . . with the right to live and work and think as individuals but with an obligation to the society we live in." With these words, then, Rupert

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

removes himself from his isolation and posits himself as one of a world of “individuals [who have] an obligation to . . . society.”

Lawrence, however, views Rupert Rupert’s assumption of his place in society not as an evolution in the character’s arc but rather as a disclaimer on the part of Stewart, the actor who portrays him. For she claims that the “distinction between Brandon’s murder and Stewart’s soldier is society: One acts on his own, the other is shielded by society’s authority. Whatever he has done . . . is out of his hands.”⁴⁶¹ Yet such a claim applies to all murderers and soldiers; that is, the former act on their own, the latter are shielded by society’s authority. In consideration of this claim’s general applicability, then, it seems curious that Lawrence’s argument strives to indict Jimmy Stewart in particular rather than America in general for wartime civilian casualties. In fact, her analysis of the film’s final scene, which follows, employs a purely subjective interpretation in order to insure such an indictment:

Rupert goes to the window, slaps open the latch with the gun barrel, and fires three shots. Turning away as voices rise from the street, he looks hesitantly at Brandon, then turns a long troubled look toward Philip. With great difficulty, he lifts his bad leg off the windowseat, having to steady himself against the piano for a minute before he can stand. Once again Stewart slowly looks back and forth between Brandon and Philip. Finally, he limps across the room toward the chest. At the last moment he uses his bad leg to pull a chair closer and sits heavily, worn out, his gun hand resting protectively on the chest’s firmly closed lid. The illusion that we can read the thoughts of actors on their faces and in their bodies is insisted upon in this moment of “pure cinema,” the “victory” transformed into guilt, shame, and utter defeat.⁴⁶²

Thus, Lawrence interprets Rupert’s physical exhaustion in this final scene as evidence of Stewart’s shame. As noted previously, however, only one modest piece of evidence—

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 72.

Barrymore's acting-versus-dropping-bombs-lecture—substantiates Stewart's recognition of his alleged "war crimes." Another difficulty with this interpretation, moreover, arises from its reliance on audience reception—"we can read actor's thoughts"—a necessarily subjective phenomenon and thus hard to determine or substantiate. Moreover, in an apparent attempt to justify her doubly clairvoyant strategy—reading the mind of the collective audience who is, in turn, reading the mind of actor Jimmy Stewart—Lawrence undermines it instead by resorting to the awkward passive: "the illusion that we can read . . . actors' thoughts . . . is insisted upon." Lawrence's own words, then, belie their intended meaning, for an "insisted-upon illusion" necessarily denotes an emphatic fantasy rather than a solid premise on which to base an argument. Thus the transparency of this literary sleight-of-hand implicitly acknowledges the difficulty inherent in making claims that involve the received understanding of a viewer.

As a case in point, I myself understand this scene not as Stewart's acceptance of guilt but rather, as I have argued from the beginning of this chapter, Stewart's character's enactment of the returning veteran's negotiation between contesting extremes. In the case of Rope, for example, Rupert, as previously discussed, copes with the competing aims of solitude and society, cerebralism and emotion, the brutal confrontation of war and the arch evasiveness of words. As I have also argued, moreover, these struggles exact an exhausting physical and psychic toll. Thus, in the final scene, at the culmination of his own adaptive enterprise, Rupert, lacking the stamina and strength to telephone the police while at the same time keeping the gun trained on Brandon and Philip, instead fires three shots and thereby relies on the sound of gunfire as an alarm that will elicit the most rapid police response. Moreover, since his wounded hand, swathed in a blood-stained handkerchief, cannot hold the gun to aim it warningly at Brandon and Philip, Rupert rests it instead on the lid of the chest. In combination with these other frailties, then,

Rupert's need to use the furniture to support his tired, injured body indicates that the "bad leg [he] . . . got in the war for his courage" no longer represents a sign of tested masculinity but rather a sign of emasculation. I believe, then, that the filmic evidence of Rope leads not to Lawrence's dramatic conclusion that "Jimmy Stewart [has] . . . blood on his hands" but rather to the unanswerable question, "Another veteran has reentered society, but at what cost?" Or, in the words of Dennis Bingham, who refers in the following quotation to all of Stewart's films in general rather than to Rope in particular: "The Stewart character at last arrives, scarred and battered, at the attainment of his manhood, but the films are unsure about whether he is better off there."⁴⁶³

