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The iconography of nationalism: icons, popular culture, and American nationalism

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THE ICONOGRAPHY OF NATIONALISM:
ICONS, POPULAR CULTURE, AND AMERICAN NATIONALISM

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ABSTRACT

<u>The Iconography of Nationalism: Icons, Popular Culture, and American Nationalism</u> develops a model of cultural icons, defining icons as highly visible, culturally variable, and overdetermined auratic images. Situating icons within the context of mass reproduction technologies and American nationalism, this study seeks to demystify the simple images presented by infantile, national, and scapegoat icons in literature, film, and political rhetoric.

This dissertation argues that icons participate in the American nationalist project by channeling citizens' political and patriotic feelings through seemingly simple images. While acknowledging that icons are necessary to construct what Benedict Anderson calls "the imagined community" of the nation, this study complicates a quick and easy reading of an icon's manifest content and uses narrative to reveal the latent content in images like Marilyn Monroe, Barbie, Mickey Mouse, Elvis Presley, Pocahontas, Uncle Sam, Big Brother, and Adolf Hitler.

CHAPTER ONE:
SPECTACLES AND ICONS: TOWARDS A THEORY OF CULTURAL ICONS

In Matthew G. Lewis' <u>The Monk</u> (1796), Ambrosio, a Capuchin abbot, addresses his nightly prayers to a painting of the Madonna hanging in his chamber that "for two years had been the object of his increasing wonder and adoration" (Lewis 65). Unbeknownst to Ambrosio, this religious icon has been constructed specifically for him. Matilda, who has disguised herself as a male to be near the abbot, commissioned the painting so that the Madonna was recast in her image. When Matilda reveals the machination to the abbot, she says, "Judge of my rapture, when informed that you gazed upon it [the Madonna painting] with delight, or rather with adoration; that you had suspended it in your cell, and that you addressed your supplications to no other saint!" (101). In addressing his prayers to the painting, Ambrosio is praying to Matilda, and through this image he is taught to desire Matilda, who, the reader later discovers, is in league with the devil in a plan engineered to damn the monk. Once Matilda reveals herself, the reader must retrospectively reinterpret Ambrosio's dreams in which "he pressed his lips to hers [Madonna's/Matilda's], and found them warm: the animated form started from the canvas, embraced him affectionately, and his senses were unable to support delight so exquisite [. . .] his desires placed before him the most lustful and provoking images, and he rioted in joys till then unknown to him" (89).

Coming before Matilda's revelation about the painting, the dreams foreshadow the image-to-flesh metamorphosis that occurs when Ambrosio first sees Matilda's face because her cowl has slipped from her head: "What was his amazement at beholding the exact resemblance of his Madonna!" (101). For Ambrosio, it first appears as though the virgin is incarnated in Matilda. The image of the ideal woman, the virgin mother, comes to life, and, because he desires the ideal image, he now desires a flesh-and-blood counterpart. However, when Matilda

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confesses, Ambrosio learns that the appearance of Matilda as the object of desire has been modeled for him by the Virgin painting. Since Ambrosio has been raised exclusively in the monastery, he has been inculcated with the image of Madonna as the depiction of the ideal female. She is the only standard available to the abbot for measuring other women. By injecting her likeness into this ideal, Matilda exploits Ambrosio's valorization of the Virgin so that his desire for the sacred icon becomes entwined with desire for her. Ambrosio does not desire Matilda because she looks like the Virgin; he desires her because the Madonna has been constructed to look like her. Ambrosio has been duped by the illusion, and it turns out that Matilda behaves nothing like the virgin mother. The image is a trap that leads to the loss of Ambrosio's life and soul.

The lesson of the Virgin/Matilda painting is that our desires can be shaped, directed, and redirected by an image. To take a simple example, there is nothing natural about wanting to own a Mercedes Benz; children do not emerge from the womb requesting a Mercedes. Rather, people learn that owning a Mercedes is a desirable thing – a way of announcing that one has "arrived" both economically and socially. Through a system of cultural beliefs, desire is modeled for subjects.[1] Moreover, as The Monk demonstrates, visual images play an important role in the process of managing desire. It is by manipulating the image of the ideal female that Matilda redirects Ambrosio's desire.

Published in England in 1796 and set in medieval Spain, the novel can still conceive the shaping of desire as a private affair between individuals. The Madonna painting is commissioned by Matilda for the abbot. The image is a message from one person to another and would not have the desired effect for a monk at another monastery because the seductive design of the painting calls for the presence of Matilda to interact with the image. In the world of The

Monk, portraits are expensive, rare, and relatively difficult to obtain. However, as productive and reproductive technologies have advanced into the era of mass culture, the shaping of desire with images occurs on a mass scale.

The one on one map of desire in The Monk has been replaced by pop star Madonna's mass messages. Desire is now modeled through manufactured images in advertising, film, and other media. These mass messages are directed to a wide audience, but each subject receives the communication in a personal context. This is not to say that interpersonal relations have been eclipsed by communication technology, but even the most basic personal interactions are caught up in multiple systems of discourse emanating from radio, film, television, and print media.[2] Our culture is more textualized than at any other point in history, and the perpetually increasing amounts and types of signifiers affect the way we live and relate to the world. Understanding the complex cultural, political, psychological, and literary webs that these signifiers weave around the desiring subject is one of the principle aims of contemporary literary criticism and theory.

In the context of proliferating representations, this dissertation develops a model of cultural icons that includes characters such as Mickey Mouse and John Wayne, suggests that these figures are political in nature, and, through original textual readings, demonstrates that personified iconic representations in literary works and narrative become domesticated over time as they are cleansed of subversive traits that could interfere with their widespread appeal and ability to shape and manage desire on a mass scale. The term icon here does not refer only to the traditional meaning of the term as a religious image of a valorized person such as a saint or Madonna. As used in this study, icons are highly visible, culturally variable, and overdetermined auratic images.[3]

Icons are particularly powerful signifiers because they are immediately recognizable and carry complex cultural codes in a compact image. Gregor Goethals comments, "When we designate certain images and objects as 'icons,' we are really asserting that these images and objects are extraordinary in that they embody particularly important values or even some residue of the sacred. Otherwise, why not simply use the word 'image'?" (24). Verifying Goethals' commentary, Albert Boime's study of "national icons" stresses the similarity between the "sacred icons" of the Christian tradition and national monuments, implying that a civil religion exists in the United States and that the Statue of Liberty is not all that different in function from a painting of Saint Peter: "The national emblems share many of the traits of the sacred icon, including consecration in the form of dedicatory ceremonies and their status as pilgrimage sites. These monuments pose as shrines to national ideas and, in reinforcing these ideals affect our very consciousness and behavior" (2). In this account, national icons are shown as inspiring faith, devotion, and obedience to a nationalist ideal. By positing secular materials as iconic, the realm of the sacred extends from a religious context to a broader cultural arena. However, Goethals and Boinme's designation of icons as "sacred" retains the implication that icons carry only positive, uplifting, or beneficial messages.

Boinme does note that national "Icons possess a 'dark side' in their ready made text designed to enlist blind obedience to the governments who purport to represent them and embody their ideals" (14). He argues, "The history of each [national] icon reveals that privileged members of the American hierarchy, bent on maintaining their economic and social class advantages, attempted to appropriate the symbols of America almost from their inception and use them to stimulate an illusion of inclusivity" (8). The question of ethics, as Boinme observes, is not easily resolved; one person's sacred is another's profane, and one person's emblem of

freedom is another's symbol of oppression. Adolf Hitler is admired by a minority of neo-Nazis and some other racist groups, but is reviled as an avatar of all that is evil and inhumane by many others. Depending on the context of a subject's life, icons can take on multiple, even contradictory, associations, and Goethals allows no space for multivalence or ambivalence. Icons can and do carry the sort of valorization traditionally thought of as pertaining to religious deities, but we can also value something precisely because it has negative connotations; attempting to keep negative qualities confined in images of great evil like Hitler or Osama Bin Laden, to cite a more recent example, is a way of warding off the wickedness embodied in these images, a way of saying "We are not evil; we are not like this." Whether positive, negative, or both, cultural icons can shape and direct human desire and are strengthened by their connection to the sacred and the political.

The difference between an icon and a more pedestrian signifier is the difference between Marilyn Monroe and Norma Jeane Baker. Of course, any reference to a "female" is bound up in a network of cultural norms and expectations. Furthermore, alluding to an individual with words or images goes beyond the meanings of gender and evokes any number of more specific ideas or stereotypes based on numerous factors, such as how the subject looks, dresses, talks, and moves. The extent to which the audience knows or does not know the referenced subject affects the number and kinds of associations conjured by the allusion. In contrast, icons are public referents. We are personally acquainted with the myth, if not the person, of Marilyn Monroe. She is a household name, and referring to her ensures instant recognition and readability in most circumstances. The invocation of Monroe carries myriad meanings that are not present in a generic reference to a female; to a personal, private acquaintance; or to a lesser known actress. We know her as an American, an actress, a blonde, an unexplained death, a mystery. She is both

a femme fatale and a victim of the Hollywood culture industry. Graham McCann, who has written the most detailed study of Monroe's cultural dissemination, observes that "The legend of Monroe leads one into the bourgeois truisms of Western culture: that fame does not bring happiness; that sexuality is destructive; that Hollywood destroys its own children" (181). As the wife of both Joe Dimaggio and Arthur Miller, she has connections to famous figures in the traditional national pastime and the American theater. As the first woman to appear nude in Playboy and the alleged mistress of both Robert and John F. Kennedy, Monroe breaks traditional conceptions of proper female behavior and invokes a strong sense of heterosexual appeal, which has been documented and nurtured by writers. The opening of Marilyn: A Biography (1973) provides a fairly typical example of Norman Mailer's chauvinistic adoration: "So we think of Marilyn who was every man's love affair with America, Marilyn Monroe who was blonde and beautiful and had a sweet little rinky-dink of a voice and all the cleanliness of all the clean American backyards. She was our angel, the sweet angel of sex, and the sugar of sex came up from her like a resonance of sound in the clearest grain of a violin" (15).

Renato Casaro paints the same idea in his revision of Sandro Botticelli's The Birth of Venus (1485-6); titled Star is Born (1990), this painting replaces Venus with Marilyn, replaces an ancient goddess of love and beauty with a modern one, while also painting Marilyn into ancient myth.[4] Thousands of other texts, images, and artifacts promise to peel back the layers of studio publicity, showing us the "real" or "authentic" Marilyn Monroe. As Andy Warhol recognizes in his Marilyn Diptych (1962) print which presents images of Marilyn in columns and rows, there is no authentic Monroe.[5] Marilyn Monroe is a fiction created by film directors, photographers, writers, and the actress herself from the person named Norma Jeane Baker at birth. The constructed Monroe embodies the traditional, romantic story of the dead woman that

Edgar Allan Poe draws attention to in "The Philosophy of Composition": "the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world" (1379). Monroe is beautiful in her death precisely because she never grows older than thirty six. Moreover, she cannot counteract or deny the multivalent meanings that accumulate around her life. In death, it is possible for a person to become a monument, and the subject's death is obscured by the narratives and images circulating around her absence.

Pete Dexter's Deadwood (1986), a novelistic account of Wild Bill Hickcock's last days and death, provides a lucid example of the passage from subject to monument. When new construction makes it necessary to relocate Hickcock's grave, the gravediggers find that the body has petrified, causing one of the characters to remark "It's a statue," and "It ain't Bill [. . .] It's [Hickcock's petrified body] a souvenir the angels left behind" (350-51). Literally reified, Hickcock moves from the fluid and mutable existence of a living subject to the dense and monumental status of legend. This transformation does not reduce Hickock's life to a single, authorized account; competing recollections and narratives continue to be voiced by the deceased's friends and enemies. The narrative of Hickcock's life continues, but it continues without Hickcock, without the living subject that provides the basis for these stories. Hickcock himself can no longer play an active role in providing material for new stories, can never tell or clarify a personal anecdote about himself, and can never provide his interpretation or challenge erroneous renderings of his life story. Even so, the stories of his life, based on varying degrees of biographical fact, grant Hickcock a textual life after death.

There are, in fact, many alternative histories that imagine an icon is still among the living. Bubba Ho-Tep (2003), a horror film directed by Don Coscarelli and starring Bruce Campbell, supposes that Elvis is alive, if not well, and is fighting off an invasion of Egyptian

mummies from a retirement home in Texas. In <u>Men in Black</u> (1997), directed by Barry

Sonnenfeld, K (Tommy Lee Jones) tells J (Will Smith), "No, Elvis is not dead; he just went

home," implying that Elvis is an extraterrestrial who did not die, but went back to his home

planet. Drew Hayden Taylor's <u>Only Drunk's and Children Tell the Truth</u> (1996) hypothesizes

that, despite outlandish theories claiming Amelia Earhart "was captured by aliens and forced to

breed with Elvis and Jim Morrison to create television evangelists," the missing pilot is living on

an Indian reservation in Canada (1943). In <u>Gone for Good</u> (1998)*,* Mark Childress gathers

Earhart, Monroe, and Jimmy Hoffa together on one tropical island. In some cases, this textual

existence is strong enough that some ostensibly nonfiction sources question an icon's death, or at

least turn some people's doubts into a chance to make money. Elvis Presley sightings have been

common fare in tabloids for years; on January 24 1995, for instance, <u>Weekly World News</u> ran a

headline, proclaiming, "ELVIS COMING OUT OF HIDING ON FEB 25!" (Mabe 105). Gilbert

Rodman reports that a 1992 televison documentary titled <u>The Elvis Conspiracy</u> argues that Elvis

really died in 1977, but in 1991, the same producers had argued that Elvis is alive in <u>The Elvis</u>

<u>Files</u> (3)*.*

Monroe is subjected to a similar process of posthumous existence laden by conspiracy

theories. McCann writes that "The death of the star allowed the symbol to assume a harder

outline: bold, bright, lip-glossed and loveable, a Mailer made woman for men's

amusement"(186). This textual Monroe compensates for the loss of Monroe as living subject;

she is dead, but our culture is not deprived of her presence. Monroe lives in her films, photos,

and biographies. Mailer has gone as far as to write a pseudo-autobiography for the actress; in <u>Of</u>

<u>Women and Their Elegance</u> (1980)*,* Mailer writes, but Monroe narrates. In addition to the

associations with fame and sex, the rewritten, reconstituted Monroe provides a means of coping

with communal guilt over her death. As McCann states, "Men thought that their protection might have saved her, women wondered if their empathy could have helped her. [. . .] It is a measure of Monroe's vivid status as an American symbol that she is still written about as though it were not too late to bring her back to life. Mailer's Marilyn was the long, brawling affair he never had with the star, and [Gloria] Steinem's Marilyn made a rescue bid a quarter-century after the subject's death" (208).

Many of Monroe's meanings can be called forth with the flourish of a photo or the murmuring of her name. "Marilyn Monroe" is shorthand for a set of ideas that gathers around her life and death. She stands out from hundreds of other celebrities as instantly recognizable and heavy with the significance of fame, beauty, sex, experience, innocence, victimization, death. Yet, however Marilyn is defined, there is always another biographer who claims they are capable of showing us the "true" Marilyn Monroe. That promise becomes one in a series of infinitely regressing promises. No biographer has captured or is capable of depicting the "authentic" Monroe. She always recedes into the horizon of possible lives and truths and is always distant from the writer and reader however close she may be. Borrowing Walter Benjamin's terminology, we can say that Monroe and other icons have an "aura."

According to Benjamin, art loses its "aura"when mechanically reproduced; he writes, "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (222).   In other words, mechanical reproduction erodes the interpersonal shaping of desire through art that is tied to a specific time, place, and person such as the seduction plot in The Monk. Benjamin states,

> The definition of the aura as a 'unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be' represents nothing but the cult value of the work of art in categories of space and time perception. Distance is the opposite of closeness. The essentially distant object is the unapproachable one. Unapproachability is indeed a major

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quality of the cult image. True to its nature, it remains 'distant however close it may be.' The closeness which one may gain from the subject matter does not impair the distance which it retains in its appearance. (245)

Presumably, replication technologies erode art's cult value because the aura of the "authentic" piece is dispersed through reproduction, destroying the possibility of iconic representation.

Unlike Benjamin, who saw some positive potential for breaking down class barriers and facilitating democracy through artistic reproduction at the same time he saw art's aura fading, many members of the Frankfurt School see the mechanical reproduction of art as a more negative development. Herbert Marcuse, for instance, argues that mass production has brought about a change from a two-dimensional to a one-dimensional society According to Marcuse, mass marketed art is deprived of its ability to protest or demonstrate contrast:

> The neo-conservative critics of leftist critics of mass culture ridicule the protest against Bach as background music in the kitchen, against Plato and Hegel, Shelley and Baudelaire, Marx and Freud in the drugstore. Instead, they insist on recognition of the fact that the classics have left the mausoleum and come to life again, that people are just so much more educated. True, but coming to life as classics, they come to life as other than themselves; they are deprived of their antagonistic force, of the estrangement which was the very dimension of their truth. The intent and function of these works have thus fundamentally changed. If they once stood in contradiction to the status quo, this contradiction is now flattened out.[6] (64)

Marcuse terms twentieth-century culture the "one-dimensional society," Christopher Lasch the "culture of narcissism," and Guy Debord the "society of the spectacle."[7] These critics share a conviction that the proliferation of images and the uses of these images have a profoundly negative impact on life in the twentieth-century.[8]

Lasch states, "Bureaucracy, however, is only one of a number of social influences that are bringing a narcissistic type of personality organization into greater and greater prominence. Another such influence is the mechanical reproduction of culture, the proliferation of visual and audial images in the 'society of the spectacle'" (47). Debord sums up one of the main ideas these

lines of argument share, stating, "All that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (12). Life is comprised of an increasing amount of representation via amusement parks, television, computers, and other technological interfaces. Instead of gathering on front porches to socialize with their next door neighbors, many people sit in front of their personal computers, gathering in chat rooms to socialize with persons who may be across town or on the other side of the globe. Instead of face to face communication, the keyboard and screen mediate social relations, allowing subjects to be social and anonymous simultaneously.[9] Jean Baudrillard argues that even warfare takes part in this trend towards representational abstraction. In The Gulf War Did Not Take Place (1995), Baudrillard argues, "War [is] stripped of its passions, its phantasms, its finery, its veils, its violence, its images; war [is] stripped bare by its technicians, and then reclothed by them with all the artifices of electronics, as though with a second skin (64).[10]

Writers like William Gibson, Philip K. Dick, Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo, to name a few, have commented on the increasing number of images through their novels and short stories. DeLillo's White Noise (1985), for instance, depicts even an ostensibly simple trip to the grocer's as a labyrinthine undertaking: "Everything is concealed in symbolism, hidden by veils of mystery and layers of cultural material. But it is psychic data, absolutely. The large doors slide open, they close unbidden. Energy waves, incident radiation. All the letters and numbers are here, all the colors of the spectrum, all the voices and sounds, all the code words and ceremonial phrases" (37-38). Andy and Larry Wachowski's film The Matrix (1999), starring Keanu Reeves and Laurence Fishburne, takes this commentary to its extreme conclusion. Informed by the postmodernism of Jean Baudrillard and featuring his book Simulacra and Simulation (1981), this film depicts the world we experience as a symbolic representation of life, a virtual reality

program. Meanwhile, the "real" world, outside of the symbolic construct, is a lifeless desert

populated by machines that harvest human bodies for energy. While quite different in their

presenting form, these texts share a belief that our world has become more complex as a result of

intricate patterns of signification and that this glut of representations conceals the real meanings,

the real world. To recover the hidden truths, these texts assert, one has to decode the facade of

signifiers.

Instead of taking a trip to the Grand Canyon, many Americans are content with watching

a nature documentary on the Discovery Channel or PBS. In lieu of the "direct" experience of

personal contact, the images of nature are filtered through the gaze of the camera. Even when the

pilgrimage to the Grand Canyon takes place, according to Lasch, "we distrust our perceptions

until the camera verifies them" (48). It is now MTV that shows viewers the Real World.

Similarly, DeLillo provides examples of this need to have perceptions and existence affirmed by

the media. In White Noise, Jack Gladney's daughter, Bee, experiences a near disaster on a plane

flight. As she meets her father after exiting the plane, she asks, "'Where's the media?'" (92). Her

father replies that "'There is no media in Iron City'" (92). Bee asks whether "'They went

through all that for nothing?'" (92). Without the media present to affirm and publicize the

passengers' brush with death, the experience amounts to "nothing."

Bee relies on the media's cameras to verify what she experiences, and Debord's

conception of the spectacle emphasizes the role of appearances:

> The concept of the spectacle brings together and explains a wide range of
> apparently disparate phenomena. Diversities and contrasts among such
> phenomena are the appearances of the spectacle – the appearances of a social
> organization of appearances that needs to be grasped in its general truth.
> Understood on its own terms, the spectacle proclaims the predominance of
> appearances and asserts that all human life, which is to say all social life, is mere
> appearance (14).

Debord states that the spectacle is at the center of modern culture. The images that comprise the

society of the spectacle come from diverse times and traditions, fusing into a current of visual

and audial images. These representations mediate relationships between subjects, but instead of

encouraging dialogue and communication, the spectacle situates subjects as passive recipients.

Debord adds an additional twist to Marx's proposition that capitalism transforms the "being" of

life into "having" by stating that the spectacular "entails a general shift from having to

appearing" (16). Television, film, sports, news media, politics and other activities participate in

this process. Financed by corporate sponsors, these events provide the audience with images of

happiness, of wholeness, promising that the audience can attain bliss by purchasing the right

product or service. The effect of this commodity parade, according to Debord, is precisely the

opposite of what the spectacle promises. The spectacle promises fulfillment via specular

identification. It gives alienation: "The spectacle's function in society is the concrete

manufacture of alienation" (Debord 23). What makes the spectacle effective is that it alienates,

but it takes the appearance of unity because "Spectators are linked only by a one-way relationship

to the very center that maintains their isolation from one another. The spectacle thus unites what

is separate, but it unites it only in its separateness" (Debord 22).

Debord analyzes the commodity as spectacle, arguing that "the spectacle is capital

accumulated to the point where it becomes image" (24), and Lasch perceives American politics

as a spectacle where appearances (saving face) take precedence over other concerns like

"avoidance of excessive risks, assessment of the likelihood of success and failure, and

calculation of the strategic and political consequences of defeat" (78). Both Debord and Lasch

argue that the spectacle shapes what we desire through the appearances it presents. This

dissertation shares with Debord and Lasch the conviction that contemporary society is one of

spectacles. My analysis differs in its scope, which is not without theoretical consequences. Debord states that "The concept of the spectacle brings together and explains a wide range of apparently disparate phenomena" (14). Both Debord and Lasch undertake nothing less than a comprehensive critique of social structure through the concept of spectacle and narcissism, respectively. If, however, modern society flattens out distinctions and deprives art of the ability to defamiliarize, as Marcuse claims, or if "it is an art that is <u>not</u>," as Debord claims, then such a totalizing critique surely reproduces the conditions that it sets out to criticize (135).

While Debord's approach of synthesizing a wide array of social practices has the benefit of showing the cohesive nature of the spectacle, it plays down the ways in which various forms of spectacle might operate differently or perform differing functions within the society of the spectacle as a whole. There are critics who do not differentiate between sorts of cultural signifiers, critics who perceive only a barrage of information flowing from the internet, radio, television, and print medias. Postmodernism is well known for its theories involving the infinite free play of signification where messages swirl about like dust in a storm. Baudrillard argues that the media have experienced an implosion of meaning and that "All current forms of activity tend toward advertising and most exhaust themselves therein. Not necessarily advertising itself, the kind that is produced as such – but the <u>form</u> of advertising, that of a simplified operational mode, vaguely seductive, vaguely consensual" (<u>Simulacra</u> 87). Marilyn Manson, lead singer for the rock group of the same name, picks up on this line of thinking when he writes, "The name Marilyn Manson has never celebrated the sad fact that America puts killers on the cover of <u>Time</u> magazine, giving them as much notoriety as our favorite movie stars. From Jesse James to Charles Manson, the media, since their inception, have turned criminals into folk heroes" (23).[11]

According to this line of thinking, content is nullified, and the media has only one message: a self referential circle of fame and notoriety that treats movie stars and serial killers equally.[12]

Conversely, most works undertaking the study of cultural icons focus on one figure, citing an image's prominence or uniqueness as justification for the analysis. Rodman argues,

> Thus, despite the occasional extreme display of devotion made by fans in the name of a particular celebrity, the oft-invoked religious metaphor for stardom is, in the final analysis, nothing more than hyperbole . . .
> . . . except, that is, in the case of Elvis. When it comes to him (Him?), this otherwise banal metaphor actually has a great deal of substance behind it: enough so that his case needs to be distinguished from that of other stars. (112)

Elizabeth Lawrence claims, "Mickey [Mouse] has achieved a unique position in prominence, not only as a national symbol in America [. . .], but as a celebrity in many other parts of the world as well" (65-6). Will Brooker cites Batman's pervasiveness: "From Corporate merchandise to localized creativity, the adult consumer to the primary-school fan, the war zone crossfire to the leukemia bed – Batman got there, somehow, and the questions raised by these death-marked images alone are enough, I feel, to justify this book's existence" (4). Carolyn Marvin and David Ingle make a case for the United States' "sacred flag" as "its center" (1), and Stephen Prothero nominates Jesus "the man, not the metaphysics" as the most interesting icon (10).

We are presented with mutually exclusive views. On one hand, there are those who argue that any given icon is unparalleled by any other signifier, that each icon must be examined in isolation because it is unique. The icon's uniqueness both guarantees our interest and justifies it. On the other hand, there are those who do not differentiate icons from more pedestrian signifiers in either meaning or function.

This dissertation argues that the truth lies somewhere between these poles. While an individual icon may possess some unique characteristics or may lay claim to individuality based on a combination of traits not found together in another image, this dissertation demonstrates that

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an icon, as individual as it may seem in isolation, is not unique in function or meaning. Shared

traits are the foundation of definition and classification. This is a basic idea, but it tends to be

obscured when examining something in isolation because isolation gives the impression of

uniqueness. However, juxtaposition can reveal patterns that lay bare shared functions and

meanings. To label an image as an icon is to classify it, which establishes similarities with other

icons based on the term's definition as an auratic, highly recognizable, overdetermined and

culturally variable image.

The problem with the rock group Marilyn Manson pulling Marilyn Monroe and Charles

Manson together into an iconic discourse of sex and violence and proclaiming that these icons

are equal in all situations is that it flattens not only the icons themselves but also all contexts into

one meaning, which is tantamount to claiming that every signifier is equal in function and

meaning to every other signifier.[13] If this were true, then meaningful communication would be

impossible. Arguably, this is what Baudrillard claims in <u>Simulacra and Simulation</u> while also

reserving the notion of intelligible argument for his own discourse.

Icons do differ from the flow of other images around the desiring subject; they have an

"aura" that ironically can emanate from their very reproducibility, and they stand out from other

signifiers. John Frow points out that the development of aura <u>through</u> reproduction, which he

relates to the postmodern idea of the simulacrum, is developed in <u>White Noise</u> (421). In that

novel, Jack Gladney and Murray Siskind visit a barn that has been announced by billboards as

"the most photographed barn in America." Murray comments,

> No one sees the barn [. . .]. Once you have seen the signs about the barn it
> becomes impossible to see the barn [. . .]. We're not here to capture an image,
> we're here to maintain one. Every photograph reinforces the aura. Can you feel
> it, Jack? An accumulation of nameless energies [. . .]. Being here is a kind of
> spiritual surrender [. . .].What did the barn look like before it was photographed?
> What was the barn like, how was it different from other barns, how was it similar

to other barns? We can't answer these questions because we've read the signs, seen the people snapping pictures. We can't get outside of the aura. We're part of the aura. (12-13)

Absorbing and profiting from the aura is what Jack attempts to do as he immerses himself in

Hitler Studies. Explaining his fascination with the German dictator to his children, Jack says,

"But it's not a question of greatness. It's not a question of good and evil. I don't know what it

is. Look at it this way. Some people always wear a favorite color. Some people carry a gun.

Some people put on a uniform and feel bigger, stronger, safer. It's in this area that my obsessions

dwell" (63). Hitler, because "he's always on" television, provides Jack with a stable

dependability that he can use to dodge his fear of death (63). Hitler's perpetual presence on The

History Channel becomes, in spite of the atrocities perpetrated by the German leader, an image of

life for Jack. The media attention Hitler receives continually documents the dictator's existence,

extending that life beyond death. Jack hopes to participate in this aura and to stave off death by

associating himself with Hitler. His colleagues do the same with other icons like Elvis Presley,

James Dean, and J.F.K. Samuel R. Delany, contra Benjamin, argues,

> As a purely socially grounded phenomenon, the only thing that endures in
> mechanical reproduction *is* the aura. What is lost in reproduction is, of course, the
> material specificity of the work of art, which, in the case of painting and sculpture,
> very often constitutes its true richness as an aesthetic form. [. . .] But it is the
> aura that survives, even when the specific details are blurred, because the aura was
> never in the work itself. It was always the web of signs in which the work was
> embedded – and that comes to us, not in the work, but with it. (86-87)

Despite Benjamin's claims that mechanical reproduction destroys cult value, the college

professors in White Noise confirm Delany's analysis by finding cult value in the most

reproduced images of the twentieth century. The "larger than life" fame and the trace of the

sacred imbue these icons with an influence that is different in the degree of power and allure they

exert even if they are similar in type to many elements in the signifying networks surrounding them.

Even though auras have not disappeared, cultural interfaces have changed dramatically as a result of the proliferation of signifiers ushered into existence by communication technologies, but this development did not produce the split subject. The alienated subject precedes the era of spectacle. Debord states, "The spectacle is hence a technological version of the exiling of human powers in a 'world beyond' – and the perfection of separation within human beings" (18). In keeping with Jacques Lacan's theory, there is a baseline level of alienation that is necessary to constitute reality. Alienation is prerequisite to having a conception of I and other, world and self, or a sense of self at all. To demarcate a boundary between what is me and what is other, there has to be a not me, and in so far as there is a not me, I am separated, cut off, and estranged from the not me. This alienation is largely a product of language for it is through language that subjects interact with their surroundings and communicate with other human beings.

Language is the lens through which we perceive reality, and it is a symbolic system. Words refer to themselves as words but also refer to something that is not a word, something beyond the system of signs (an object, another person, an emotion, etc.). In the vocabulary of Ferdinand de Saussure, linguistic representation consists of a signified and a signifier (67). The signifier is the sound-image that refers to a concept, which is the signified. Together, these elements form the linguistic sign, which can be expressed as S/s (read as Signifier over signified). There is a gap, represented by the bar, between the signified and the signifier. The signifier is not the same thing as the signified; it is a substitute. Like most substitutes, the signifier loses something from the signified. A substitute is not identical to the original, and this is exacerbated by the fact that there is no one to one correlation between words and material

reality. Words often have several definitions, and a seamless interface does not exist in language. Therefore, when subjects use words to communicate their desires and needs, there is always leakage. Language works more like a sieve than a bucket. Humans are cut off from what escapes language, the grains that pass through the bottom of the sieve. This alienates us both from ourselves as well as those around us because we cannot represent what escapes the linguistic system.

What the linguistic structure means for theories of spectacles and icons is that there was never a golden age before the rise of mechanical and digital reproduction when human beings, as language users, were whole or unalienated. The subject is always already a split subject because of the alienating properties of language. However, just because a baseline level of alienation is a necessary byproduct of language, this does not mean that additional estrangement is a necessary or positive circumstance.   In other words, alienation is not an on or off proposition and is better conceived as a spectrum ranging from the minimum alienation that arises through language to more extreme forms of alienation like that experienced by Gregor Samsa of Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," who wakes up to discover that he is a bug, no longer human.[14]

The narrator of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man (1952), for instance, is, like all human beings, alienated through language; representational totality is not available to him. The narrator is further estranged socially and politically by his status as a young, black male in1930's America. In the famous "Battle Royal" scene at the beginning of the novel, the Invisible Man, along with several other black men, is paraded in front of a group of white men, while a white, female stripper, sporting an American Flag tattoo on her belly, dances for the white men in the audience. The young, white, and blonde woman is reduced to a specular image and displays herself for all of the (white) men in the audience. It is tempting to conclude that the white men

are less estranged from the dancer's image because they are allowed to look. In this reading, the white men emphasize the black men's greater alienation from the dancer: "Some threatened us if we looked and others if we did not" (19-20). Facing violent reprisal from the whites for disobedience, the black men are caught up in contradictory threats; there is no feasible solution to the injunction to look and not look.

The white men reduce both the dancer and the black men, who later participate in a boxing match, to specular entertainment. By turning subjects into spectacles, the whites alienate themselves from the dancer and the black men. Separating themselves from the stripper and the boxers is, in fact, the point of the banquet. The spectators demarcate themselves from the "entertainers" to reaffirm white male privilege, and, as Debord points out, spectacle manufactures alienation. Therefore, there is a sense in which the white men experience greater estrangement than the woman and the black men, but it is an alienation that they purposefully produce and celebrate to perpetuate the illusion that they, as white men, experience no alienation whatsoever. The white men, then, separate themselves from the performers, and paradoxically, this is done to deny their own estrangement.

Caught up in the complex workings of alienation, the Invisible Man experiences ambivalent desires, wanting to embrace the dancer's image and to destroy it. Unlike the white men, the narrator is aware of the contradictions that the specular performances elide. The dancer's status runs parallel to the boxers' plight; both have been exploited for specular entertainment. The Invisible Man's wish to destroy the dancer is a wish to destroy the spectacle that is dangled in front of him, but he could not realize this desire without harming someone who, like him, has been exploited by the white men. The same conundrum underwrites the boxing match that pits the black men against each other; any move to destroy the boxing

spectacle means to lash out violently at another black male, giving the white men the entertainment they desire. Passive resistance, refusing to fight, is not an option because the white men are waiting to beat the boxers for noncompliance. The boxers are situated so that obedience and disobedience result in the same conclusion: spectacle and alienation from both the white men and the other boxers.

Invisible Man exemplifies that some subjects are more alienated than others, socially and psychologically, beyond the baseline estrangement inherent in linguistic structure. Social disunity takes place in the specific cultural structures and institutions of a society such as the white/black racism documented in Invisible Man. The novel presents this social disharmony through the image of the dancer. She is displayed before the black men as something they should desire while the white men reinforce the idea that this object is forbidden for the black men.

While the "Battle Royal" scene is replete with spectacles, it hinges upon one icon. The national symbol, an icon of American freedom and equality, is grafted onto the dancer's belly above the V (for victory, for virgin, for victim) of her sex organs; the flag transforms the dancer into a signifier of the American dream and illustrates the difference between icons and spectacles. The implication here is that if one of the spectators realizes his desire of attaining the dancer's V spot, of mastering the signifiers of her body, the promises of the flag will blossom in the dancer's belly, her womb. The flag distinguishes this woman from the thousands of other entertainers who dance on any given night in the United States. The woman is inscribed as a national project; her youth, body, sexuality, ethnicity, and performance are sutured to the flag. The flag elevates the events to national significance; the banquet is not about the occurrences of one night in the American South. Rather, what is at stake in the gathering is access and control of the nation.

Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" provides a basis for understanding the operations of the American flag's iconic status. Althusser argues that labor power (and we might add consuming power) is reproduced by interpellating "individuals" into "subjects" through a variety of ideological discourses channeled through institutions and organizations such as family, school, work, and church, but "the Church has been replaced today in its role as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus by the school" (157)[15]. These ideological discourses function by "hailing" the subject, by presenting themselves in a way that appears to address each individual even when they are mass generated . This is precisely the Invisible Man's reaction to the flag bearing dancer when he "had a notion that of all in the room she saw only me with her impersonal eyes" (Ellison 19).

Althusser offers the example of religious ideology to illustrate how ideology hails the individual, and his analysis is easily extended to account for "Old Glory's" power over the male spectators in Invisible Man. Althusser states, "there can only be such a multitude of possible religious subjects on the absolute condition that there is a Unique, Absolute, Other Subject, i.e. God" (178). Having posited the total subject as God and scripture as a kind of metalanguage that is not subject to the difficulties and gaps of normal, human language, Christian doctrine addresses itself to the individual:

> I [God, ideology, Christian discourse, etc.] address myself to you, a human individual called Peter (every individual is called by his name, in the passive sense, it is never he who provides his own name), in order to tell you that God exists and that you are answerable to Him. It adds: God addresses himself to you through my voice (Scripture having collected the Word of God, Tradition having transmitted it, Papal Infallibility fixing it forever on 'nice' points). It says: This is who you are: you are Peter! This is your origin, you were created by God for all eternity, although you were born in the 1920th year of Our Lord. This is your place in the world! This is what you must do! (177)

While Althusser focuses on linguistic discourse, ideological hailing often emanates from an iconic image such as the flag. Marvin and David analyze the iconic function of the American flag in Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag (1999) and argue that the flag functions as the central symbol in a national religion based on allegiance and sacrifice to the totem of the American flag[16]: "The flag symbolizes the sacrificed body of the citizen. This label has meaning only in reference to the group that defines it, the nation. Blood sacrifice links the citizen to the nation. It is a ritual in the most profound sense, for it creates the nation from the flesh of its citizens. The flag is the sign and agent of the nation formed in blood sacrifice" (63). In Invisible Man, the flag marks the dancer as the sacrificed citizen whose body constitutes the nation. Branded with the Stars and Stripes, her body literally becomes a body politic. The flag links the sexualized display to national concerns, demarcating the American dream as white, young, sexual, female, and (to the Invisible Man) forbidden. Even so, no one attains the totality of the image's promises; none of the men, white or black, reaches the V, but some of the white men physically respond to the ideological hailing and "began reaching out to touch her" (20).