In most of his subsequent postwar films, Stewart continues to play characters whose bodies exhibit the physical and psychic toll exacted by this strenuous struggle to negotiate a reconciliation between stereotypically masculine and feminine mindsets, characteristics, and domains. In fact, Stewart's arguably last true postwar film, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (John Ford, 1962), relies upon his inability to portray physically formidable masculinity and, as a result, delivers the most cogent lesson regarding the type of masculinity required by postwar America. Indeed, several of the film's characters raise the question of what, exactly, constitutes manhood. For example, as a trio of thugs waylays a stagecoach and robs a "widder-woman" of the brooch given her by her late husband, her fellow passenger Ransom Stoddard (Jimmy Stewart) physically intervenes, demanding, "What kind of men are you?" In response to Ransome's question and interference, the thugs' leader Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin) strikes Ransome to the ground and, looming over him, asks him in return, "Now, what kind of man are you, dude?" Struggling to his feet, Ransome retorts, "I'm an attorney-at-law, duly licensed by the territory. And

⁴⁶³ Bingham, 29.

you may have us at your guns now, but I'll see you in jail for this." "Jail," Valance scoffs and then clubs Ranse to the ground with the handle of his whip. He then sends the stagecoach and passengers on its way but directs them to leave Ranse behind. After dismissively tearing pages from Ranse's law book, Valance furiously wields his whip over the prostrate Ranse. This scene, then, established the film's overarching conflict between the corporeally unimposing, intellectually-oriented Ranse and his commitment to communal law-and-order versus the physically imposing, violence-prone Valance and his commitment to the supremacy of the strongest. While the former requires a comparatively non-aggressive masculinity like Ranse's—archetypally, in fact, Ranse qualifies as "a feminized male character, . . . a tenderfoot from the East"—the latter insists upon what Cohan, in describing John Wayne, terms "hard masculin[ity]."⁴⁶⁴ In this film, Wayne plays Tom Doniphon, a horse-trader whose formidable self-reliance—based on his sharp-shooting skills—not only places him at odds with the violence-aborring Ranse, whom Tom rescues after Valance's men leave him for dead, but also suggests Tom's similarity to his archenemy Liberty Valance. Indeed, with respect to this linkage between hero and villain, John Belton notes that, in accordance with the conventions of the Western genre, heroes "fight their alter egos; that is, men like themselves."⁴⁶⁵

Tom, however, has not yet fought Liberty Valance, even though Tom, as Liberty himself admits, is faster on the draw and even though Liberty represents a constant threat to the frontier town of Shinbone in which Tom lives. Significantly, though, Tom's home and horse ranch lie in the desert on Shinbone's outskirts, a peripheral site that not only allows Tom convenient access to the town's inhabitants and amenities without the inconvenience of their omnipresence but that

⁴⁶⁴ John Belton, *American Cinema, American Culture*, 2nd ed., (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005), 256-7; Cohan, 203.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 254.

also, along with the horse-trading expeditions Tom conducts, allows him to serve as the town's news-gatherer and sentry. Thus by profession and by choice, Tom resides on the margins of the Shinbone community rather than at its center. Indeed, in his implicit definition of "community," Tom fails to acknowledge Shinbone at all. On the contrary, he identifies, on separate occasions, the following three constituents of his own self-styled community: "Pompey is MY boy," Hallie is MY girl," and "that's MY steak." Despite Tom's racist appropriation of Pompey (played by adult black actor Woody Strode) as his "boy," Pompey is, in fact, Tom's hired hand. Tom's girl Hallie (Vera Miles) earns her living as a cook and waitress at Pete's Place, a restaurant owned by a Scandinavian couple, Nora and Peter Ericson, who kindly grant the penniless Ranse room and board in the kitchen of their eatery. There, Ranse—unlike Tom in his desert homestead—occupies the center of the existing Shinbone community. Wearing an apron as he washes dishes, Ranse also volunteers to serve customers their meals in order to help the overburdened Hallie. Despite her protests and Nora's that he thus engages in women's work, Ranse good-naturedly assures them that he's "glad to help out" and leaves the kitchen to deliver Tom's steak to his table. Unbeknownst to Ranse, however, Liberty and his thugs have entered the dining room and are sitting at a table and enjoying the meals of the hapless customers they have roughly evicted. As Ranse grimly tries to pass their table in order to serve Tom his steak, Liberty trips him, and Ranse and the tray containing Tom's meal fall to the floor. Even during Liberty's manhandling of the other diners, Tom has remained sitting sideways at his table in a guardedly relaxed position with his chair tilted back against the wall, but at this outrage, he springs to his feet and, with his hand on his gun, announces, "That's my steak, Valance." When Liberty orders Ranse to pick it up from the floor, Tom insists that Liberty himself do so. Convinced that a shootout will result from each man's intransigence, Ranse furiously picks up the steak and throws it on a plate

while he yells, “What’s the matter? Is everyone in this country kill-crazy? There! Now it’s picked up!” This scene, then, reveals Besides revealing Ranse’s advocacy of non-violence and his willingness to undertake, for the good of all, even those chores gendered as feminine, this scene demonstrates Tom’s commitment to personal interests rather than communal ties, since Tom allows Valance to take liberties with his fellow diners but not with his steak.

Ranse, on the other hand, subordinates his personal dignity—and, in Tom’s and Liberty’s view, his manhood—in order to pick up the steak and thereby avoid possible bloodshed. Backed by Mr. Dutton Peabody, the hard-drinking editor of the town’s newspaper the Shinbone Star, Tom elicits Ranse’s resentful admission that the threat of Tom’s gun rather than Ranse’s law degree ultimately persuaded Liberty and his gang to leave Pete’s Place. Moreover, Tom warns that since Liberty will return to avenge himself on Ranse, the latter should either buy a gun or leave town. Undeterred, however, Ranse plans not only to remain in Shinbone but also to set up his law office at the Shinbone Star. Moreover, he enlists the help of the newspaper editor and Hallie in setting up a school so that Shinbone’s illiterate children and adults can learn to read and write. By thus rejecting Tom’s trigger-happy solution and choosing instead to pursue a double career as an attorney and a schoolmaster, Ranse again valorizes intellect-based problem-solving over brute force. And by volunteering to serve as Shinbone’s schoolteacher, a position more conventionally occupied by a female schoolmarm, Ranse further effeminizes his apron-wearing, dish-washing, food-serving self. As Mr. Peabody, Hallie, and Ranse collaborate on their plans for the school house and the attorney’s office, they congregate around the tub of dishwater on the table in the center of kitchen in Pete’s Place. Occupying the foregrounded center of the frame, their combined presence relegates Tom to the kitchen doorway in the background, and from this luminal position he dubiously listens to their plans, which, he warns, will further enflame Liberty

Valance. Then, after informing Hallie that he will be away horse-trading for a few weeks, he exits into the dark night as Hallie stands watching within the backlit frame of the kitchen door. By thus depicting Tom on the periphery—leaning against the restaurant wall or the kitchen doorway—in several interior shots or in shadowy silhouette in many exterior shots, the film visually reinforces Tom’s marginalized relationship with the town of Shinbone.

Ranse, on the other hand, becomes increasingly more central to the frontier community. For example, besides living and working in the town’s restaurant, he also works in the office of the Shinbone Star as a lawyer (although he has no clients) and as a reporter (under the direction of Editor-in-Chief Dutton Peabody). The schoolroom abuts the newspaper office, and Ranse also serves there as head teacher with Hallie, his first student, as his assistant in charge of the children. Impressed with an article that Mr. Peabody has written, Ranse asks the editor if he can refer to it in class, since “the best textbook in the world is an honest newspaper.” Gratified, Mr. Peabody eavesdrops on the lesson, for prior to Ranse’s influence, the editor has included in the newspaper only social news or articles of a non-controversial nature. On this occasion, though, he has written an inflammatory piece about the cattle barons who intend to oppose statehood so that they can continue to the lay claim to land at the expense of the small homesteaders, like those who constitute much of the citizenry of Shinbone. Prior to discussing Mr. Peabody’s article, Ranse—played by Stewart as a more mature, less martyred, yet equally earnest version of his eponymous hero in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (Frank Capra, 1939)—gives the class a brief lesson in civics: “the electorate . . . means you, the people.” The irony is, however, that not one member of Ranse’s class is actually eligible to vote. The brood of children born to cowardly Marshall Link Appleyard (Andy Devine) by his Mexican wife (or mistress—the film fails to clarify this point) are too young, as is Herbert Carruthers, a hulking minor whom Ranse deems to

big to “whup” for attempting to skip school; Pompey is black; High-Pockets and Kentuck, hired hands from the Lazy J ranch, are not landowners; and Hallie and Nora are females. (As the film later makes clear when Nora’s husband Pete proudly goes to vote with his citizenship papers in hand, it is not Nora’s immigrant status that disenfranchises her but her sex.) For these representatives of America’s melting pot, then, the quest to secure voting rights for themselves and/or their descendants begins in the schoolroom with the aspirational possibility of participatory democracy that Ranse sets before them.