Althusser's analysis of the holy trinity as an Ideological State Apparatus posits that God functions as the ideal ego for believers: "The dogma of the trinity is percisely the theory of the duplication of the Subject (the Father) into a subject (the Son), and of their mirror-connexion (the Holy Spirit)" (180)[17]. In the same way, the Stars and Stripes operates as a national ideal in Ellison's novel. The mirroring situates individuals as subjects, installs their subservience to the Subject, assures subjects' self recognition and mutual recognition for each other, and underwrites the reality and transparency of the process. The flag stands out as an instantly recognizable signifier of American nationhood and becomes the point around which all other significations in

the "Battle Royal" passage revolve. "Old Glory" connects the white men to the dancer, the black men to the dancer, and the white men to the black men even as the scene demonstrates that these groups are connected, as Debord theorizes, through their alienation and with differing degrees of self-awareness.

Like the dancer in Invisible Man, William Grimes would dedicate his body to the nationalist project, to turning his body into a national body, an icon for the official text of the United States that beckons others into the ideological fold of American Nationalism. At the conclusion of his autobiography, "Life of William Grimes, The Runaway Slave" (1825), Grimes states, "If it were not for the stripes on my back which were made while I was a slave, I would in my will, leave my skin a legacy to the government, desiring that it might be taken off and made into parchment, and then bind the constitution of glorious happy and free America. Let the skin of an American slave, bind the charter of American Liberty" (232). Grimes would like to offer his body as a tabula rasa, a blank writing space for cultural text. However, his body has already been inscribed with the stripes of slavery (simultaneously compared and opposed to the stripes of the American flag), and he refuses to be a palimpsest which covers over the evils of slavery with the rhetoric of freedom. Older and darker than the white dancer in Invisible Man, Grimes concludes that his body is barred from ascending to iconic status because his body is already tattooed with a different sort of Stars and Stripes. Even so, the sarcastic tone of Grimes' last statement argues that slave labor and suffering does underwrite the freedoms enjoyed by white land-owning males at the same time that it exhorts the nation to a place where the slave body will not have to serve as a palimpsest, to a place where the skin really will be a tabula rasa that is capable of cleanly and honestly binding the "charter of American Liberty." In making these

statements, Grimes shows an awareness of the disparity between national theory and praxis and registers a protest against this gap.

Grimes and the Invisible Man highlight a problem for Althusser's theory and for ideological hailing through iconic images – the problem of rebellion. Doubtlessly, there are situations where Althusser's account is accurate. It is, for instance, commonly known that it was illegal to teach a slave to read or write in the southern states during the Antebellum period because keeping slaves illiterate helps immobilize them both physically and mentally. Illiterate slaves have no direct access to written texts, scriptural or otherwise, yet blacks were sometimes inundated by plantation owners with services that appealed to Christianity as authorizing the slaves' subjugation. Some blacks were told that their slavery was endorsed by God, the total and omnipotent Subject, and that their patience and obedience to white slave holders would be rewarded in the afterlife. Conversely, slaves would answer to God for their rebellion. Each slave was assured that God knew them personally, was watching them, and had a plan for their life. The image of God is an icon in both the religious and cultural senses, and the interpellation of blacks as slaves is achieved, at least in part, by appealing to the image of God. In Roll, Jordan, Roll (1974) Eugene D. Genovese states that after the Nat Turner revolt,

> The [slave owners] came to see Christianity primarily as a means of social control. Hence the apparent contradictions of the period: a decline of antislavery sentiment in southern churches; laws against black preachers; laws against teaching slaves to read and write; encouragement of oral instructions of slaves in the Christian faith; and campaigns to encourage more humane treatment of slaves. The religious history of the period formed part of the great thrust to reform slavery as a way of life and make it bearable for the slaves. (186)[18]

Through this process, some blacks not only accepted their slave status, but they believed it was the natural and divinely recognized order of existence. They saw themselves as slaves and identified with that designation.

Grimes cautions others against rebellion at the conclusion of his narrative:

> Those slaves who have kind masters, are perhaps as happy as the generality of mankind. They are not aware that their condition can be better, and I don't know as it can: indeed it cannot by their own exertions. I would advise no slave to leave his master. If he runs away, he is most sure to be taken. If he is not, he will ever be in the apprehension of it. And I do think there is no inducement for a slave to leave his master, and be set free in the northern states." (231)

Even though Grimes himself escaped from slavery and was a living refutation of much that was said and written about black slaves, he reproduces plantation ideology and reinforces the supposed panoptical vigilance of slave holders. Furthermore, having internalized the religious teachings of his masters, Grimes believes that a slave can receive recompense for earthly sufferings in the afterlife. Commenting on the death of his mother, he writes, "Oh! my poor mother! But she is gone, and I presume her skin is now as white as that of her mistress" (195). This comment indicates Grimes' identification with Christianity as a buttress for slavery, with a Caucasian imago, with an ideology that sees white skin as better than black skin, and with the promise of a better afterlife.

If that were the end of the story, then Althusser's analysis could be accepted without revision. However, the story does not end with a slave's identification with the institutions of Christianity and slavery. Genovese documents the many ways that slaves used Christianity for ends others than those intended by masters seeking increased control. He notes that for many slaves, "The image of Moses, the this-worldly leader of his people out of bondage, and Jesus, the otherworldly Redeemer, blended into a pervasive theme of deliverance" (253). While the Jesus as Redeemer motif is open to the common objection of pacifying a populace with promises of freedom and equality only after death, it is important to note that Moses is not open to the same objection; he leads the Isrealites out of slavery in this world, not the next. Moreover, the writings of Olaudah Equiano, Nat Turner, Fredrick Douglass, William Wells Browne, Sojourner Truth,

Grimes and others document some of the ways blacks rejected their status as slaves, rebelling against the hailing icon of God posited by slave owners.

Both the Invisible Man and Grimes are attracted and repelled by American nationalism expressed through iconic images. The Invisible Man states, "I wanted at one and the same time to run from the room, to sink through the floor, or to go to her and cover her from my eyes and the eyes of the others with my body; to feel the soft thighs, to caress her and destroy her, to love her and murder her, to hide from her, and yet to stroke where below the small American flag tattooed upon her belly her thighs formed a capital V" (19). Even as the narrator realizes that he is being alienated from the other performers and wishes to end the charade, he falls into the lure of the dancer's image. He desires the promises proffered by the dancer's sexualized presence and white male prerogative, but he also suspects that something rotten may lurk beneath the facade of perfection precisely because he himself functions as a spectacle for the whites and because the stripper's image is taboo for black males in the first place. The Invisible Man sees past the illusion even as he is held in its thrall, resulting in a complex matrix in which he is socially more estranged than the white man because he is exploited into spectacle by their social power but less alienated psychologically because he perceives the contradictions beneath the display. The rhetoric of citizenship and freedom promise equality, but Ellison's narrator is repelled because, in a classic case of doublethink, the same rhetoric that promises social rights also denies those rights to blacks and reduces the dancer, a human being, to an object to leer and grab at as if she were a national pinata.

Althusser argues that all ideological discourses trace back to and work for the State where the State is fundamentally a repressive apparatus that enforces class positions and divisions. The model leaves little room for resistence or social change, but both the Invisible

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man and Grimes resist, without totally repudiating, identification with the iconic flag. In Lacanian terms, we might say that Althusser's concept of the State is a totality and does not account for what escapes symbolization. While Althusser's notion of Ideological State Apparatuses is useful, it is too neat. The processes that interpellate subjects are much more ragged and haphazard than Althusser acknowledges; these processes are subject to gaps, failures, omissions, and human and bureaucratic mistakes. Remnants of previous ideologies, which may counter the interests of the current State, still circulate, and the model makes no room for foreign discourses that penetrate the State's field of power, but in an era of electronic media, a person can log onto the Internet or order books to read materials from other, competing States. There is no consideration of the competing interests between local, state, and federal governments. There is no room for ambivalence such as that presented by Ellison and Grimes. The presence, absence, and arrangement of signifiers, including iconic representations, affects their meaning and power in relation to other signifiers; both metaphor and metonymy affect subjectivity.

Althusser rightly points out that "there is no practice except by and in an ideology," which means a subject always speaks from a symbolic position (170). The purely objective subject position does not exist because subjects are caught up in the processes of language. Furthermore, because of the gaps and failings of language, the master's (or State's) discourse is never a totality. The master is always a usurper whose knowledge is incomplete; without absolute knowledge, there is no absolute master, no absolute State. The structure inherent in the metaphoric castration of subjects posits that there will be a master, but he will always also be castrated. The failings of the master's discourse make rebellion possible, but resistance is open to the same structural problems. Rebellion cannot form a totality and can never reach the perfection of utopia. As Lacan told the students who participated in the student uprisings of May

1968, rebellion replaces the old master with a new one, which may help explain why Grimes advises other slaves not to run away from their masters.[19] Democratic elections demonstrate this thesis; voting the old representative out always equates voting a new representative in to fill the structural position (of mayor, senator, judge, etc.).[20] The structure of governmental positions imposes a limit on the possibilities of electoral political reform. Yet, structure does not level out all differences; even if they occupy the same structural position, there are some significant differences between the actions and persona of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.

The great white shark of Jaws (1975) and its predecessor, Moby-Dick (1851) demonstrate that similar or identical structures do not cancel out variations. In noting the varied glosses on the meaning of Jaws that range from the threat of Communism to the "unreality of daily life in America today" or an incarnation of Leviathan, Jameson argues,

> None of these readings can be said to be wrong or aberrant, but their very multiplicity suggests that the vocation of the symbol – the killer shark – lies less in any single message or meaning than in its very capacity to absorb and organize all of these quite distinct anxieties together. [. . .] Yet it is precisely this polysemousness which is profoundly ideological, insofar as it allows essentially social and historical anxieties to be folded back into apparently 'natural' ones, both to be express and to be recontained in what looks like a conflict with other forms of biological existence. ("Reification" 26-27)

While Jameson focuses on the shark, he makes it clear that Moby Dick, Herman Melville's great white whale, is the shark's predecessor. Arguably, outside of literary studies, Moby Dick does not have the wide spread fame and appeal that mark icons like Marilyn Monroe and the American flag. Nevertheless, as Jameson's reference to Moby-Dick in his discussion of Jaws illustrates, the logic that fuels Ahab's mad quest is precisely the structure at work in Jaws. In other words, Moby Dick exists as in icon inside of the novel, if not in a wider cultural arena.

The white whale is a screen, a mask that veils the hunted object cause of desire, but it also allows for an infinite play of signification around the whale, and while the screen's structure is

stable the contents of that screen alter with who looks at that screen. Like Jaws, Moby Dick

encompasses myriad meanings; his bulk of white skin invites projection. In chapter forty two,

"The Whiteness of the Whale" Melville demonstrates how the cultural symbolism of whiteness is

overdetermined; whiteness suggests beauty, pearls, milk, innocence, and purity, but it also bears

the meanings of Coleridge's albatross, sickness, a death shroud, and albinism. Every aspect of

the whale is couched in similar pluralities and ambiguities. Therefore, it is no surprise that the

whale has been interpreted as nature, a symbol of property and privilege, God's messenger,

archetypal parents (father and mother), the Freudian unconscious, and the list goes on. As early

as 1954, James D. Koerner states, "One scarcely knows where to begin in surveying such a

scholarly junkyard where the weary and unsuspecting White Whale becomes all things to all

men" (43).

Even so, the novel provides a highly personal account for Ahab's motivations. Ahab tells

the Pequod's crew that

> All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. [. . .] If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near me. Sometimes I think that there is naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. The inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him (Melville 144).

Like Jaws, the function of the whale is the very play of signification that eludes definitive

interpretation. Ahab qualifies his response to the whale in personal terms, inviting his crew to

interpret the whale for themselves. Out of all the "pasteboard masks" imaginary fantasy uses to

cover over the gaps in symbolization, to hide the void of the real, Ahab valorizes Moby Dick as

the sole threat to his illusion of becoming a total subject. The whale is Ahab's wall, his bar of

signification that yields the split subject, because the whale has wounded him physically and

psychologically. On the specular level, Ahab's ivory leg indicates his status as divided subject.

On an earlier voyage, Moby Dick took Ahab's leg, and the whale hunter replaces the missing

limb with the "polished bone of the sperm whale's jaw" (110). If the whale is the mask that

Ahab wishes to smash through, then it is also true that Ahab is visibly inscribed as bifurcated,

part whale. Moreover, this "part" of Ahab does not coexist peacefully with the other "parts."

Replacing his biological leg with the ivory does not make him whole; in fact, the bone threatens

the physical marker of his manhood: "by some unknown, and seemingly inexplicable casualty,

his ivory limb having been so violently displaced, that it had stake-wise smitten, and all but

pierced his groin" (385). Ahab has the ship's carpenter fashion a new leg, as if by casting off the

offending piece of ivory he can avoid the torments plaguing the divided subject, but the new leg

is another version of the whale, of the mask that covers over the real, because it, too, is made

from a whale's jawbone (386-7).

The hunt for the whale is a vain and futile enterprise; while Ahab vocally externalizes his

bifurcation, projecting it onto the whale, his ivory leg demonstrates that this very bifurcation is

constitutive of Ahab as a subject. Indeed, he proclaims his own narcissism, declaring, "The firm

tower, that is Ahab; the volcano, that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious

fowl, that, too, is Ahab; all are Ahab; and this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe,

which like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious

self" (359). If true, then the great white whale is also Ahab, and the answer to his defiant

question/challenge of "Who's over me?" becomes himself (144). Ahab's unconscious is over

himself, his ego. It is, then, no surprise that Ahab turns out a bit like Edgar Allan Poe's "William

Wilson" (1839) , who kills himself as he stabs his doppelgänger. Similarly, Ahab ends his hunt

for totality strapped to the inscrutable and overdetermined whale by a harpooning rope and

headed for the depths of the sea. Having projected himself onto the whale, Ahab's fate is tied up

with that projection; he is literally and metaphorically connected to the white whale.

Icons can be animals, persons, flags, logos, trademarks, geographic locations,

monuments, or natural formations. Monument Valley, the Grand Canyon, and the White House,

for instance, are all iconic sites. Moreover, it was the World Trade Center's iconic nature that

made the towers a target for terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. As many commentators

have observed, the bombers did not have the resources necessary to launch a traditional war on

the United States. Therefore, they chose symbolic sites, including the Pentagon and the White

House, as high profile targets that have psychological and emotional resonance for American

citizens. Even so, the main concern of this dissertation consists in exploring icons based on

fictional and historical characters, personified icons.

Icons are fundamentally specular in nature. They are images captured in monuments,

photos, drawings, posters, advertisements, billboards. In this state, an icon is static, revealing

little about how it acquires or reinforces its multivalent meanings. Of all icons, personified

icons, including historical people, fictional characters, and anthropomorphic animals, can most

easily become animated through narrative. We commonly refer to the "movement of the plot" in

a novel or short story; we discuss the "flow" of an essay's argument. Narrative grants motion,

and motion can be charted, analyzed. As Peter Brooks puts it,

> Narratives portray the motors of desire that drive and consume their plots, and
> they also lay bare the nature of narration as a form of human desire: the need to
> tell as a primary human drive that seeks to seduce and to subjugate the listener, to
> implicate him in the thrust of desire that never can quite speak its name–never can
> come quite to the point–but that insists on speaking over and over again its
> movement toward that name. (61)

Narratives allow us to more fully, but never totally, examine the iconic image, revealing the

workings behind the image's facade. Brooks observes, "Narrative is this acting out of the

implications of metaphor. In its unpacking, the original metaphor is enacted spatially [. . .] and temporally" (26). The same can be said of icons. Narratives that include personified icons become an acting out of the icon's implications. An icon's meaning spreads out across narrative time and space.

A vampire's image on a mass produced poster can be encountered anywhere: in stores, subways, restaurants, homes, classrooms, etc. The poster is, as Benjamin notes, bereft of its place in time and space; the poster is dehistoricized, giving scant account of its history, origins, or complex meanings. However, narratives, whether historical or fictional, establish context and grant motion both intratextually and intertextually. While we tend to think of icons as static, monumental, and monolithic, narrative movement demonstrates how icons acquire meaning and how those messages are perpetuated and revised. Icons change over historical and narrative time.

In contrast to the static and generic image of a vampire on a poster, Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897) establishes the modern mythology of vampires, and that narrative becomes condensed to a single iconic image of a mysterious looking aristocrat in a high-collared cape that is encountered in countless manifestations and contexts. Narrative is required to understand the appeal and meaning of this omnipresent image. Behind a vampire poster lies the stories that establish, reinforce, and revise the icon's associations. These narratives are so prevalent in our culture that they affect even those who have not read the books or seen the films. Stoker's novel features the iconic vampire who serves as the basis for every vampiric being that follows; he is a shape changer, which encourages multivalent readings and retellings. Dracula can assume the forms of a human, a wolf, rats, a bat and mist. As a shape changer, Dracula does not have a stable form in the imaginary; he is always changing and can appear in numerous guises. In fact, the novel's story springs from complications involving Dracula's attempt to acquire an additional

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form by changing himself from feudal aristocracy to Victorian gentleman, from a Transylvanian

Count to a London citizen. The vampire's metamorphic nature makes him difficult for the

vampire hunters to track and kill, but it also allows and even encourages many interpretations.

Maud Ellman succinctly summarizes the numerous readings of Dracula:

> If the vampire can mean so many disparate things, does he really mean anything at
> all? Dracula has been interpreted as a figure for perversion, menstruation,
> venereal disease, female sexuality, male homosexuality, feudal aristocracy,
> monopoly capitalism, the proletariat, the Jew, the primal father, the Antichrist,
> and the typewriter. But Dracula is all of these things and more: he stands for the
> return of the repressed, the contents of which are forever shifting. For this reason,
> he can never be pinned down: he continues to change shape, beyond the covers of
> Bram Stoker's book, in the minds of his insatiable interpreters. (xxviii)

While a solid and lasting interpretation of the vampire is, as Ellman notes, unlikely, all of these

interpretations radiate from the idea that the icon is a threat. Dracula is an invader that spreads

the Gospel of the vampire like a plague that must be hunted down and properly destroyed. The

responses to Dracula's threat are as varied as the glosses on Moby Dick, including many

interpretations and rewritings that attempt to make the vampire more human and reduce the

mystery to make the vampire a more sympathetic character.

The Count puppet on Sesame Street, the popular children's show aired on the Public

Broadcasting Service, seeks to domesticate the vampire. Through the homophone of "count," the

puppet replaces aristocratic rank with the act of numbering. Count Chocula is another defanged

version of Dracula. Used to market a children's cereal, Chocula replaces blood with the more

innocent and sweet substance of chocolate. Both of these articulations seek to minimize the

terror of Dracula by narrowing the fantasy space to parameters that are ostensibly appropriate for

young children.

Recent versions of the Dracula story marketed for adults also seek to explain away the

evil Stoker invested in the vampire. Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992), directed by Francis Ford

Coppola, introduces a love story between Dracula and Mina Harker. In this film, Dracula's wife dies, which is the catalyst for the Count's renunciation of God that damns him to be a vampire. Centuries later, Dracula believes Mina Harker is his wife reincarnated when he sees her photograph in Jonathan Harker's possession. Dracula now leaves his castle to reclaim his "wife" in London, and the film dwells on the Count's efforts to seduce Mina, which would have been successful if not for Van Helsing and his cohorts. The introduction of the love plot into Stoker's Gothic narrative dispels the mystery of Dracula's motivations, making the film, for all of its supernatural elements, a mundane version of the Hollywood love story. The Count's shadowy plans, as presented in Stoker's novel, make him a threatening villain, a satanic force who fears Christian symbols. He is inscrutable and evil. In Coppola's retelling, Dracula's love for his wife explains and justifies his evil as a love so strong that he attempts to thwart God to preserve that love. The Count becomes more sympathetic in this rendering. As with the man that steals bread to feed his family, Dracula becomes the villain forced into his role for the sake of love. He is now as much a victim of God's whimsy as he is a predator of innocent humans, and the mists of unfathomable threat are filled out with tortured passion.

Even Anne Rice's popular Vampire Chronicles series seeks to domesticate and close off the range of possible interpretations, attempting to redeem the vampire. Emphasizing the vampire's beauty, Rice's novels are sprinkled with comparisons of vampires with angels. In her rendering, vampires experience moral quandaries about their actions. Louis, the narrator in Interview With a Vampire (1976), often prefers to drink the blood of animals so that he does not have to take human lives to sustain his own. Lestat, who narrates The Vampire Lestat (1985), says, "I was resolute that I would not drink innocent blood" (11). Under Rice's vision, vampires can be socially responsible creatures, and Lestat claims to perform a vigilante policing function

when he feeds.[21] By his account (as opposed to Louis'), "I hunted almost exclusively among the gamblers, thieves, and the killers, being more faithful to my unspoken vow to kill the evildoer than even I had hoped [. . .]" (*Lestat* 499). Unlike the shape changing Dracula, Rice's Vampires are static, and often conservative, creatures. Armand tells Louis that "all things change except the vampire himself; everything except the vampire is subject to constant corruption and distortion. Soon, with an inflexible mind, and often with the most flexible mind, this immortality becomes a penitential sentence in a madhouse of figures and forms that are hopelessly unintelligible and without value" (*Interview* 280).

As with Frankenstein's Monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Rice lets the vampires, instead of the vampire hunters, speak, and much of the time, the result is an explanation, an apologia, a justification for vampires. Giving the blood drinkers a sustained narrative voice brings the reader psychologically closer to the vampires, and encourages the reader to identify more closely with the normally reviled villains. Rice attempts to portray the vampire as a tortured, beautiful, and ultimately human creature with enhanced capabilities. Dracula's continuing popularity as a Halloween costume and the cultivation of the vampire aesthetic in some subcultures suggest that there are those who identify and seek to emulate the vampire as a charismatic, mysterious, and misunderstood being with preternatural powers. Rice's novels, as the hundreds of fan pages on the Internet testify, have helped tame the vampire into a comprehensible and sympathetic figure that is, in some ways, far removed from the iconic Dracula while still drawing on many of Dracula's characteristics.

The intertextual relationship between the vampire texts reveal that, over the course of the twentieth century, Dracula has been subjected to a series of revisions seeking to nullify his threatening inscrutability. These revisions, from Count Chocula to Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*

attempt to fill out the vampire's mystery with interpretations that humanize and domesticate the undead, making him more sympathetic and understandable to the audience. While literary critics often appear to celebrate competing interpretations without valorizing one as definitive, too many possible readings are unsettling. Perhaps interpretations can become so varied that the very range of possibilities endangers a reader's ability to construct meaning. After all, language is a system of differences. Black is black because it is not white, and on is on because it is not off. As Terry Eagleton comments, "Any word which covers everything loses its cutting edge and dwindles to an empty sound. For a word to have meaning, it must be possible to specify what, in particular circumstances, would count as the other of it [. . .]" (7). This attempt to close off interpretive uncertainty is not, of course, totally successful; Dracula still exists in the pages of Stoker's novel and is susceptible to the range of interpretations cited by Ellman. Nevertheless, there is reason to conclude that revisionary narratives have sought, if not to totally cleanse the blood from the vampire's fangs, then at least to scrub the blood from the dining room rug.

The move toward cleansing, domesticating, or taming is not unique to Dracula narratives. Analyzing personified icons in terms of their historical evolution and presence in literary narratives demonstrates a consistent trend that occurs both intratextually and intertextually. Early in these narratives, sometimes before their ascendency to iconhood, these figures have transgressive elements that run counter to accepted beliefs and mores. In time, these offending traits are downplayed, if not completely effaced. The sharp corners are rounded off, and as their appeal broadens to lure a larger audience, icons become tamer, losing some of their disruptive and unsettling energies in exchange for wider audience appeal and interpellational power. In this process of entropy, artworks do not necessarily, as Marcuse claims, "come to life as other than themselves" by gaining wider accessability outside of opera halls and museums because it is only

after this taming down that many icons emanating from Hollywood, comic books, and other popular culture sources find their way *in* to museums and other highbrow institutions (64).

Providing a reading of any single vampire text does not fully reveal the extent to which recent texts seek to domesticate vampires. Newer narratives respond to and revise earlier versions of the vampire icon; more specifically, they all look back to *Dracula*, the founding text of modern vampire mythology. Isolating one version of the iconic vampire for analysis gives the illusion of uniqueness and transparency of meaning. A specific articulation of an icon is neither completely unique nor transparent. Icons share some common traits, and they are also complex knots of signifiers inscribed with multiple meanings in a compact image, which gives the impression of simplicity. The presentation of a static image encourages the audience to perceive icons as singularities whose meaning lies on the surface, and this study attempts to counter that interpretive tendency by analyzing multiple articulations of the icons discussed in the coming chapters. Presenting and examining multiple versions of the same icon triangulates each articulation against other versions. This method establishes both the similarities and differences between competing depictions as a way of showing the complex meanings operating behind each image. Revision is a form of critique. Alterations seek to correct, improve, update, renew, or cleanse, and examining how an icon has been revised from other versions establishes what is at stake in an icon's image.

The following chapters address icons, their domestication, and their relationship to American nationalism. Chapter Two presents a more in depth definition of "icon" as it explores icons that appeal to children and teenagers as well as the childlike aspects of the adult psyche. Drawing on Lauren Berlant's work, this section includes readings of Barbie, Mickey Mouse, and Elvis Presley. Chapter Three focuses on icons aimed at adults and the more mature aspects of

human personalities. Using Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" and

Roland Barthes' inoculation theory, this section analyzes Pocahontas, Uncle Sam, and the

Unknown Soldier in political rhetoric and literary works, including William Faulkner's *A Fable,*

Steve Darnell and Alex Ross' *U.S.: Uncle Sam* , Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*, and

Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*.   Chapter Four concentrates on the ways projection functions in

constructing foreign scapegoat icons to strengthen domestic national identifications. Drawing on

Abdul JanMohamed's work with Manichaeanism and analyzing George Orwell's *Nineteen*

Eighty-Four, Hart's War, and *Decoration Day,* this chapter demonstrates that projection takes

place within defined parameters, and in these texts, projection is directed at an iconic scapegoat,

an icon that bears the weight of responsibility for a community's failure to achieve the totality of

utopia.

Throughout, the popular objects of mass culture and middle brow art are read alongside,

against, and with the culturally consecrated artifacts of high brow art.[22] Elvis Presley, a poor

southern boy transformed into the King of Rock and Roll, is read alongside the high nationalist

figure of the Unknown Soldier. The plastic Barbie shares space with the literary Huck Finn. An

analysis of icons should not be restricted to the upper crust of cultural production. Icons cut

across mediums and cultural hierarchies because they are public figures. Berlant, commenting on

what she terms the "National Symbolic," says, "the collective possession of these official texts –

the flag, Uncle Sam, Mount Rushmore, the Pledge of Allegiance, perhaps now even JFK and Dr.

Martin Luther King – creates a national 'public' that constantly renounces political knowledge

where it exceeds intimate mythic national codes" (103). Icons are caught up in mass appeal and

would not be an effective means of shaping desire and identification on a national scale if they

did not transcend notions of cultural consecration. Icons permeate every level of cultural

production, and a study of icons necessarily roots through the pulpy pages of comics and the

hallowed leaves of critically celebrated novels.

NOTES

1. My analysis here is similar to the theory Althusser outlines in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1969). Althusser argues that ideology calls out to subjects, "hailing" them (124).

2. In 1900 approximately 6,356 book titles were published in the United States alone (Census Historical 808). By 1950, 11,022 titles were published annually, and the number jumped to 119,357 in 1999 (Census Historical 808; Statistical 708). (These figures are titles published in the year given, not the number of books printed in that year.) These statistics by themselves are enough to document the proliferation of texts and images that have accompanied new modes of mechanical and digital reproduction, and this does not even account for periodical publications or the rise of newer mediums like sound recordings, film, television, and digital sources such as the Internet.

3. See Chapter Two for a more extensive definition of icon.

4. In Mount Hollywood (1990), Casaro replaces George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt with the faces of Humphrey Bogart, Marilyn Monroe, and Elvis Presley. In 1988, Gottfried Helnwein paints the same four popular culture icons into Edward Hopper's Nighthawks (1942). Both of these paintings draw attention to the rewriting of history, claiming that Bogart, Dean, Monroe and Presley are so deeply ingrained in culture that it becomes difficult to imagine an America without them. Casaro even claims that the performers have eclipsed, covered up, the important political figures carved on Mount Rushmore.

5. Warhol uses the same repetition with images of Elvis Presley.

6. In The Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944), Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno argue along similar lines:

> [I]f a movement from a Beethoven symphony is crudely 'adapted' for a film sound-track in the same way as a Tolstoy novel is garbled in a film script: then the claim that this is done to satisfy the spontaneous wishes of the public is no more than hot air. [. . .] there is the agreement – or at least the determination – of all executive authorities not to produce or sanction anything that in anyway differs from their own rules, their own ideas about consumers, or above all themselves. (122)

7. There are many additional theorists that have presented analyses of the increasing number of signifiers. For instance, Fredric Jameson argues that postmodernism "ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural and social production, in some new and heightened bricolage: metabooks which cannibalize other books, metatexts which collate bits of other texts"(Postmodernism 96). Jean Francois Lyotard states, "Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats

McDonald's food for lunch, and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong" (76).

8. Debord, unlike some other scholars, does not see the spectacle as a direct effect of replication technologies. Instead he conceptualizes it as "a world view transformed into an objective force" (13).

9. For an in-depth discussion of the psychology behind chat rooms, cyber sex, and "screen personalities," see Slavoj Žižek's The Plague of Fantasies (1997).

10. It is important to note that Baudrillard claims that culture has moved beyond the society of the spectacle:

> We are no longer in the society of the spectacle, of which the situationists spoke, nor in the specific kinds of alienation and repression that it implied. The medium itself is no longer identifiable as such, and the confusion of the medium and the message (McLuhan) is the first great formula of this new era. There is no longer a medium in the literal sense: it is now intangible, diffused,, and diffracted in the real, and one can no longer even say that the medium is altered by it (Simulacra 30).

Baudrillard and situationists such as Debord view the media and reproduction technologies as abstracting forces that reduce subjects to passive observers. Debord, however, believes in a stable distinction between the appearance of the spectacle and the underlying reality. It is therefore possible to strip away the false appearance of spectacle. Baudrillard rejects the idea that reality and simulation can be differentiated. In this view, contradictions, truth, power, illusions and reality all collapse into an infinite play of signifiers, and there is no stable reality behind the endless play of signification.

11. Marilyn Manson consists of Marilyn Monroe's first name followed by Charles Manson's last name. The band's members use stage names derived from a model or actress' first name combined with the last name of a serial killer: Daisy Berkowitz, Madonna Wayne Gacy, Ginger Fish, Gidget Gein, Twiggy Ramirez, Olivia Newton Bundy.

12. Natural Born Killers (1994), directed by Oliver Stone, presents a similar argument through the depiction of Mickey (Woody Harrelson) and Mallory Knox's (Juliette Lewis) killing spree that has camera crews scrambling to document the pair's crimes. Stone's film, along with True Romance (1993), directed by Tony Scott and starring Christian Slater and Patricia Arquett, and Badlands (1973), directed by Terrence Malick and starring Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek, is loosely based on the serial killing couple Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate, who went on a killing spree through Nebraska in 1958. Natural Born Killers turns the couple's history into a satire on media and murder, arguing that our fascination with media coverage makes killers into stars. The same thinking runs throughout DeLillo's White Noise. In that novel, Gladney worries that Hitler may lose some measure of his uniqueness by being associated with Elvis Presley in the joint lecture on Hitler and Elvis presented by Gladney and Sisskind.

13. This is not to say that the context created by pairing Marilyn Monroe with Charles Manson is somehow an illegitimate or faulty use of these icons, but it is not the only situation in which these images exist and restricting analysis of these icons to a shared discourse is reductive.

14. Fredric Jameson takes another tack in reconciling "historicist" and "structuralist" versions of alienation by regarding them as different kinds of alienation: "Materialistic thinking, however, ought to have had enough practice of heterogeneity and discontinuity to entertain the possibility that human reality is fundamentally alienated in more than one way, and in ways which have little enough to do with one another" ("Imaginary" 386).

15. Marvin and Ingle argue that churches are not Ideological State Apparatuses. Basing their argument on the idea that only the state can perform sanctioned, legal killing, they argue, "Only nationalism motivates the sacrificial devotion of [American] citizens, without which there can be no effective governance. In relation to *that* faith sectarian religion is best understood as a jealous competitor" (10).

16. Totem is used here in the Durkheimian sense of "the sign by which each clan distinguishes itself from others [. . .] It is at once the symbol of the god and of the society" (206). As I define the term, a totem like the flag would fall under the icon rubric. However, as Durkheim states, the totem is a single, central identification. Icons are more diffuse, and while a reasonable case can be made for the centrality of the flag in America's symbol lexicon (especially in light of the glut of flags following the World Trade Center bombing on September 11, 2001), the flag is supported and supplemented by numerous other icons. If, as Marvin and Ingle argue, the flag is America's totem god, then the host of other nationalistic icons are the flag's canonized saints.

17. Lacan's account of the imaginary register and the mirror stage, the process by which infants first acquire an ego, silently underwrites Althusser's theory. In Lacan's account, the mirror stage produces a fundamental alienation as the child derives a sense of self from an image outside of himself. The child, who previously is unaware of the body as a whole, acquires the illusion of a cohesive sense of self through the specular identification reflected in the mirror. Lacan states,

> For the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority in which, to be sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted, but in which, above all, it appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it. (Ecrits 4)

The reflection appears complete and integrated, but only because the reflection is a frozen moment that captures and reverses the body's uncoordinated motion, and the infant, peering into the mirror, believes that he too can acquire the sense of completeness and mastery he perceives in the image. After this constitutive act, the mirror phase comes to a conclusion, resulting in the formation of the ego, but the logic of identification and projection stays in place, and "it will also be the rootstock of secondary identifications" (Ecrits 4). The mirror stage logic can be seen in Debord's analysis of the spectacle; the spectacle alienates through images that promise fulfillment. The spectacle and the mirror phase hold out the promise of assuming the harmonious image, but the promise is always deferred. Subjects never achieve a full realization of the imago, the ideal ego.

18. See also page 189. Genovese shows that the relationships between Christianity, slaves, and masters is complex. For instance, while some masters sought to use religion as a form of control, other slave owners forbade their slaves from practicing Christianity or attending religious services.

19. The point that revolution always brings a new master has been made by several popular music groups, including Bob Dylan and The Who. Dylan sings, "It may be the devil or it may be the lord / But you're gonna have to serve somebody," and Pete Townsend, lead singer for The Who, intones, "Meet the new boss / Same as the old boss" in "Won't Get Fooled Again."

20. This metaphor has limitations. In the case of democratic elections, it is possible to replace democracy with another political system and destroy the structural positions occupied by elected politicians. The structure of language, however, is, by all current accounts, universal. Although, we must remain open to the possibility that this may change, necessitating a revision of Lacan's theory.

21. The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen also imagines in its film (2003) incarnation, as opposed to the comic book version (2002), that vampires can be morally responsible creatures. This story postulates that Mina Harker (now Mina Murray) was not saved by the vampire hunters in Stoker's novel; she became a vampire. In the film, Mina, along with other famous characters from the Victorian era (Tom Sawyer, Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde, Captain Nemo, etc.), unite to thwart a global threat from Dr. Moriarty (Sherlock Holmes' arch enemy). Mina uses her vampiric abilities to aid her companions in stopping Moriarty's plans.

22. I am borrowing Pierre Bourdieu's terminology from "The Market of Symbolic Goods" (1983) See pages 112-145 of The Field of Cultural Production (1993).

CHAPTER TWO:

INFANTILE NATION: DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF BARBIE, MICKEY, AND ELVIS

"Icon" is a term used by many but defined by few. The word appears frequently in both the mainstream media as well as scholarly studies and is applied to a wide range of people and objects. An article in <u>The Village Voice</u> refers to playwright August Wilson as "an icon," and a writer for <u>The New York Times</u> calls the Ford Mustang "an icon of coolness for an older generation" (Marcus 60; Laniard 12.1). Another piece, in <u>The Boston Globe</u>, maintains that Dolly, the sheep with the distinction of being the first cloned mammal, became "an instant cultural and scientific icon" (Barnard A1). Ray Browne and Marshall Fishwick edit <u>Icons of America</u>, a volume of scholarly essays, which includes George Washington, The Beatles, pinball machines, CB radios, slot machines, postage stamps, fashion trends and many other phenomena under the icon umbrella.