After Ranse explains to his students that Mr. Peabody’s article “calls upon you . . . to unite behind a real strong delegate and carry this fight [against the cattle barons’ monopoly of frontier real estate] to Washington, if necessary,” Tom, having just returned from his horse-trading trip, bursts into the classroom to demand that Pompey return to his chores. Tom also warns that Liberty and his men are recruiting hired guns for the cattle ranchers and are on their way to Shinbone to strongarm the election of a delegate supportive of the cattlemen’s interests. In spite of this threat, though, the voters of Shinbone attend the election meeting, and Ranse nominates as a delegate Tom Doniphan, who refuses because, he says meaningfully, “I got other plans—PERSONAL plans.” With these words, Tom alludes to his plan to marry Hallie and install her in the new addition that Tom and Pompey are building to his desert home. What is curious about Tom’s reply, however, is not its transparently cryptic articulation but rather its lack of logic. For in citing “personal plans” to justify his refusal of the nomination, Tom reveals his belief that the two—marriage and communal service—are mutually exclusive. With his egocentric definition of community—“my boy,” “my girl,” “my steak”—he fails to understand that a personal event like marriage, or the birth of a child, may well give rise to a man’s urge to perform communal service in order that his newly acquired dependents have a strong social

network on which to rely. In accordance with his self-reliant masculinity, however, Tom has no need of communal backup, since deems himself, by himself, supremely capable of insuring Hallie's safety and happiness. On the other hand, Ranse, the newest member of the Shinbone community, stirs the voters at the election when he reminds them, "We want statehood because statehood means protection for our farms and fences, and it means schools for our children and progress for our future." Still bedding down in the corner of the Ericsons' kitchen, Ranse, of course, owns no "farms" or property marked with "fences," nor does he entertain the prospect of marriage or "children" who will require schooling. Yet in spite of his lack of personal experience with respect to property ownership and family responsibilities, Ranse, as indicated by his use, in the foregoing speech, of the third person plural—WE want statehood . . . for OUR future"—recognizes that he has an obligation to his immediate community, Shinbone, and the larger, extended community of the still emerging United States of America.

To fulfill the latter obligation, in fact, he has left his home in the East—conventionally gendered s feminine by virtue of its association with civilization and/or "old world . . . Europe"—in order to bring law and order to the West.⁴⁶⁶ Yet his ability to do so is jeopardized by Liberty Valance who, enraged not only by Ransom's unanimous election as delegate to the statehood convention but also by his own failure to garner a single vote for that position in spite of his threats, demands a shootout with Ransom that evening, even though he realizes that the lawyer knows little about handling a gun. In response to the townspeople's unanimous advice, Ranse initially plans to leave Shinbone in advance of the showdown. He remains, however, when he witnesses the vengeful violence that Liberty and his men have wreaked upon the office of the Shinbone Star and to Mr. Peabody, who, inspired by Ranse's consistent refusals to submit

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 259.

to Liberty's threats, has continued to write and publish articles attacking Valance and his gang. Still wearing the apron he has worn while washing dishes at Pete's Place, Ranse ventures out into the night and onto the main street of Shinbone to face Liberty Valance. By thus choosing not to flee but rather to engage in a gunfight with a far superior marksman, Ranse lives up to his full name, Ransom Stoddard, since he stolidly offers his own life as ransom payment in an attempt to insure safety for his adopted town of Shinbone. Holding his gun in his right hand, Ranse approaches the drunken Valance, who laughingly shoots out the street lamp above Ranse's head. Next, Valance shoots Ranse in his right arm and continues to shoot in the area of the fallen gun as Ranse awkwardly tries to pick it up with his left hand. Then, tired of toying with his victim, Valance proclaims, "This time, dude, right between the eyes." Ranse fires first, and Valance falls to the ground dead. Clutching his bleeding arm, Ranse numbly walks past the gathering crowd of townsfolk celebrating Valance's death and returns to Pete's Place, where Hallie weepingly dresses his wound and wordlessly professes her love for him in an embrace witnessed by Tom, who has entered the kitchen unseen. Devastated by the loss of Hallie to Ranse, Tom, in drunken rage and despair, sets fire to and destroys the addition to his house that he has built for her.

Days later, at the statehood convention, Mr. Peabody urges the attendees to vote for Ranse as their delegate to the United States Congress, and he celebrates the latter's accomplishments in this speech that he delivers to the conventioners: "[Ransom Stoddard] came to us not packing a gun but carrying instead a bag of law books. . . . He is a lawyer and a teacher, but more important, he is a man who has come to be known . . . as a great champion of law and order." However, Major Cassius Starbuckle, the cattlemen's spokesman, contradicts Mr. Peabody's glowing description of Ranse with oratory of his own:

[Ransom Stoddard's] only claim to office is that he killed a man. [He is] a man who usurps the function of both judge and jury and takes the law into his own hands. . . . What other qualifications has he, then? The blood on his hands? The hidden gun beneath his coat? The bullet-riddled body of an honest citizen? Is THIS your fearless champion of law and order? I tell you the mark of Cain is on this man, and the mark of Cain will be on all of us if we send him with blood-stained hands to walk the hallowed halls of government where Washington, Jefferson, yes, and Lincoln still live, immortals in the memory of man!