Like most words, icon has multiple definitions, and it is not immediately obvious which definitions apply to the preceding examples. According to <u>The Oxford English Dictionary</u>, "icon" can refer to an image, figure, or representation; an image on a computer screen that allows the user to select a computing operation; an image of a sacred person that is itself sacred and is honored with adoration; a simile (obsolete); a signifier that shares a characteristic with the signified; or a realistic representation or description in writing (obsolete). Of these six definitions, two are obsolete. We may also eliminate the definition referring to computers because this is a specialized meaning that only occurs in a specific context and because this definition is a more particular use of the semiotic definition. That is, icons on a computer screen are generally visual representations that share a quality with the computing operation they represent. The definition that refers to an icon as a generic representation is not particularly

helpful either because all language and images are representational. The two remaining

possibilities merit a closer examination because of their prominent positions in scholarly

discourse, and, while neither the semiotic nor the theological definitions fully meet the needs of

this study, elements of both play a role in constructing a new definition of icons.

In the field of semiotics, an icon consists of a signifier that shares at least one significant

trait with the signified. Commenting on the title of his book, The Verbal Icon (1967), W. K.

Wimsatt, Jr. explains,

> The term icon is used today by semiotic writers to refer to a signifier which
> somehow shares the properties of, or resembles, the objects which it denotes. The
> same term in its more usual meaning refers to a visual image and especially to one
> which is a religious symbol. The verbal image which most fully realizes its verbal
> capacities is that which is not merely a bright picture (in the usual modern
> meaning of the term image) but also an interpretation of its reality in its
> metaphoric and symbolic dimensions. (X)

Charles Sanders Pierce is generally credited with systemizing the semiotic use of icon, which

acquires its meaning in contrast to symbols and indices. These three, for Pierce, are the

fundamental classes of semiotic signs. In his taxonomy, symbols are arbitrary signs that achieve

meaning through association with other symbols, and Pierce notes that "All words, sentences,

books and other conventional signs are symbols" (292). Symbols do not denote a particular

object; they denote a general class. "Bird" is a symbol that refers to a class of animals and not to

any particular bird. When situated in discourse, symbols acquire more specific meanings as they

interact with indices and icons. An index, also called a seme, is a sign that correlates with and

implies another meaning in space or time. Like an index finger, the index points to something

else. Smoke is an index for fire; the smoke tells the viewer that fire is present at a particular

location, and "A low barometer with a moist air is an index of rain" (286). Pierce states,

"Anything which focuses the attention is an index. Anything that startles us is an index, in so far

as it marks the junction between two portions of experience" (Pierce 285). Pronouns, adverbs that denote place or time, and prepositions function as indices. Unlike indices, which point to a meaning, icons are capable of "directly communicating an idea" (278). An icon represents a signified through a similarity. Pictures, diagrams, algebraic expressions, and metaphors are icons. For instance, a picture of a printer that designates a print function is an icon because the sign resembles the actual printer that will produce the copies of the document. In contrast, the word "print" has no resemblance to the signified and is not an icon.[1]

As Wimsatt observes at the opening of The Verbal Icon, the other (and older), noteworthy definition of icon has its roots in theology. In the realm of religion, an icon is a holy image that is itself holy; it is a valorized representation that purports to depict some aspect of the divine or an object or person associated with a deity. For proponents, spiritual icons are used as a mediating image between subjects and the divine as an aid in worship and prayers. For iconoclasts, the use of icons is synonymous with idolatry and often confuses a representation of the deity with the deity itself. Debates concerning depictions of the divine and the role these images play in worship practices date back to antiquity. Xenophanes, who lived from approximately 570 to 480 B.C., criticized the practice of idolatry and the practice of attributing human foibles to the gods: "But mortals believe the gods to be created by birth, and to have their own (mortals') raiment, voice, and body. But if oxen (and horses) and lions had hands or could draw with hands and create works of art like those made by men, horses would draw pictures of gods like horses, and oxen of gods like oxen, and they would make bodies (of their gods) in accordance with the form that each species itself possesses" (Hyland 92). For Xeophanes, the idols, statues, and icons of Greek worshipers were created by the suppliants in their own images.[2]

St. John of Damascus, one of the prominent icon defenders in the eighth-century, refutes these arguments in <u>Apologia of ST. John Damascene Against Those Who Decry Holy Images</u>. Basing his response on Christ, John argued that because God assumed the form of man in the person of Jesus, he was as susceptible to graphic depictions as any other man. John writes, "If we made an image of the invisible God, we should in truth do wrong. For it is impossible to make a statue of one who is without body, invisible, boundless, and formless. Again, if we made statues of men, and held them to be gods, worshiping them as such, we should be most impious. But we do neither. For in making the image of God, who became incarnate and visible on earth, a man amongst men through His unspeakable goodness, taking upon Him shape and form and flesh, we are not misled" (58-9). Moshe Barasch states that, for John, "The sacred icon mitigates the full force of the divine, a force we would not be able to endure. But at the icon of God we <u>can</u> look. On the other hand, the bodily forms shown in the icon are transparent towards the holy; they enable us to get a glimpse of the sacred or divine. The icon suggests the divine without fully unveiling it" (216-7).

While there is nothing religious about Lacan's thinking, the role of the divine totality runs parallel to Lacan's account of the phallus, the signifier that often represents the myth of the complete subject. Lacan states that the phallus "can play its role only when veiled" (<u>Ecrits</u> 277). In Lacan's account, the phallus is the signifier for all that subjects lack. If, however, humans could approach this signifier directly, they would have access to the phallus. The veil covers the phallus; it is an elusive promise that what the subject desires is just behind the curtain. If the subject draws aside the curtain, she, like Dorothy in the <u>Wizard of Oz</u> (1939), finds that what the veil conceals is not the completing object they desired after all. For Lacan, the phallus is real, but it always remains out of reach. Similarly, Christian worshipers cannot experience or

comprehend the full power of the deity. In order to have contact with the divine, Christians must approach it in a watered-down, roundabout way. John suggests that icons perform this function by filtering the totality of God through the image of Christ, of the entrance of God into history.[3]

As the comparison of John and Lacan suggests, semiotic and theological icons have points of contact. Boris Upensky explores the crossover in The Semiotics of the Russian Icon (1976) and explains that, "The semiotic, i.e., lingual, nature of the icon was clearly realized and even proclaimed as dogma by the fathers of the church. Particularly characteristic in this respect are the comparisons made, from extremely ancient times (in fact, almost from the epoch of the birth of the icon), between icon-painting and language, and between the icon and the verbal text" (9). However, even when composite definitions from semiotics, art, and theology are taken into account, the definitions are still lacking. Many contemporary writers refer to specific types of icons such as "cultural icons," "scientific icons," "popular culture icons," and "national icons" for which the religious, semiotic, and aggregate definitions cannot fully account. A new definition and taxonomy are needed.

Barbie, Mickey Mouse, and Elvis, demonstrate that cultural icons are images that are auratic, highly recognizable, overdetermined and culturally variable. At the same time, these particular icons gear their appeals to children and to the childish aspects of adults. Exemplifying what Berlant terms "infantile citizenship," these icons represent model behaviors based on what attracts children and adolescents while attempting to contain adult conduct within childish parameters in the name of protecting youths from allegedly inappropriate adult behaviors. Infantile icons like Barbie, Mickey, and Elvis present an innocuous surface that is ostensibly safe for young minds. These icons appear to provide entertainment and opportunities for play (as opposed to a more serious endeavor like work). Yet, the play infantile icons provide is an

example of what Clifford Geertz, following Jeremy Bentham's <u>The Theory of Legislation</u> (1802)*,* calls "deep play." Deep play is "play in which the stakes are so high that it is, from his [Bentham's] utilitarian standpoint, irrational for men to engage in it at all" (432). From this hypothesis, Geertz analyzes the sport of cockfighting in Bali, which he argues is "fundamentally a dramatization of status concerns" (437). In other words, the entertainment value in cockfighting is window dressing, concealing a whole range of social and political concerns that are the real stakes in the sport.

Infantile icons participate in deep play. Often, their manifest content includes fun or innocence, leading icons like Barbie to be frequently dismissed as a trivial child's thing. These superficial features should not be ignored. There is an element of frivolous play in infantile icons, and children, not to mention many adults, often read only the manifest content, accepting Barbie, Mickey Mouse, and Elvis as amusing distractions. Yet, there are deep or latent meanings fused into these innocent figures, and these deep meanings, which include statements about race, class, sexuality, religion, and politics, are the real stakes. Infantile icons are ultimately aimed at adults – adults who make purchasing decisions for children, who use these icons for nostalgic reminiscing, and who place boundaries on their own behavior in response to admonishments to protect the young.

The term icon derives from the Greek word for image, eikon. Both the religious and the semiotic definitions take the optical into account. In the religious sense, icons are visual representations of the divine even if they do not claim to show the deity's totality, but semiotics posits that iconicity is based on resemblance to the signified. While not necessarily visual (one could make a case for iconicity based on sounds), most semiotic icons derive from visual resemblance. Some semioticians have gone as far as to say that the resemblance posited between

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an iconic signifier and signified results in a motivated sign. According to Saussure, unlike most other signs, "the symbol [. . .] is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty for there is the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified. The symbol for justice, a pair of scales, could not be replaced by just any other symbol, such as a chariot" (68). Saussure's symbol is the equivalent of Pierce's icon. Despite the difference in vocabulary, both terms imply a natural connection between signifier and signified. This natural bond assumes that the imaginary register shows things as they are in a utopian, premediated reality. Oddly enough, what Saussure posits as natural in terms of visual symbols, he rejects as culturally variable in onomatopoetic signifiers because "not only are they limited in number, but also they are chosen somewhat arbitrarily, for they are only approximate and more or less conventional imitations of certain sounds (cf. English bow-bow and French ouaoua)" (69).

If sounds are culturally variable, it is plausible that sight similarity is also a product of learned behavior rather than natural and therefore universal similarities. This point is made by Roland Barthes in "The Photographic Message" (1977): "We saw that the code of connotation [in photographs] was in all likelihood neither 'natural' nor 'artificial' but historical, or, if it be preferred, 'cultural.' Its signs are gestures, attitudes, expressions, colours or effects, endowed with certain meanings by virtue of the practice of a certain society: the link between signifier and signified remains if not unmotivated, at least entirely historical" (27). In other words, images, including "realistic" photographs, do not provide access to a precultural, unmediated reality even if "The image is the sign that pretends not to be a sign, masquerading as (or, for the believer, actually achieving) natural immediacy and presence" (Mitchell 43). In Lacan's terminology, images occur in the imaginary register, not in the real; all images, whether they are photographs, mirror reflections or icons, are representations. However, this designation is provisional because

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icons, as we will see, also have a symbolic dimension (in Lacan's sense), which is most fully

realized in narrative.

Icons are caught up in the dialectic of the gaze. The gaze consists of the "objet a" in

vison where the scopic field is split between the eye and the gaze. The eye falls on the side of the

subject while the gaze originates from the object. Whenever a person looks at an object, the

object gazes back: "in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a

picture" (Lacan Seminar XI 106). Not coincidentally, Benjamin describes aura in related terms:

"But looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the

object of our gaze. Where this expectation is met (which, in the case of thought processes, can

apply equally to the look of the eye of the mind and to a glance pure and simple), there is an

experience of the aura to the fullest extent" (190). The auratic gaze figures the subject as a visual

object; the subject is a representation in the field of the gaze. If the subject can see, he can also

be seen; if the subject can see a spectacle, he can also be a spectacle, yet the gaze is "not a seen

gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other" (Lacan Seminar XI 84).[4] The gaze, the

fact that the object sees the subject, precludes mastering the visual field objectively because the

gaze inscribes the subject into the picture.

To illustrate the operation of the gaze, Lacan uses the example of Hans Holbein's

painting *The Ambassadors* (1533). In this work, two well-dressed men are standing at opposite

ends of a table. The table is covered with artifacts that represent the achievements in the arts and

sciences; musical instruments, a globe, books, maps, etc. litter the table. In the center foreground

of the painting, a shadowy object rises from the floor and appears to be floating or tilting,

depending on the angle of sight. When examined directly, this object mars the painting; it is an

incomprehensible stain that defies interpretation. On the other hand, when looked at from a

distance and at a side angle, the enigmatic stain emerges as the shape of a human skull. On first

perusal, the depiction appears to celebrate human achievement in the arts and sciences, but the

skull renders all of this null. Lacan states that the skull is the imaged embodiment of symbolic

castration (*Seminar XI* 89), and Žižek adds that "it is by means of this phallic spot that the

observed picture is subjectivized: this paradoxical point undermines our position as "neutral,'

'objective' observer, pinning us to the observed object itself. This is the point at which the

observer is already included, inscribed in the observed scene" (*Looking* 91).

For a human representation like Barbie, the figurine and personality first marketed by

Mattel in 1959, it is tempting to conclude that the gaze emanates from the depiction's eyes. In

many cases, it does; Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (1507)*,* for instance, features eyes that some

viewers say "follow" them as they walk from one side of the painting to the other. However,

until 1971 Barbie's eyes looked down and to the side (Lord 12). The eyes, then, are emphatically

not the source of Barbie's gaze. Of course, Barbie exists in thousands of articulations, and

doubtlessly some of these incarnations feature a gaze that emanates from the depiction's eyes.

In Andy Warhol's rendering, unveiled in 1985, Barbie's gaze does originate from her oversized,

blue eyes. Even so, in many other forms, the anatomical features that have evoked the most

commentary are Barbie's breasts. Like the skull that hovers in the center of *The Ambassadors*,

Barbie's bust attracts the attention of the doll's viewers.   Pamela Brandt comments, "We weren't

interested in any other part of the anatomy but Barbie's breasts. They were perfect. None of us

had ever seen perfect breasts. What we saw on our mothers and grandmothers ranged from flat

to sagging half-filled air bags" (53). Far from being an unidentifiable stain on the figurine's

body, the breasts are idealized images that gaze at the audience precisely because of this

perfection. The breasts are torpedoes aimed directly at the viewer. As a marker of Barbie's

gender, the breasts are the image's trait that, literally and metaphorically, "sticks out."

The gaze of iconic images must gain mass exposure and *recognition*; iconicity is a

product of public awareness. Icons, whether famous like Barbie or infamous like Jack the

Ripper, are valorized, and they cannot function if they are unknown or obscure to the majority of

the population. This need for exposure, for recognition could be considered a weakness, but in

an era of mass production and the society of the spectacle, the resources needed to place an

image before the public are readily available to any company or group with the capital necessary

for a media campaign. Even without a large amount of capital, icon peddlers can obtain a

respectable showing with desktop publishing and electronic mediums like the Internet. On the

side of the icon itself, it must be readily adaptable to a number of mediums. Generally speaking,

this is not an obstacle because most images can be rendered in any of the visual arts: painting,

photography, film, sculpture, etc.

While icons exist partially in the imaginary, they also have a symbolic dimension. Names

allow icons to function in linguistic based mediums; names function as a short hand for invoking

the icon's presence even without the visage of an image. Barbie Millicent Roberts, like many

icons, is widely known only by one name – her first name – which suggests a personal

relationship. Fans and detractors alike are on a first-name-basis with the icon, that first name is

shorthand for the image, and both the image and the name are ubiquitous. Two Barbie figurines

are sold each second somewhere on the globe, and this figure does not include the myriad spinoff

products marketed by Mattel (Dubin 19). Andy Warhol has painted Barbie in a portrait

commissioned by Mattel, and, while the company attempts to keep a tight legal hold on Barbie's

image (often by commissioning works and issuing guidelines), many artists have produced

unauthorized, and sometimes unflattering, images of the doll, illustrating that corporations do not have complete control of the discourses that circulate around their products. Cindy Sherman, for example, has taken photographs of the doll altered to be anatomically correct and sexually explicit; Maggie Robbins' work features faceless Barbies mutilated with nails, screws, and safety pins that penetrate every inch of the doll's plastic flesh, and, on the Internet, computer hacker Barbie has made her debut.

The figurine also has an existence outside of the visual arts, a narrative life. As with the optical representations, Mattel maintains an official company presence in Barbie narratives. Under an agreement with Random House, for instance, three "authorized" short story collections and eight novels were published in the 1960's. As in its efforts with the plastic arts, the company has not had total success with controlling the icon's narrative persona, and some notable, unauthorized narratives exist, including M. G. Lord's "unauthorized biography," which details Barbie's historical rise to prominence.

Whether Barbie is being critiqued or praised, it is certain that she is, if not loved, known worldwide through both images and narratives. So pervasive is her fame that shoppers often refer to products produced by Mattel's competitors as "Barbie dolls" in the same way that soft drink consumers frequently refer to "Coke" even when they are not drinking Coca-Cola. This fame is articulated, produced, and reinforced in dozens of ways through Barbie toys, commercials, periodicals, books, fan clubs, and collectors' fairs.

Barbie is the impetus for Philip K. Dick's commentary on arrested development and nostalgia in "The Days of Perky Pat" (1963), and, while the story itself does not directly refer to Barbie, the author states in notes accompanying the narrative that, "'The Days of Perky Pat' came to me in a lightening swift flash when I saw my children playing with Barbie Dolls" (377).[5]

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Barbie/Pat hangs somewhere between childhood and adulthood. As an adolescent, Dick claims, she is inappropriate for children, but the doll enables adults to behave in a childish manner and indulge in nostalgia for their own youthful days before capitalism lost its charm and sexuality became threatening. Instead of serving children as an accessible model for future development, the always young Barbie/Pat arrests adult development and even allows for mental and emotional regression. Instead of caring for their children, the adults tend to Perky Pat while the children go ignored.

"The Days of Perky Pat" details a post apocalyptic world where people live in tribal settlements but yearn for the days before the war. To stave off the bleak reality that surrounds them, married couples compete against each other in a role playing game organized around the Perky Pat doll (read Barbie) and her boyfriend Leonard (read Ken). The competition occurs both in each couple's ability to develop their Pat's "layout, " which includes her house, clothing, and other accessories for the doll, and their ability to collect capital during game play: "Money was the tender in the game; there was no other criterion by which one could tell if he had won or lost" (311). While capitalism has largely been replaced by the parentalistic charity of Martians, who regularly drop supply loads from cargo ships, the Perky Pat game allows the players to indulge in a longing for earlier times: "Playing this game . . . it's like being back there, back before the war" (307). The game's economic system looks backwards, allowing the participants to deny their present reality in favor of an obsolete social system. The story suggests capitalism is outdated, but this escapes our notice and perpetuates itself through the economic and social "games" played by the middle class.

Moreover, Pat represents a sexual conservatism that halts the maturation of the human subject. Pat's innocence is perpetual and posits a desexualized existence that the players never

allow to move beyond an adolescence suitable for a 1950's television show like <u>Leave it to</u>

<u>Beaver</u>. When Norm and Fran pit Pat against the "You know – more, um, <u>mature</u>" Connie

Companion doll used in a similar game by some other settlements, the couple wins the match and

the opposing team's Connie doll (316). By coming into contact with Connie, Norm and Fran

lose their innocence, their ability to suspend disbelief in a game that ignores the progression of

time. Upon returning home, after the away match with Connie, Norm and Fran find that their

neighbors become hostile when presented with Connie, who threatens Pat's owners' never

ending sexual naivete. Norm tells his neighbors, "It's logical. You have to follow the logic.

Why, eventually Perky Pat –," but Norm's companions refuse to trace a trajectory for Pat's

potential development. They prefer the status quo of static innocence and tell Norm and Fran

that "You don't live here anymore. You're different than you were. You – changed." (320).

The story, in which none of the settlement's children express the smallest interest in Pat or her

game, reflects Dick's belief that, "Obviously these anatomically super-developed dolls were not

intended for the use of children, or more accurately, should not have been. Barbie and Ken

consisted of two adults in miniature" (337).[6] As miniature adults, the dolls are unsuitable for

children and trivialize the concerns of adults, who should occupy their attention with the more

pressing concern of building a new society instead of fantasizing in a culture from the past.

The most famous Barbie narrative, which shares Dick's dim view of the doll in terms of

race and economics rather than sexual maturity and economics, is Sandra Cisneros' frequently

anthologized "Barbie-Q," a story about two Latina girls who cannot afford to purchase Barbie

dolls from the store. Instead, these girls obtain dolls at a sale of products that have been

damaged by smoke in a warehouse fire. The story hinges on the condensation in the title.

"Barbie-Q" refers to an outfit marketed in the early sixties for the doll, the pun on Barbie-Q and

barbecue, the smoke damaged dolls, and the girls' skin color. The narrator's roasted dolls are

slightly melted and "smell like smoke when you hold them up under your nose even after you

wash and wash and wash them" (Cisneros 16). The story criticizes the economic conditions that

force the girls to buy damaged Barbies, but it also sarcastically suggests that the damaged Barbies

are somehow more appropriate for the Latina girls because both the dolls and their owners are

"farther" than whites from the Caucasian ideals of skin color and economic class presented by

Barbie in an unmelted state. Like their dolls, the girls are smoky Latinas, not lily white, and like

the girls' attempt to remove the smoke from the dolls, they attempt to live up to an impossible

white standard of beauty, which implies that they, as Latinas, are "smoke damaged."

The multitude of responses produced by the doll in texts like "The Days of Perky Pat"

and "Barbie-Q" reveals that icons like Barbie are overdetermined. They have multiple causes,

effects, and meanings, allowing for a range of identifications, some of which are paradoxical or

contradictory. Icons are knots of signifiers condensed into one, specular image. They are a

powerful intersection between the collective and the personal, permitting the subject to

experience mass communications on the level of personal interaction. Icons transmute the socio-

political into the personal. In Lacan's paradigm, an icon is a point de capiton, which is literally

translated as "quilting point." A quilting point is a signifier that temporarily appears to halt the

otherwise infinite flow of the signifying chain. Lacan states, "Everything radiates out from and is

organized around this signifier, similar to these little lines of force that an upholstery button

forms on the surface of material. It's the point of convergence that enables everything that

happens in this discourse to be situated retroactively and retrospectively" (Seminar III 267).

Icons are quilting points that send out multiple lines of force where each line allows for a

different mode of identification. However, these possibilities all trace back to the common

quilting point. In the specular field, the quilting point is the point of the gaze, the place where the object looks back at the viewing subject, but in narrative, this quilting point is often the icon's name.

As is by now apparent, Barbie is extremely versatile. Borrowing a phrase from Barthes, she is a "writerly text," a writerly body; the consumer becomes the producer of varied situations and narratives involving the doll (S/Z 4). The marketing of dozens of career oriented accessories allows the Barbie consumer to identify with her in a number of professional guises. Mattel has marketed career Barbie as stewardess, pilot, teacher, ballerina, fashion designer, police officer, astronaut, physician, and archeologist. Historical Barbies are outfitted for life in a number of settings, including everything from the medieval royalty to the flappers of the 1920's. The figurine has even been packaged as a Grecian goddess and Lady Liberty complete with tiara and uplifted torch. Barbie can also accommodate nearly every class position; in one incarnation she is a McDonald's fry cook, in another she is an aristocratic princess, and in another she is "Greaser" Barbie, based on the film Grease (1978). Barbie changes with the culture; Mattel routinely updates the icon's accessories and features and sometimes models these details on prominent personalities. Lord notes that in 1962 Barbie was packaged in a copy of Jackie Kennedy's inauguration dress and a matching hair style (61). The company has also recognized the need for at least a superficial stab at racial diversity; in 1980 Hispanic and black Barbie made their debuts.[7] The doll captures the interest of everyone from small children to wealthy collectors who do not mind spending hundreds, even thousands, of dollars for vintage figurines or limited edition runs. Barbie is adept at morphing into hundreds of forms.

Icons like Barbie, however widespread their fame, are nonetheless culturally variable, a product of their time and place. Icons do not spring spontaneously into existence with no history,

influences, or precursors. For instance, the figure of Brother Jonathan, who has now faded into historical obscurity, once occupied Uncle Sam's place as the personification of the American state. Mattel founders Ruth and Elliot Handler created Barbie by toning down an erotic doll from Germany called Bild Lilli, basing much of her anatomy on the German doll. It is also true that Barbie, at least in her original incarnation, is decisively Euro-American. Barbie's skin color and hair have undergone countless modifications, but the paradigm remains the Caucasian with blonde hair. While Mattel softens Lilli's Teutonic features by rounding her face, it is clear that Barbie's visage is European derived.

However, there are significant divergences between the American Barbie and the German Lilli. Mattel sanitizes the German doll, transforming an adult sex toy into an ostensibly wholesome, but still sexualized, play thing. Lilli exists solely in the realm of illicit sexual adventures, and in fact, the connection Lilli demonstrates between sex and economics in the original German ads suggest that she is a prostitute. In contrast, Barbie appears in a wide array of contexts, including domestic duties, community service, and professional activities. If Lilli is the stereotypical "bad girl," then Barbie is marketed as the American "girl next door" (who just happens to drive a pink sports car). Even so, the specular similarities between Lilli and Barbie haunt the good girl's image. Mattel markets Barbie as a toy for girls, but the doll is unquestionably sexualized, and the figurine's sexuality has not escaped the notice of the children who are supposedly the target audience or the attention of numerous writers who incorporate Barbie images into their work. A. M. Homes' "Real Doll" (1990) tells the story of a boy who steals his sister's Barbie and creates a fantasy world in which he is dating and having sex with her: "I'm dating Barbie. Three afternoons a week, while my sister is at dance class, I take Barbie away from Ken. I'm practicing for the future" (2).

Barbie is a contested site, a locus, and a quilting point that structures a field of debates on consumerism, legality, morality, gender, race, and sexuality. As hard as Mattel struggles to maintain their product's polished innocence while keeping her nebulous identity, unauthorized versions often peel back the veneer and draw attention to aspects of Barbie's existence that Mattel finds unsavory. At times this entails reverting back to the explicit sexuality of Bild Lilli as in the dominatrix Barbies sold on the Internet or Homes' short story. At others, Barbie is appropriated as a transvestite or a lesbian. As several writers have noted, Barbie more resembles the hipless silhouette of a transvestite than a woman. Carol Ockman states, "this body, with its broad shoulders and wasplike waist, more transvestite than woman, has the effect of making those bodies that don't resemble it seem abnormal" (76). Lord notes that many transvestites cite Barbie as an influence and states, "Barbie has, in fact, a drag queen's body: broad shoulders and narrow hips, which are quintessentially male, and exaggerated breasts, which aren't" (14). Completing this portrait of transvestitism, Marjorie Garber reports that a Ken doll "attired in a pink tutu with lace flounces, a handbag slung over his shoulder" found its way onto store shelves in 1990 (2). When a teenager was recently suspended from a New York school for wearing a "Barbie is a Lesbian" shirt, a law suit initiated by the girl's mother resulted in a $30,000 settlement from the city for wrongful suspension. What is at stake in these battles is the need of various groups to appropriate a defined subjectivity for the fictional character. It is a fight over who has the right to identify with Barbie's image and who does not. It is a fight over whether that image, once defined in the symbolic register, is a healthy or harmful imago.

For some, Barbie is an ideal ego, an image that they identify with and appropriate as a scheme of self development. Barbara Kingsolver's Pigs in Heaven (1993) demonstrates, if not the fact, then at least the belief, that Barbie functions as a imago for some subjects, and the novel

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takes a dim view of the influence that Barbie exerts over her more dedicated fans. The novel

includes a character so enamored with Barbie that she legally changes her name to "Barbie TM, "

wears Barbie inspired clothing pieced together from scavenging trips at thrift shops, and prides

herself on the aspects of her life that mirror Barbie's: "I was born in 1959, exactly the same year

that the first Barbie was developed and marketed by Mattel. Don't you think that's like too

coincidental? The woman that invented her named the doll after her own daughter, and guess

what. My name at birth was Barbara" (139-40). In Kingsolver's narrative, which explores

adoption issues and celebrates Native American identity, Barbie functions as a foil to the less

polished but more caring characters around her because it turns out that this Barbie is a money

counterfeiter and, like her plastic namesake, a counterfeit person. When "Barbie's surface

cracks," she leaves Taylor and her daughter but only after she steals all of their money, stranding

them (204).

There is evidence to suggest that identification with Barbie as strong as that posited by

Kingsolver does occur. Cindy Jackson, who views Barbie's influence as a positive force, is a

regular on tabloid talk shows and has had over twenty plastic surgeries in an effort to mold her

body into the shape of Barbie. While Jackson may be an extreme case, anti-Barbie

commentators argue that the body image the figurine communicates is damaging because no

human could ever attain the doll's ultra sleek figure, torpedo boobs, and ageless face. The doll

stands approximately eleven and a half inches, but when considered in adult human proportions,

her anatomy is unlikely and probably impossible; she measures "40-18-32 in life-size terms"

(Quindlen 119). One study concluded that Barbie's waist measures sixteen inches while a

sampling of anorexics showed an average waistline of twenty-six inches, and a random selection

of female college students had an average waist measurement of 27 and a half inches (Norton et

al 291).[8]   Critics also point out the materialistic consumerism that Barbie demonstrates with her ever growing need for more clothes and accessories; Barbie likes to shop, which is no surprise since Barbie herself is a commodity. Mattel has a vested interest in encouraging a desire for obtaining more products, and this desire is built into the doll's official, corporate personality.

Conversely, defenders of the doll point out that Barbie exists outside of many traditional gender roles, which provides a positive behavior model for women. Barbie has never been a mother.[9] Even though Ken has been Barbie's perpetual boyfriend since 1961 and even though she has been presented as wedding Barbie more than once, Barbie lives an independent existence, free of children and house wife duties. The wedding ensemble is merely another passing flash in the figurine's whirlwind of activities rather than a permanent union, and the doll's proponents draw attention to the fact that Ken is the second sex in the Barbie/Ken coupling; the Barbie cars and houses are Barbie's, not Ken's, not Barbie and Ken's.

Taking a side in the Barbie wars by arguing for a fixed view of the doll misses the point. Barbie provides what Žižek terms "fantasy space," which "functions as an empty surface, as a kind of screen for the projection of desires" (Looking 8).[10] Fantasy space functions as invitation to the audience to project their own desires onto an existing structure.   Icons like Barbie as well as Jaws, Dracula, and Moby Dick can operate as fantasy spaces through the images' less realized aspects. Icons that are foreign, shrouded in mystery, metamorphic, or inscrutable are more likely to allow for some fantasy space projection. Interpretations gather around these icons like bugs around a porch light; they simultaneously resist and invite interpretation. The significance of Barbie discourse is that the figurine is overdetermined and capable of simultaneously sustaining all of the multiple, even contradictory, views that circulate around her.

Barbie represents a crisis of interpretation; she denies definitive closure, which paradoxically invites interpretation. The meanings invested in the image are fluid, but this slide of signification is structured and circulates around the symbolic designation of "Barbie," the drive to consume more Barbie goods and accessories, and an impossible and eternally youthful body. In all the varied articulations of Barbie, she is an ideal. The doll can be the perfect heterosexual female, independent career woman, lesbian, consumer, transvestite, and the list goes on. Even for those that take a dim view of the character, she is the ideal scapegoat, the image of everything that the subject should repudiate as "not me."

All of this seems like a heavy load for the shoulders of a trivial, plastic doll, a child's toy. But whatever kitsch banality Barbie possesses is shadowed by the deep play of social, economic, sexual, and political debates surrounding her.[11] Barbie is big business. Millions of consumer dollars are at stake, and Mattel fights, not always successfully, to retain control over the doll's image and personality. This economic and legal struggle becomes infused with the morality of sex and citizenship. In recent lawsuits with MCA records and a woman who sold customized dominatrix Barbies, Mattel argues that the toy company has an interest in keeping others from besmirching Barbie's good girl image because they have a duty to protect their young, female consumers from confusion and exposure to adult themes. In making this argument, Mattel appeals to what Lauren Berlant has termed "infantile citizenship": "homophobic conservatives and radical feminists have intensified the image of the ideal citizen as an innocent young girl or the young girl's parent, in contrast to the disgusting 'adult' culture that fouls the nest of its own national privilege" (22).[12] Berlant uses her analysis of the iconic fetus, which came into existence with the advent of the sonogram and the subsequent display of these images in the mass media, to illustrate that national politics has been influenced by an appeal to innocence,

which has resulted in a trend towards infantile citizenship.[13] The presentation of the iconic fetus blocks off the limits of the fantasy space, allowing fantasy to take place only insofar as it does not transgress the limits provided by the presentation.

The fetal fantasy space hinges on the fetus' scale, anonymity, and the specter of the future. The fetus is both tiny and larger than life. The technology which allows photography to invade the mother's body and present the fetus disconnected from the maternal body produces a new kind of sublime and celebrates the miniature in the same way that Kenneth Burke says, "Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime" (114). Simultaneously, photographic technology is also capable of granting the fetus gargantuan measurements on billboards and movie screens. These two modes of representation – tiny and huge – construct a scene in which the fetus is defenseless as it also observes society as do the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, watching over the valley of ashes in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby (1925). Furthermore, these surveying eyes could be anybody – the next Einstein, the person who will find a cure for cancer or AIDS, the next John F. Kennedy, the person who will bring about world peace, or simply "my baby." These and similar projections are shaped by the image, and to project a prospective identity or role onto the fetus is to identify that office as fetal. That is, the identification of the fetus as possibly "the next . . ." or as "the one who will . . ." is to utilize the fantasy space while accepting the frame of the fantasy, which structurally situates identification as beginning and ending with the fetus in a never ending slide of signification that always defers the fetal fantasy into the future.

The threatened fetus is presented as "all fetuses – from the point of view of its standing in the sacred and juridical law" (Berlant 117). Anonymity gives the appearance of universality, but it also directs each viewer to project an identity onto the fetus. The identity becomes the shape of

the future, for the fetus is here the subject that has not yet had a chance at subjectivity, an innocent and perfect creature who must be protected. As Berlant observes, "the iconic fetus marketed by pro-life activists [is] something paradoxically ahistorical (human nature itself) and profoundly historical (its fate has been said to be the nation's fate)" (87). The viewer projects an identity and future onto the fetus, but since the fetus is defenseless it becomes the adult viewer's responsibility to provide conditions that make the fetus' future realizable through legislation, activism, etc. In this way, adults are motivated into political and nationalist action and identification through the projection of a future onto the fetal image.

The same logic found in appeals to the fetus can also be found in iconic comic book and cartoon characters, which in present day America are ostensibly marketed as appropriate for children, as infantile icons. One can see, for instance, this infantile censoring concept at work in Fredric Wertham's famous anti comic book monograph, Seduction of the Innocent (1953).[14] Encouraging the censorship of comics for the moral protection of American youths, Wertham writes, "Only someone ignorant of the fundamentals of psychiatry and psychopathology of sex can fail to realize a subtle atmosphere of homoeroticism which pervades the adventure of the mature 'Batman' and his young friend 'Robin'" (189-190). Supposedly, children need to be protected from this encounter with the homoerotic, and Wertham's arguments rippled the comic book waters well into the 1980's when Frank Miller wrote Robin into Batman: The Dark Knight Returns (1986) as a girl as if to rewrite past versions and lay to rest questions regarding Batman's heterosexuality. Infantile citizenship such as that demonstrated in Wertham's argument against Batman is a mode of discourse that appeals to the future through images of young children and fetuses. To insure a fruitful and peaceful future, the argument states, we must protect the young from "adult" materials, and this often entails curtailing adult activities and expressions. Berlant

states, "This national icon [of the American child and fetus] is still innocent of knowledge, agency, and accountability and thus has ethical claims on the adult political agents who write laws, make culture, administer resources, control things" (6). The logic of infantile citizenship results in a social sphere that censors and disciplines adults by appealing to the interests of the young to promote moral, sexual, political, and economic agendas.

One of the most striking examples illuminated by Berlant's theory is Mickey Mouse, who is commonly thought of as child's fare that no serious adult or scholar would contemplate for long. Indeed, Merriam-Webster defines Mickey Mouse as "being or performing insipid or popular music," as "lacking importance," and as "annoyingly petty." Yet, as the rise of Disney Studies in recent years at institutions like Duke University suggest, Mickey holds as much, if not more, fascination for adults. In a campaign that is finally aimed at adults, Mickey has become both behaviorally more mature and younger in appearance. Changes in the mouse from his first appearance in 1928 appeal to both adult impulses to care for infantile creatures and the hunger for nostalgia that allows adults to remember, live, and relive their own childish experiences, not as these events actually occurred, but as adults would like to remember them.

Mickey's 1928 debut in "Steamboat Willy" shows him to be an impudent trickster figure, who physically abuses animals to produce music. Since then, Mickey has become younger, more sedate, and more innocuous. In "Orphan's Benefit" (1941), Mickey hosts a benefit show for orphan mice instead of abusing animals. Here, the mouse is kind and patient, and when Donald Duck becomes exasperated with the orphan mice, Mickey says, "Donald, behave yourself." In 1928, Mickey is misbehaving, but by 1941, Mickey is something of an authority figure and behavioral model for his fellow Disney characters. Shenanigans still occur, but they have been

displaced onto other characters while Mickey stands in as the model of good behavior even if he is capable of the occasional clumsy mistake.

Mickey's increasing courtesy is accompanied by specular alterations that reflect his psychological metamorphosis. Mickey is composed of circles; his body, head, and ears are circles. Elizabeth Lawrence notes that circles are safer than sharp edges and angles; circles are soft shapes and represent totality as in a pie chart (68). Mickey has never resembled the rodents for which people set mouse traps. Stephen J. Gould observes, "As Mickey became increasingly well behaved over the years, his appearance became more youthful. Measurements of three stages in his development revealed a larger head size, larger eyes, and an enlarged cranium – all traits of juvenility" (96). Lawrence adds, "Mickey Mouse ears have, indeed, taken on a wider symbolic meaning – standing now even for the process of becoming juvenile" (69). This is not just any youth; rather, Disney's mouse is the common sense model of a well-behaved child, the all American mouse. As instructions the Disney Company issues to animators puts it, "Mickey seems to be the average young boy of no particular age; living in a small town, clean living, fun loving, bashful around girls, polite and clever as he must be for the particular story" (Finch 150).