Despite Starbuckle's overwrought oratory that unironically refers to Liberty Valance as an "honest citizen," Ranse realizes the truth of its meaning: in killing Liberty Valance, he has abandoned the principles of law and order that make possible a stable and democratic nation. Unseen by the other delegates, then, he leaves the meeting hall and encounters a ravaged looking Tom Doniphon, who reveals that it was he, watching from the shadows, who fired the shot that killed Liberty Valance. Tom and Ranse then exchange the following words:

Ranse. Tom, why did you do it?

Tom. Cold-blooded murder. But I can live with it. Hallie's happy. She wanted you alive.

Ranse. But you saved my life.

Tom. I wish I hadn't. Hallie's your girl now. Go on back in there and take that nomination. You taught her how to read and write. Now give her something to read and write about.

In accordance with these instructions from Tom, Ranse rejoins the convention, where the delegates greet his return with cheers.

Depicted in a sustained flashback that occupies the greater portion of the film's running time, all these previously related events have thus occurred in the diegetic past. The film's return to the diegetic present indicates that Ranse has married Hallie and enjoys a successful political career, while Tom, on the other hand, has retired to his desert home and died there in obscurity.

Indeed, his sparsely attended pauper's funeral is the reason that Ranse and Hallie return to the town of Shinbone, which now not only boasts family homes with front porches, mail boxes, lawns, trees, shrubbery, and picket fences but also enjoys the diegetically modern conveniences of irrigation, railroad, and telephone. Hallie remarks to former Marshall Link Appleyard, "Place sure has changed: churches, high schools, shops." He replies, "Well, the railroad done that. Desert's still the same." While Link accompanies Hallie on a visit to Tom's ramshackle desert home that still bears the burned-out ruins of the addition he built for her, Ranse submits to an interview by the staff of the Shinbone Star, who, after learning that Senator Stoddard is in town for the funeral of Tom Doniphon, want Ranse to tell them about him. Although Ranse discloses after all this time that it was Tom who actually killed Liberty Valance, the newspaper editor declines to print the revelation, reminding Ranse, "This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." Later that day, after Hallie and Ranse have boarded the train back to Washington, the conductor, who utters the film's final words, flatteringly assures the Senator, "Nothing's too good for the man who shot Liberty Valance."

The film, then, works on several registers. Besides providing an account of the transformation of the West from, in Hallie's words, a "wilderness" to a "garden," The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance simultaneously depicts the death of the Old West via the character of Tom Doniphon and the rise of the New West via Ranse Stoddard's. In addition to representing these turn-of-the-century archetypes, the characters of Tom and Ranse also represent contemporary, instructive models for postwar audiences who first viewed the film in 1962, the year of its release. For in contradistinction to the wartime, military model—that is, the aggressive, self-reliant masculinity of John Wayne/Tom Doniphon—Jimmy Stewart/Ransom Stoddard demonstrates the kind of masculinity that peacetime America requires: a masculinity that may at

times appear effeminate—as Ranse does, wearing an apron while he washes dishes and serves meals—because this new, cold war masculinity requires the stereotypically feminine quality of other-orientedness in its insistence on responsibility not simply to oneself but rather to one’s community, including one’s nuclear family, corporate family, suburban neighborhood, and country, especially in the latter’s fight against the Russian-led infiltration of communism. The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance ultimately problematizes this dualism—Tom’s no-longer appropriate wartime aggression versus Ranse’s peaceful, communal responsibilities—with its final reminders that Ranse’s political success, which has allowed him to continue his work of building stable, enlightened, and law-abiding communities, rests on the popular favor he continues to enjoy as the result of his perceived act of cold-blooded murder. This diegetic valorization of murder reflects Robert Warshow’s observation in his book *The Immediate Experience*, originally published in 1962, the same year as the film’s debut. In that work, Warshow remarks that “the Western movie . . . offers a serious orientation to the problem of violence such as can be found almost nowhere else in our culture.”⁴⁶⁷ “One of the well-known peculiarities of modern civilized opinion,” Warshow continues, “is the refusal to acknowledge the value of violence. This refusal is a virtue, but like many virtues, it involves a certain willfull blindness and it encourages hypocrisy.”⁴⁶⁸ Thus, in its final exposure of postwar “blindness” and “hypocrisy,” The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance acknowledges—by virtue of the valorized murder committed by Ranse, the proponent of both law and order and egalitarian enfranchisement—that any international respect postwar America enjoyed arose at least as much from the country’s war-winning military might as it did from its democratic form of government.