The devolution noted by Gould and Lawrence is counterintuitive because the progression of time is linked with becoming older, not younger. Like Gould, Lawrence follows Konrad Lorenz's neoteny theory, which holds that adults retain some physical and behavioral markers of childhood, which elicit care giving impulses (67). The purpose of making Mickey younger in appearance and more mature in action, then, is to call "forth an adult nurturing response to such a 'lovable' object, moving people to feelings of tenderness" (Lawrence 68).

The changes Disney engineered in their star character are aimed, not at children, but at adults. In 1934, only six years after Mickey's initial appearance, Walt Disney lamented, "He's

such an institution that we're limited in what we can do with him. If we have Mickey kicking

someone in the pants, we get a million letters from mothers scolding us for giving their kids the

wrong idea" (Finch 137). The mouse's alleged ability to shape children's behavior, whether real

or imagined, surfaces here. This ability ostensibly appeals to parents and others who play a role

in selecting and purchasing the products and texts children encounter. By making the mouse

younger in appearance, Mickey's creators may invite an increasingly younger audience to identify

with him as a peer; by toning down his actions, Mickey's creators may make him acceptable

children's fare in the eyes of many adults. Combining a youthful mien with socially acceptable

behavior, Disney effectively censors the mouse's antics, keeping the character in line with a

cultural stereotype that sees animated films as the province of children who need to be sheltered

from adult and "socially deviant" behaviors. Yet, as he progressively became an icon of youthful

appearance and behavior, Mickey's deep play appeal (in Geertz's sense) was to adults.

While it is undeniable that Mickey is popular with children, Lawrence reveals that (at

least in 1986) "Appreciation of Mickey's realm of the Magic Kingdom is not limited to the

young, however, for more adults attend, by a ratio of 4 to 1" (66). Disney himself said, "You're

dead if you aim only for kids. Adults are only grown up kids anyway," and "You can't live on

things made for children–or for critics. I've never made films for either of them. Disneyland is

not just for children. I don't play down" (Disney 136 and 127).

Robert Brockway writes, "In essence, the Mickey Mouse Generation is the Depression

Generation. Mickey has some impact on younger people but far less than upon those during the

inter-war years" (33). Mickey's popularity during the Great Depression allows people to

reminisce about the "old days" without stumbling over the memories of soup lines, migrant

farmers, and the other trials depicted in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath (1940) because

the mouse steered clear of such weighty topics. According to Mary Bancroft, "The 30's were Mickey's Golden Age. During the Great Depression everyone was delighted to laugh at the antics of a little mouse, playing everything from a fireman to a giant killer, a cowboy, an inventor, a ghost hunter, a detective, and a plumber" (117). Brockway may understate Mickey's post-depression influence, but he and Bancroft are right to point us to the 1930's. Mickey rose to iconhood during the Great Depression when approximately twenty-five percent of the American workforce was jobless (McElvaine 75). The first licensing for a secondary Mickey Mouse product occurred in 1929 (Wasko 10). By 1932, the Mickey Mouse club had enrolled on million members internationally, and by 1936, Walt Disney had licensed seventy products ranging from clothes to comic books and toys (Wasko 11, 13). This success is all the more noteworthy because it came at a time of great economic hardship for the nation. In a decade plagued by bank closings, company failures, strikes, unemployment, and other social ills, Mickey profited.

Walt Disney had his own theory concerning the popularity of his first and most popular character: "All we ever intended for him or expected of him was that he should continue to make people everywhere chuckle with him and at him. We didn't burden him with any social symbolism, we made him no mouthpiece for frustrations or harsh satire. Mickey was simply a little personality assigned to the purpose of laughter" (Disney 38). Sullivan's Travels (1942), directed by Preston Sturges and starring Joel McCrea and Veronica Lake, expands upon Disney's reflections. In this film, John L. Sullivan (McCrea), a Hollywood director who is weary of making comedies and wishes to make socially meaningful films that investigate the trials and tribulations of the common man, which implies that comedy is not socially useful. Informed by his studio that he knows little about poverty and trouble, Sullivan leaves his mansion and cars, setting out with a single dime in his pocket to ride the rails and experience the homeless life.

Thanks to a case of mistaken identity, Sullivan is put in jail for murdering himself and experiences a visceral Mickey Mouse epiphany when he and the other prisoners go to a church to watch a cartoon. The film screen covers the altar and replaces the preacher with the black and white antics of Mickey Mouse and his dog, Pluto. Sullivan watches the (black) congregation and the other (mostly white) prisoners laughing as mouse and dog flicker across the screen. At first befuddled by this reaction, Sullivan eventually experiences the emotional release provided by comedy and laughs harder than the rest of the audience. Abandoning his idea of making serious films, he returns to Hollywood to direct more comedies.

The lesson provided to Sullivan by Mickey Mouse is that people who live in economic hardship and other troubles do not go to the movies to view their own tribulations on the screen. These "common people" seek a distraction from their hardships, not a reminder of them. Mickey provides that escape, allowing viewers to forget, for a few moments, the late rent, a lost job, or even incarceration. The film also points to the uniting powers of Mickey Mouse and comedy. The cartoon unifies a black church audience and a group of predominantly white prisoners through laughing. Innocent comedy, the film claims, connects people of different races and social classes, and it is no coincidence that this all occurs in the church of Mickey Mouse, where mouse and dog replace pulpit and preacher. Mickey replaces religion, which frequently claims to provide the common goal of a search for salvation, but has just as often produced strife, war, class divisions, and racism. Here, a silly mouse succeeds where religion has often failed.

Sullivan's Travels argues that Walt Disney is wrong to declare Mickey free of social symbolism, but the film does claim that meanings inscribed upon the mouse are positive. The notion that people should forget their troubles instead of working towards some kind of personal or social solution is an ideological statement. No one can maintain psychological health without

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some sort of stress relief, but when taken too far the impulse for escape from the mundane becomes perilous. Mickey seemingly heals Sullivan's alienation from his audience, but after watching the film with the same sorts of people who watch his own films, he also learns he does not need to be concerned about the plight of lower classes. He does not need to live the life of a tramp or relinquish his mansion, servants, and cars. Sullivan can go on enjoying the perks of a Hollywood director, knowing that he is helping the world laugh. Mickey Mouse, as the savior the film wants him to be, washes away Sullivan's concern and guilt.

Yet, the mouse's ability to break down demarcations is also his weakness. Some boundaries need to be recognized as the first step in rectifying them, but instead of correction, the distinction between a black church audience, a group of prisoners, and a Hollywood mogul have been effaced in Sullivan's conscience, but not in social reality. Sullivan should be cognizant of social problems; he himself was wrongfully imprisoned, but the prisoners go back to the chain gang and Sullivan goes back to his mansion, believing that all is right in the world as long as people can laugh.[15]

Despite an appearance of youthful innocence and fun, Mickey is steeped in ideologies involving comedy, politics, business, and youth. Mickey's evolution is bound up with Disney's business interests; Disney uses Mickey to produce profit. In fact, the mouse has become the animated CEO of the corporation; John Murray remarks, "[. . .] when Disneyland opened in 1955, Mickey was chosen as the official host – a position he still enjoys today. Indeed, whenever Disney Enterprises undertakes a new project, such as a new satellite Disney Channel, Mickey Mouse is always on hand to oversee the operation" (33). Mickey is a capitalistic venture, and Disney fights as hard as Mattel to protect its characters. Danny O'Neill, a cartoonist sued by

Disney for copyright infringement in 1979, comments, "They're so big they don't even know what they are doing. They've sued everything that looks like a mouse" (Levin 216).

As we have seen, Mickey's youth is marketed to prescribe proper behavior for the American child while also appealing to adults' care giving impulses. Both of these strategies invite critics to examine Disney's claims about good, clean fun. Henry A. Giroux, for instance, asks, "Are Disney Movies Good for Your Kids?" as he outlines the ways in which cartoons from the Disney Corporation smooth over history while offering gender and racial stereotypes to the audience. From the vantage point of 1997, Giroux argues, "Disney no longer simply provides the fantasies through which childhood innocence and adventure are produced, experienced, and affirmed. Disney now produces prototypes for model schools, families, identities, communities, and the way the future is to be understood through a particular construction of the past" (55). Even as Giroux recognizes that the past is constructed, he constructs his own past by conjuring an earlier time when Disney did produce only innocent fun that was unburdened by ideology.

As Giroux's wishful thinking about Mickey's past indicates, once appeals from infantile icons like Mickey have successfully hailed an audience, they ex post facto rewrite history, and Berlant rightly draws attention to the retroactive nature of iconic images as quilting points. For her, coming into contact with an icon initiates a process where the subject's memories and experiences are reinterpreted through the lens of the meanings invested in an iconic articulation:

> The national culture industry is also in the business of generating paramnesias, images that organize consciousness, not by way of explicit propaganda, but by replacing and simplifying memories people actually have with image traces of political experience about which people can have political feelings that link them to other citizens and patriotism. This process veils, without simply suppressing knowledge of, the means by which the nation's hegemonic contradictions and contingencies are constructed, consented to, displaced, and replaced by images of normal culture that "the people" are said already to accept (57).

Lord's analysis of Erica Rand's Barbie discourse confirms Berlant's argument: "Rand's talk was an exercise in the 'Barbie Strategy' – advancing one's political agenda by lashing it to Barbie" (303). This is not to say that Rand's agenda – gaining increased visibility and political agency for gays and lesbians – is without merit, but it is noteworthy that Rand chooses Barbie as the vehicle for articulating her views.

To successfully and completely appropriate Barbie as a sign of nonheterosexual identity would mean that identification with Barbie would be retroactively figured; identification with Barbie would then indicate a point of identification as nonheterosexual. It would mean that heterosexual consumers would suddenly find that they had been identifying with a "queer image," or as Berlant phrases it, Rand seeks to make "queer good by making goods queer" (162). Rand herself expresses doubt about the realization of this utopian project, pointing out that "subversive" images of Barbie often end up perpetuating stereotypes of "subversives": "General readability is purchased at a cost. Many people, dyke and otherwise, can recognize [the non-Mattel authorized] Totally Out Barbie as signaling dyke, but most dykes simply don't look like her; using the most readable images perpetuates the invisibility of those who don't conform to them" (171). Even so, the desire to read Barbie as something other than a straight female testifies to the figurine's cultural importance. Not only do Rand and the artists who depict Barbie as a lesbian want to unsettle Mattel's version, but their fascination with the character implies that some subjects look to Barbie to articulate, authorize, and legitimate their sexuality. Simultaneously, by making Barbie the object-cause of her discourse, Rand does benefit from Barbie's fame just as Bill Clinton's invocation of the Elvis Presley icon, according to Greil Marcus, won him the presidency.

In 1992 George Bush accused Clinton, his opponent for the United States presidency, of

endorsing "Elvis economics," an economics that ends with the nation "checking into the

'Heartbreak Hotel'" (Marcus <u>Double</u> 50). In response, Clinton plays "Heartbreak Hotel," an

Elvis song, on <u>The Arsenio Hall Show</u>, a nationally televised talk show. At first glance, playing

a saxophone on national television may seem like a frivolous thing for a presidential candidate,

but it is, in fact, a shrewd political reply to a hostile opponent. Marcus states, "slap Elvis on

anything and you'll be noticed. Elvis in a campaign speech is a guaranteed sound bite on that

night's news, maybe even a headline in the next day's papers" (<u>Double</u> 51). Clinton not only

turns an accusation into a positive quality at the point when he is lowest in the polls, but he also

exploits Elvis' iconic status by displacing national politics and public economics onto the icon.

It is tempting to conclude, as Marcus does, that the Elvis connection won the election for

Clinton, but that seems extreme. Even so, Clinton's standing did rise after his appearance on <u>The</u>

<u>Arsenio Hall Show</u>.

    Clinton associates himself with Elvis, but it is up to the audience to determine exactly

what Elvis represents in their individual myth. McKenzie Wark explains,

> The image refuses to go away – and how could it? Elvis was once the second
> most produced image in the world, next to Mickey Mouse. Yet compared to
> Mickey, Elvis is much less pure, much more of a pastiche, a collage of bits and
> pieces, all of which can be pulled out and recombined with other bits and pieces in
> a great open-ended combinatory of style. Bits of him keep cropping up
> everywhere [. . .]. The flesh of old images never dies, it just gets carved up,
> redigested and sacrificed afresh. (24-5)[16]

There are multiple, positive – and negative – representations of Elvis in music, art, film, and

literature. Kinky Friedman, in his novel <u>Elvis, Jesus, and Coca-Cola</u> (1993), says of a

documentary on Elvis impersonators that

> There were Elvises beyond the imagination. Negro Elvises, dwarf Elvises, female
> Elvises, Norwegian Elvises. There were young fat Elvises, skinny old Elvises, in-

between Elvises. There were Elvises that in no physical way remotely resembled Elvis, yet in some uncanny afterimage, looked like Elvis. There were Elvises with no voice, no rhythm, and no talent except the ability to make you think, if you put your hand over your face and slowly looked between your fingers, you were seeing Elvis. (143)

Friedman may be exaggerating a little, but not much. According to Gilbert Rodman, there are approximately 3,000 Elvis impersonators in the United States alone (6). Elvis has accumulated more cultural associations than there are musicians in the U.S. These meanings were already proliferating before Elvis died in 1977 to the point that Elvis the man became deeply alienated from Elvis the icon. He told Larry Geller that "I will never know if a woman loves me or 'Elvis Presley'" (Mason 163). Rodman observes that the Elvis phenomenon is already too big (and growing too fast) to be described in its entirety, much less analyzed and explained exhaustively" (29). Elvis is commonly associated with discourses on music, sex, marriage, race, the military, religion, Hollywood, drugs, national politics, regional politics (north versus south), conspiracy theories, extraterrestrial life, law enforcement, education, economics, and class. Elvis and Elvis impersonators crop up in all sorts of fiction genres, including mystery, science fiction, horror, comedy, and mainstream.

The King of Rock and Roll entertained fantasies of being involved with law enforcement, which culminated in successfully petitioning President Nixon to grant him a Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) badge. Egil Krogh, "the White House aide who prepared for and participated in the meeting," has published his account of the meeting in The Day Elvis Met Nixon (1994) (5), and Jonathan Lowy explores the meeting in his novel Elvis and Nixon (2001). After (the historical) Elvis received the badge, he sometimes engaged in law-enforcement-like activities. Mason reports, "Several years after he got his badge, he was passing by a gas station when he saw two men assaulting a station attendant. Elvis stopped, bounded out of his limo, and

broke up the fight with some karate moves. The participants were so amazed to see Elvis Presley that they stopped fighting, and Elvis posed for pictures with them" (150). Doubtlessly, the notion that Elvis could have been involved with crime on both the perpetrator and enforcing sides springs from these biographical details. Crime and mystery texts like Friedman's <u>Elvis, Jesus, and Coca-Cola</u>, Anne George's <u>Murder Boogies with Elvis</u> (2001), and <u>3,000 Miles to Graceland</u> (2001), directed by Demian Lichtenstein starring Kevin Costner and Kurt Russell, feature Elvis impersonators.

But it is with Daniel Klein's mystery novels that Elvis' crime-related fantasies are fully realized, spotlighting Elvis himself as a private investigator. Klein's titles, including <u>Kill Me Tender</u> (2000), <u>Blue Suede Clues</u> (2002), <u>Viva Las Vengeance</u> (2003), and <u>Such Vicious Minds</u> (2004)*,* play off items and song titles associated with Elvis.[17]   These novels attribute many of Presley's quirks to his sleuthing activities; Elvis skips recording and filming sessions, disappearing for days at a time because he is tracking down leads for the case, and in the process of solving these crimes, Elvis demonstrates his anti-racism, his impressive cognitive abilities, and his love for his fellow man. In <u>Kill Me Tender</u>*,* Elvis befriends Billy Jackson, a black doctor, in the process of tracking down a serial killer who targets female members of Elvis fan clubs. With detective skills rivaling Poe's C. Auguste Dupin and Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, Elvis solves the case when the police do not even believe the girls are being murdered. In this novel, Presley shows his compassion by taking the time to correspond with teenage fans and attend the funerals of dead fan club members. When one of Elvis' employees protests that Elvis doesn't have time for these activities, Elvis says, "This here is protocol – I sign condolence notes myself" (2).

William F. Buckley Jr.'s novel <u>Elvis in the Morning</u> (2001) turns Elvis from street level law enforcement to theoretical politics by harnessing an anti-socialist agenda to him. Imagining a fictional friend named Orson Killere for Elvis, Buckley trivializes socialist thought by making Orson's first socialist action the theft of Elvis records from the PX on an army base in Germany. He swipes these records because he "wanted to give them to people who don't have them" (40). The publicity ensuing from Orson's sentence to thirty days sans Elvis earns him his first introduction to the singer, who is serving out his conscription in Germany. Years later, Orson muses, "It was Elvis, he was convinced, who had sown the seeds of Orson's political vision. It had taken a year or two, and Mr. Simon [the teacher who introduced Orson to socialist thought] was the catalyst, but Elvis had freed up Orson's mind that night in Camden. Elvis was his epiphany" (107). In this novel, Elvis, with a push from a European teacher, inspires a young boy with socialist tendencies, which later get Orson kicked out of college for juvenile antics not all that different from his misadventure with the Elvis records at the PX. Luckily, a political conservative rescues Orson from his childish socialism; Orson marries a Barry Goldwater supporter, who helps him mature. In the meantime, Buckley, while not completely vilifying Elvis – Orson's wife likes him as well – dwells on the singer's adult interest in the adolescent Priscilla, his economic excesses, his involvement with drugs, and his sexual adventures. The novel uses humor to dismiss socialism while also arguing that Elvis paved the way for much of the counterculture in the turbulent 1960's. Given Buckley's conservative politics and the tone of the novel, the author presumably does not see this as a positive development.

<u>Elvis and Nixon</u> sarcastically explores some of Elvis' religious ideas about himself and links them to national politics. Elvis tells a group of hippies that "Jesus got no monopoly on the word a' God. He's not the only Master 'fore or since; he knew it and so did the Lord. Look at

the Buddha. Madame Blavatsky. The President hisself! And, motherfuckers, look in front of

you" (Lowy 211). In Lowy's novel, Elvis sees his meeting with Nixon as one spiritual "Master"

seeking to confer with another about the threat to America from communists, hippies, war

protestors, drug addicts, and the Beatles: "The parallels were clear to him [Elvis]: Elvis/America;

under siege, at war. Used to be number one but no more. They were fat and old and tired but it

wasn't their fault. And there was the Beatles, enemies in lockstep coming toward him, like pied

pipers. Many levels here. A complex situation. Demanded some delicacy, undercover ops and a

frontal assault and public relations all at once" (215).