⁴⁶⁷ Robert Warshow, *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre, & Other Aspects of Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 121.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

7.0 CONCLUSION: GRAY FLANNEL ALTERNATIVES

In A Summer Place, Johnny Hunter (Troy Donahue) attends his father's males-only alma mater, where all students wear suits and ties. Thusly attired, Johnny sits in Latin class, reading a letter from his girlfriend Molly (Sandra Dee). When the professor chides Johnny for his inattention, the following exchange takes place between the two:

Johnny. Well, I guess I'm not much of an intellectual, sir. I mean, I guess my ambitions don't run along those lines.

Professor. What are your ambitions?

Johnny. I don't know. I guess I don't have any at the moment. . . . I figure there's going to be a war sometime.

Professor. But you'll need an education to fight in the war even if it does come. You'd want to be an officer, wouldn't you, a leader?

Johnny. No, sir.

Professor. Why not, for heaven's sake.

Johnny. Because I don't even know where I'm going, let alone leading someone else. (*His classmates applaud.*)

Thus professing to a lack of ambition, direction, and a desire to lead, Johnny resists the upwardly mobile role implicit in his schooling, his attire, and his father's and professor's expectations.

Johnny thus presents himself as a rebel, albeit an uncertain one who is sufficiently well-mannered to address the male authority figure as "sir."

In contrast to Johnny's decorous and directionless protest, however, the Beats "disdained the crass materialism of 1950s America . . . [and sought] to escape the conformity and phoniness of middle-class suburban lifestyles."⁴⁶⁹ The very culture against which they rebelled, however, effectively commodified and/or trivialized them. In addition to "renting beatniks for parties," for example, one could, according to a Jem Enterprises advertisement in the January 1959 issue of Playboy, "[avoid] be[ing] a rebel without a cause [and j]oin the exclusive Beat Generation."⁴⁷⁰ To do so, one had merely to purchase a "Beat Sweater" or "Perry Como style . . . Beat Blazer." Emblazoned on either item was a circular insignia that had at its center a beer stein imprinted with the slogan, "Sic Semper Sic." Above the stein, the words "Charter Member" were inscribed and, at the bottom left and right of the stein, the words "Ever" and "Cool," respectively. A larger, concentric circle surrounding the stein contained the words "The Beat Generation, Hipville, U. S. A." Besides implying that membership in an "exclusive" protest movement requires simply the correctly emblazoned item or clothing rather than an active commitment to the movement's cause, the advertisement puns unfathomably with Virginia's state motto and John Wilkes Booth's Invective to his dying victim President Abraham Lincoln: "Sic semper tyrannus," or "Ever thus to tyrants." Thus, the presumably humorous pairing of the Latin "sic" (thus) with its English homonym results in the awkward, if not meaningless, "Ever thus sick." Moreover, the construction of a "Beat Blazer" in a style resembling that of Perry Como—a genial crooner who hosted his own family-oriented television variety show throughout much of the 1950s—effectively recuperates the blazer into mainstream culture and thereby recants any suspicion of rebellion on the part of the wearer. Finally, the alleged site of the Beat Generation's

⁴⁶⁹ Benschhoff, 183.

⁴⁷⁰ Patrick Mullins, "Hollywood and the Beats: MGM Does Kerouac's The Subterraneans," Journal of Popular Film and Television, Spring 2001, 4.

headquarters—“Hipville, U. S. A.”—sounds perhaps like a utopia imagined and articulated by Maynard G. Krebs (Bob Denver), who played the “beatnik as amiable buffoon” in the 1959-1963 television series The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis “and who spoke in goofy beatnikese[, as in the following comment:] . . . ‘Looks like doomsville for you and the chick, daddio!’ “⁴⁷¹ By virtue of these kinds of commodifications and trivializations, “the ideological negation of Beats in the media ultimately contributed to the neutralization of the[ir] sub-culture as a visible segment of American society.”⁴⁷²

A more lasting movement against the mainstream, however, began evolving throughout the 1940s in Chicago. There, African-Americans, who had migrated from the south in order to work more profitably in the wartime industrial factories up north, popularized rhythm-and-blues with the help of Aristocrat Records, “owned by Polish immigrant brothers Leonard and Phil Chess.”⁴⁷³ By the mid-fifties, the Chess Brothers “had captured the new sound on vinyl and helped to make popular the guitar-driven, amplified blues, which . . . formed the bedrock of rock-and-roll.”⁴⁷⁴ At first, the market for these recordings was primarily black, but during the early 1950s, “more and more white teenagers . . . started to purchase the music[, and] . . . Little Richard and Chuck Berry, significantly younger and wilder than most [other] R & B performers, became heroes to [these] white teens who had discovered rhythm-and-blues.”⁴⁷⁵ By 1956, in fact, “these two black artists had bridged the short gap between rhythm and blues and what became known as rock-and-roll, originally an African-American euphemism for sexual intercourse. They delivered a frantic, blues-based sound to teens, who claimed the music as their

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 5.

⁴⁷³ David P. Szatmary, Rockin’ in Time: A Social History of Rock and Roll, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007), 7.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 16.

own.”⁴⁷⁶ As the increasingly numerous “baby boom” children of parents enjoying postwar prosperity, 50s teens had access not only to cars—and thus car radios—but also to “sizable allowances that allowed them to buy the music of their choice: rock-and-roll.”⁴⁷⁷ Other factors also helped to purvey the new rock-and-roll sound to black and white audiences. For example, the introduction in the early 1950s of the 75-cent, 7-inch vinyl, 45-rpm record “made the breakable . . . \$1.05 . . . 10-inch 78-rpm obsolete overnight.”⁴⁷⁸ Television, moreover, “absorb[ed] . . . network radio shows to fill [its] . . . programming void,” and the portable transistor radio, invented in 1947, “reached the general public by 1953.”⁴⁷⁹ Finally, disc jockey and “rock-and-roll superpromoter . . . Alan Freed ceaselessly marketed the new music[,] . . . organized increasingly racially integrated rock-and-roll concerts[,] . . . and appeared in . . . [several rock-themed movies] that further familiarized white youths with rock-and-roll.”⁴⁸⁰ During this period, moreover, which included the Supreme Court’s 1954 ban on public school segregation, rock-and-roll’s “integration of white and black youths elicited a racist response from many white adults[:some} . . . expressed their fear of race mixing by complaining about the sexual overtones of rock[, and others even] . . . tried to waylay expected integration by outlawing rock-and-roll.”⁴⁸¹

The mid-fifties arrival of white performer Elvis Presley did little to allay parental concerns, for, wearing “black zoot-suit pants [and] . . . a jet black shirt with upturned collar and no tie[, Presley s]wagger[ed] . . . across the stage, . . . [singing] a sexually charged music . . .

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 22, 23.

called ‘rockabilly’ . . . that fused white country past with African-American sounds.”⁴⁸² Worried adults linked Presley with his “wild clothes, slicked-back hair and sideburns, to the violence of juvenile delinquency,” perceiving him as the “musical embodiment” of rebel-without-a-cause James Dean or, as Jackie Gleason put it, “a guitar-playing Marlon Brando.”⁴⁸³ In The Wild One (Laslo Benedek, 1954), Brando plays the leader of a motorcycle gang, and when asked, “What are you rebelling against?”, he replies, “Wha’ d’ya got?” Thus articulated, this generalized discontent with the prosperous, conformist status quo was shared by many teens and reflected in their celebration of rock-and-roll, which challenged the sexual and racial conservatism of their elders. Males could also reflect their malaise by emulating the attire of Dean and Brando. An advertisement in the December 1958 issue of Playboy, for example, praises “The contour T-shirt . . . stretch[ed] . . . across the muscles . . . [and] tapered for a snug fit.” The T-shirt thus described evokes associations with the previously discussed torso-hugging T-shirt that Brando wore in A Streetcar Named Desire and that subsequently became not only a symbol of untamed male virility but also part of the required uniform for the 50s teenage rebel.

On the other hand, the “Gambler’s Jeans” shown in the same advertisement are apparently intended to appeal to a larger cross-section of 50s’ male demographics, for the ad addresses not only the rebellious “Angry Young Man” but also “the socially oriented BMOOC (Big Man on Campus) and sophisticated delinquents of all age groups.” According to this implicit invitation, then, even the Ivy male and the older sophisticate—like the previously discussed Perry-Como conservative in the Beat Blazer—could suggest anti-establishment roguishness with their choice of attire. Moreover, by describing the Gambler’s Jeans as “lean, mean Western jeans . . . [with] gambler’s stripes,” the advertisement also evokes associations

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 29, emphasis in the original.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 50, 30, 50.

with the virile and rugged cowboy, albeit one who relies on “gambler’s stripes” to confer upon his “lean, mean Western jeans” a dude-ranch flair. Indeed, the image of the cowboy as an “American archetype”⁴⁸⁴ prevailed throughout the years 1946 through 1958, when the “proliferation of . . . Westerns . . . could be seen as a response to the anxiety of society as a whole over the increasingly important role that technology played in shaping human consciousness and in increasing international stability {through the nuclear arms race and the cold war.}”⁴⁸⁵

By the end of the 1950s, however, the cowboy as American archetype began giving way to another: California’s “carefree golden-haired surfer.”⁴⁸⁶ Gidget (Paul Wendkos, 1959), the “first official Hollywood surf movie,” and the Beach Boys, with their 4-part harmonies celebrating Southern California as an adolescent Eden, “glamoriz[ed] . . . the bohemian Malibu surfers’ lifestyle, making it alluring to teenagers all over the country.”⁴⁸⁷ With the beach as their venue, then, surfers did not need to rely on the form-fitting clothes of the Brando-style dressers who thereby signified their rebellion. Instead, surfers wore bathing trunks, as depicted in a Catalina advertisement in the May 1959 issue of Playboy. The surfer’s trunks-only outfit represents a sartorial anomaly, for each other “Seafaring Man” depicted in the ad wears a matching two-piece ensemble, despite the casual coastline milieu. And, unlike the other seafarers, who simply hold onto some portion of a boat and stare neutrally outward or upward, the surfer, as indicated by the damp, unkempt curls falling upon his forehead, has just emerged from the ocean that forms the image’s backdrop. Unlike his nautical counterparts, then, the bare-

⁴⁸⁴ Daniel Duane, “Silver Surfers,” New York Times Magazine, 15 April 2001, 38.

⁴⁸⁵ John Belton, 270.

⁴⁸⁶ Duane, 38.

⁴⁸⁷ Thomas Lisanti, Hollywood Surf and Beach Movies: The First Wave, 1959-1969 (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), 7,10.

chedsted surfer, free of the constraints of boats and bathing ensembles, engages in strenuous and comparatively self-propelled activity, and his smiling, direct gaze at the viewer represents further sense of the agency he has thus assumed.

Perhaps, then, in view of these social, musical, sartorial, political, and generational differences making themselves felt in postwar America, one can hear, in Johnny Hunter's polite refusal in 1959 to honor his Latin professor's upwardly mobile expectations of him, a faint echo from 1949, when Jason Taylor's whole-hearted commitment to "education"—etymologically, a leading out—registered as the direct ideological opposite of postwar culture's overarching insistence on "containment"—by definition, a holding in. Accordingly, as the 1960s began with the "New Frontier" expansion—rather than containment—of John F. Kennedy's presidency, "the convergence of the civil rights movement and folk music on the college campuses led to the mercurial rise of Bob Dylan and his brand of protest folk music."⁴⁸⁸ Author David P. Szatmary describes one such college audience attending Dylan's performance at a Greenwich Village folk club in April 1961:

The audience, mostly white middle-class college students, many of them attending New York University, . . . appeared to epitomize Eisenhower gentility and McCarthy repression: boys with closely cropped hair, button-down shirts, corduroy slacks, Hush Puppy shoes, and cardigans; and rose-cheeked girls, dressed in long skirts, bulky knit sweaters, and low-heeled shoes, who favored long, straight, well-groomed hair.⁴⁸⁹

Dylan's performance, however, "shattered the genteel atmosphere," and the "rapt" reception of his "hymns of social protest" by students whose appearance "epitomized Eisenhower gentility

⁴⁸⁸ Szatmary, 91.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

and McCarthy repression” thus anticipates the contentious forces of the coming decade that had been fomenting beneath the ostensibly unruffled fabric of the gray flannel 1950s.⁴⁹⁰

Fewer than ten years later, moreover, in 1968, the burning of bras came to represent a metonymic form of liberation because of a military-themed confusion on the part of some male journalists. Reporting in 1968 about a group of feminists who, in protest against “the stereotypical beauty standards of the Miss America contest, dumped the instruments of their oppression into a dustbin[—but did not burn them, . . . some male journalists made the connection between the feminist protest and the radicalism of draft-card burnings at anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, and reported the fire as though it had actually happened.”⁴⁹¹ By thus making this connection between protests against the military and protests against undergarments, these reporters implicitly reflected the postwar inscription of the latter within the purview of the former. More significantly, this connection implicitly recognizes that both the bra-trashing and card-burning protests were undertaken for a similar objective: the corporeal liberation of females and males from institutionalized regulation. Thus, as the 1960s progressed into the 1970s, the female body, free of undergirdings, and the male body, unmilitarily hirsute, continued to resist interpellation by the state and instead sought out new and less gender-specific means of actualization and fulfillment.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 81, 82.

⁴⁹¹ Cox, 61.

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