Elvis was raised as a Pentecostal and recorded some Christian hymns, including his

Grammy winning How Great Thou Art (1967). In 1964, he had begun some serious religious

inquires. Under the guidance of Larry Geller, Elvis began looking into various religious

practices outside of Christianity, including yoga, numerology, Islam, meditation, and the I Ching

(Mason 118). Later, in 1972, Elvis confessed to Geller that he saw himself "as Jesus; inside he

was Elvis Christ. He didn't believe he was the reincarnation, but a version of him, another Christ

with a special purpose on earth" (Mason 128). Others, some in jest and some in earnest, have

taken up Elvis' claims to messiah status. Several chapels in Las Vegas, Nevada perform Elvis

themed weddings, allowing couples to have their unions blessed by an Elvis impersonator.[18]

Portland, Oregon counts the "Twenty Four-Hour Coin Operated Church of Elvis," designed and

administered by Stephanie Pierce, among its tourist attractions.

Several writers have taken Elvis as (false) messiah into the speculative future, following

these tendencies to their logical conclusion. Jack Womack's Elvissey (1993), Allen Steele's

Clarke County, Space (1990), and Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash (1992) feature religions in

which Elvis is a deity. In Snow Crash, the Christian trinity of father, son, and holy ghost has

been replaced by "Jesus, Elvis, and Reverend Wayne" (183). Steele goes further and imagines a "Church of Elvis" founded by Oliver Sperber who undergoes plastic surgery to reshape himself into the image of The King: "He was the closest physical duplicate to the King of Rock and Roll which twenty-first century cosmetic surgery could produce" (104). However, "Elvis'" followers do not believe that he is an impersonator; they believe that he is the "living Elvis," Presley's reincarnation. A church member explains the Manichean religion as, "a balance between his [Elvis'] Dark and Good selves, and he needs us – all of us – to win his constant inner battle against temptation, for when he wins, we all win against the forces of evil . . ." (125). It is this perpetual balancing act between good and evil that gives the worshipers a purpose; they are not passive observers of Elvis' greatness, but necessary aides in a spiritual battle.[19]

While the worshipers in Clarke County, Space have found their messiah in the con man who renames himself Elvis Parker and who defrauds his followers out of their money, the "Elvii" in Elvissey still await their savior. Mirroring the fracturing of the Christian Church into denominations, the Elvii divide themselves into denominations over doctrinal differences: "Amongst the Elvii were the Hosts of Memphis; the Shaken, Rattled, and Rolled; the River Jordanaires; the Gracelandians; the Vegassenes; the Gladyseans; the C of E Now or Never; the Redeemed Believers in our Master's Voice; the Church of the True Assumption of His Burning Love, and a hundred dozen more," all of whom wait for Elvis' return (43). When the Dryco company sends an expedition to recover a living Elvis from an alternate world, all of the denominations reject this Elvis as an imposter.

Elvis represents a multitude of often contradictory traits and ideas. Which of those associations did Bush wish to bring forward with his commentary on "Elvis economics" and a national "heartbreak hotel," and which did Clinton wish to claim as he performed "Heartbreak

Hotel" on The Arsenio Hall Show? At the same time that Bush and Clinton were dueling with

Elvis rhetoric, the United States Postal Service was holding an election of its own that has

frequently been cited as a parallel to the presidential election. On the one hand, the choices were

George Bush, Bill Clinton, and Ross Perot, and on the other hand, between the face of a young

1950's Elvis or an older 1970's Elvis for a commemorative postage stamp. This divided Elvis

into two, and in conjunction with the presidential candidates' Elvis references, helped set the

terms of the 1992 presidential election with each election reinforcing and drawing attention to the

other run off.

In repeatedly attacking Clinton with Elvis barbs, Bush aligned himself against both

Clinton and Elvis. Bush's Elvis jokes indicate that he took neither seriously, and, as Rodman

notes, Elvis often shows his face in parodies as "the butt of an ongoing national joke" (15). Such

jokes emphasize Elvis' kitsch value, playing up the stereotypical associations of "bad taste,"

tacky, and hillbilly in artifacts like velvet Elvis paintings. Bush's jab concerning "Elvis

economics" most likely refers to Presley's much publicized spending habits. The King spent

money as if he had a personal Fort Knox, buying cars (usually Cadillacs), jewelry, and houses for

friends and relatives. He bought, remolded, and furnished his Memphis mansion, Graceland.[20]

He bought a large ranch, but sold it when he became bored with the toy. Presley financially

supported dozens of confidants and hangers-on, known as the Memphis Mafia. While he did

have an abundance of money after his first musical successes in the 1950's, Elvis came close to

bankruptcy several times, and each new financial splurge brought the need to release another

album or star in another movie. Bush wanted to create a parallel between Presley's reckless

spending and Bill Clinton's economic plan for the country; the problem is that Bush did not

reckon with the many other associations that Elvis carries, but his opponent knew that Elvis, fifteen years after his death, had a strong fan base who took Elvis entertainment very seriously.

Days after Bush launched his first Elvis attack on Clinton, the Democratic candidate announced to the press that he was an Elvis fan. By doing so, Clinton planted the seeds for the first wave of comparisons between himself and the King of Rock and Roll. Both Presley and Clinton originate from the rural South. Presley was born in Tupelo, Mississippi, later relocating to Graceland in Memphis Tennessee, and Clinton comes from Hope, Arkansas and would later relocate to a white mansion of his own in Washington. While Elvis is an international icon, his fan support is strong in the South, and Presley's most ardent devotees are often perceived as working-class Southerners. Marcus argues that Bush effectively alienated working-class Southerners with risky remarks against a cultural hero, "that disparaged Elvis far more definitively than they did Clinton" (Double 51). Conversely, Clinton remarked, "Bush is always comparing me to Elvis in unflattering ways. I don't think Bush would have liked Elvis very much" (Marcus Double 51). Clinton aligns himself with the same cultural hero Bush disparaged, an association that culminated in his saxophone performance of "Heartbreak Hotel." The act was a statement that said, "'Heartbreak Hotel' isn't a bad place to be; Elvis was there, I've been there, and I understand that many of you have been there." Part of Bush's mistake was to tie a bluesy song about losing a lover and being lonely to economic discourse. Bush was attempting to forge a new association between Elvis, the song, and economics, but Clinton played the song, allowing the older and better known associations to Elvis and lost love to speak for themselves.

While the performance selection was dictated by Bush's rhetoric, the song had other, felicitous associations for the Clinton campaign. Elvis put himself on the national popular cultural map when "Heartbreak Hotel" shot to number one in the summer of 1956; it was

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Presley's first number one hit. He was young, energetic, and by some accounts – Little Richard

and others strongly disagree – the true inventor of rock and roll. Combining elements of blues,

country, and gospel, Elvis took the nation by storm, especially the teenage population. Clinton,

responding to Bush's jabs, clothed his political agenda in this young Elvis, and indicating that the

young Elvis was more popular than the older Elvis, the young Elvis stamp won the postal

election, rolling off of the presses and onto envelopes in January of 1993 – the same month as

Clinton's inauguration.

But this young Elvis is not free of controversy. Some see Elvis was a white male from

the South who raided the African-American music scene, stealing his material and persona from

black artists like Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup, and it is probably no coincidence that Clinton chose

to perform his Elvis bit on a show with a black host, hoping to alleviate any lingering charges of

racism against both himself and Elvis.[21] The young Elvis also had a sexual edge, representing

open sexuality and rebellion in the Leave it to Beaver world of the 1950's. Parents were not

entirely pleased with Elvis, his music, or his dancing. Coming to be known as "Elvis the Pelvis,"

he appeared from the waist-up in one appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show allegedly so the folks

at home wouldn't be scandalized by Elvis' gyrations.

Teenagers of 1992 may have thought that Clinton was hipper than his rivals because he

appeared on The Arsenio Hall Show, had smoked marijuana, and granted interviews to MTV

journalists, but the teens of the nineties, regularly subjected to musical rebellion and sexuality far

more daring than anything represented by the young or old Elvis, were not the real audience of

the "Heartbreak Hotel" performance. Elvis deviated from the accepted forms of wholesome

entertainment in the 1950's, and, by mimicking him, Clinton attempts to communicate a

departure from "business as usual politics," a common theme in political rhetoric that banks on

voters being somehow displeased with something about the incumbent administration. The

audience most likely to have the strongest reactions to the performance and to understand

Clinton's message were those who could remember a time when Elvis was dangerous to the

status quo. Many of the parents scandalized by Elvis' antics in the 1950's are now gone, and

many of the teens that found Elvis so exciting are now themselves parents and grandparents,

representing a solid block of the voting public. The image of the young Elvis is most

representative of youth to those who were young when Elvis was young. As Lawrence Grossberg

observes, Baby boomers try "to hold on to their self-identity as being somehow youthful" (qtd. in

Rodman 95). While showing these viewers that he enjoyed leisure activities besides the

traditional executive's game of golf, Clinton allowed baby boomers to be nostalgic about their

youth because performing Elvis amounts to stating that Elvis is still relevant, still young, and still

"in." By association, the performer indicates the same thing about himself and his audience and

effectively says, "We are still energetic and youthful." This message, of course, is dependent on

liking Elvis and his music. Enough people embrace Elvis for it to have been a successful

message, but George Bush's rhetoric and the debates about Elvis and racism also indicate that

there are those who do not appreciate the King of Rock and Roll or his title.

Why do some people identify with the Elvis, Mickey Mouse, or Barbie, and why do

others identify against them as a negative identification, a "not me" object? The question

presents the horizon of psychoanalysis in analyzing mass culture. Taking subjects as a large

group, psychoanalysis can tell us identifications depend upon the subject's position within the

symbolic order, but because these positions are legion, psychoanalysis offers no easy or

immediate answers for the complexities of identification with a mass produced object. The icons

discussed in this chapter are important markers in our culture, but in any subject's life, they are,

no matter how privileged, a few images among many and are caught up in what Lacan calls "the neurotic's individual myth" ("Neurotic" 414). Signifiers and objects influence each other; the presence, absence, and organization of signifiers in any subject's situation affect the field of meaning in which identifications and projections occur. Icons interact with other, more personal signifiers in a subject's life. Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, Dracula, and George Washington mix with other representations, such as a subject's relatives, friends, and teachers. Film and radio provide further signifiers, and these other representations may reinforce, disrupt, alter, mirror, or antagonize a subject's interaction with an icon. This is why, in literary studies, the text replaces the case of the clinical field; the presence, absence, and arrangement of signifiers must be examined to account for the "individual myth" of each text.

Barbie, Mickey Mouse, and, Elvis, of course, are a few icons among many, and in the context of mass production and the society of the spectacle, icons, like all signifiers, have proliferated. Barbie, for instance, is a corporate property, and Elvis is both a historic person and a corporate property, but corporations and historic figures are not the only sources of icons; the paths to icondom are many. Huck Finn began life as a character in Mark Twain's novels, but Huck has taken on a public, iconic existence independent of Twain's narratives. Many people who have never read The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885) – or seen any of the film versions) – know that Huck represents a paradigm of male fantasy and behavior based on "lighting out for the territories" to escape the influence of feminizing civilization. John Wayne is an older, violent Huck whose status as an icon largely rests on typecasting where the specular image of Wayne overshadows the fictional character he is supposed to represent. It is John Wayne in The Searchers (1956), not Ethan, who seeks to liberate a kidnaped, white, female from Comanche culture. At least in theory, The Statue of Liberty towers above the nation, embracing

the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Conversely, Adolf Hitler looms large as the

iconic villain, the scapegoat who supposedly represents everything that Americans are not.

Additionally, the definition offered earlier in this chapter does not exclude icons in the

theological sense, and Jesus is as much a cultural icon as a religious one. As Stephen Prothero

observes in American Jesus: How the Son of God became a National Icon (2003), "To hold Jesus

up to the mirror of American culture is to conduct a Rorschach test of ever-changing national

sensibilities. What Americans have seen in him has been an expression of their own hopes and

fears – a reflection not simply of some 'wholly other' divinity but also of themselves and their

nation" (9).   Jesus, Hitler, James Dean, Aunt Jemima, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln,

and Pochahontas are all icons.

Cultural icons are high profile, auratic images that are culturally variable and

overdetermined. This definition accounts for figures as diverse as Barbie and the Unknown

Soldier, but does not account for the different audiences or impulses that each icon addresses.   In

this chapter, we have set forth a general definition of "icon" and seen that some icons appeal to

children and the youthful impulses of adults through deep play that covers over serious concerns

with a facade of innocent playfulness. Iconic dolls, comics, cartoons, and rock singers are apt to

be dismissed because of their trivial appearances, but these bright, plastic facades often structure

discourse on weighty topics like sexuality, capitalism, and politics, and part of their success and

influence stems from exactly their ability to conceal volatile topics behind banal and kitsch

images that make heavy topics seem light and airy.

<div align="center">NOTES</div>

1. Some semioticians have denied that iconic signs, in Pierce's sense, exist at all. Umberto Eco,
for instance, recommends doing away with the idea because "It is a collection of phenomena
bundled together under an all-purpose label" (216).

2. While it falls outside the scope of this dissertation to offer a survey of the arguments for and against the use of icons in antiquity and the Byzantine Empire, where the icon question reached its apex, it is worthwhile to note that iconoclasts often objected to the depiction of the divinity because no representation could realize the totality of God. Every rendering of the divine is doomed to fall short of its goal and is therefore a misleading illusion. In terms not dissimilar from Xeophanes' condemnation of idolatry, many iconoclasts objected to granting the divine a human form. The fact that God created man in his own image does not mean humans should project a human form onto God. Iconoclasts also referred to the biblical prohibition against graven images to support their position. Even so, Moshe Barasch notes that Exodus 20:4 prohibits mimesis in general, including everything from images of squirrels and trees to the deity (15). Jewish temples featured ceremonial implements that defy this strict prohibition. See, for instance, Exodus 25:31 and 25:40. Therefore, the prohibition is ambiguous, but the common, pragmatic interpretation is that the ban extends only to the depiction of the deity. Certainly, this gloss has more impact historically. Additionally, in ancient Judaism, the taboo extends to the name of God, which could be written but not pronounced (Gabel & Wheeler 269). In other words, Judaism recognizes that the impossibility of a totalizing representation exists in both images and language.

3. John's intervention did not end the iconoclastic debates, which flared up again shortly after his death and still continue in a muted form today among some Christian denominations. Moreover, fundamentalist Muslims regard any image as a false idol.

4. The gaze can also be embodied in "the voice without bearer" (Žižek Looking 126).

5. Dick also states, "My vision of the face of Palmer Eldritch [. . .] became the basis of the novel The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch which the Perky Pat story generated" (377).

6. Interestingly, the only children explicitly mentioned in "The Days of Perky Pat," Timothy and Fred, are male. Whether intentional or not, this circumstance seems to place an emphasis on the wide spread belief in the United States that boys do not and should not play with dolls. We can only speculate how the inclusion of female children would alter the narrative or its social commentary.

7. Mattel's attempts to make Barbie racially adaptable have sometimes resulted in public relations blunders. In 2001, the company released an "Oreo Barbie" doll in conjunction with Nabisco, the company that makes Oreo cookies. The doll came in both white and black skin tones. Apparently, either the corporations did not realize or did not wish to admit the racial implications of a black doll labeled as an "Oreo," which is sometimes used as a pejorative term with a number of glosses, including a black person who has abandoned his or her "authentic" racial identity in favor of traits associated with whites, a couple of mixed ethnicity, and a child that comes from ethnically mixed parents. Protests and controversy about the black Oreo doll ensued. Mattel recalled it shortly after its release, and the black Oreo doll is not mentioned on Mattel's official Barbie web site (<www.barbie.com>), but it still circulates among collectors on Internet auction sites.

8. These measurements assume a uniform height of five feet and four inches for all groups.

9. Reportedly, Barbie was recently marketed as a mother that came with a baby accessory, but Mattel quickly recalled the dolls after their initial release, realizing that this particular doll violated a popular aspect of Barbie's persona.

10. Mary Rogers articulates a similar principle in sociological rather than psychological terms: "A fantastic icon contributes to a culture by exaggerating what is actual, possible, or conceivable. Such an icon invites fantasy by taking the as-if or the fictive toward its outer limit. Barbie is such an icon, as are Superman and Playboy centerfolds" (3).

11. Will Brooker makes a similar point about Batman: ". . . the boom in Batman's popularity also led to an explosion of interpretations [. . .] some of them mutually contradictory and some, like the 'political satire' reading, themselves containing further complexities and ambiguities" (235). Like Barbie, Batman is the site of numerous conflicts between fans, scholars, and "official" interpretations promoted by DC Comics and Warner – the two companies that control the output of comics, cartoons, and films involving Batman.

12. Berlant places her argument in the context of Ronald Reagan's presidency: "During the rise of the Reaganite right, a familial politics of the national future came to define the urgencies of the present" (1). While not contesting the claim that infantile citizenship increased during Reagan's tenure, many of my examples precede Reagan's rise to national power, illustrating that while infantilization intensified during this period, it existed in significant ways long before the actor turned his sights on a political career.

13. In developing the fetus as icon notion, Berlant discusses the first public appearance of fetal images in Life magazine; I Love Lucy, which featured the first pregnancy broadcast on a television show; pro life movements that utilize a rhetoric based on fetal photography; her family's home videos, and Amy Heckerling's Look Who's Talking (1989) and Look Who's Talking Too (1990). See Berlant 83-144.

14. Werthem's campaign against comic books was largely responsible for the U. S. Senate hearings on comic books in April of 1954. These proceedings inquired into links between juvenile delinquency and comic book reading. Instead of legislation, the hearings led to pressuring publishers into self regulation through the "Comics Code," which was similar to the film industry's "Motion Picture Production Code," which was enforced through the Hays and Breen offices. When the code was written and adopted by publishers in 1954, it banned horror comics, heavily regulated comic stories dealing with crime, and offered other rules for protecting the innocence of young readers. As Amy Kiste Nyberg notes, "The lasting legacy of the comics code has been the comic book industry's acquiescence to defining the comic book as a form of entertainment solely for children and the reinforcement of that perception in the minds of the public" (157-8). Unlike the film code, which was officially abandoned in 1968, the comics code is still in effect, having been revised in 1971 and 1989. While the revisions have loosened the constraints of the 1954 version, the 1989 code restates the vow to protect children: "While the comic book industry has changed over the intervening three decades, as has almost every facet of American life, the publisher members of the CMAA [Comics Magazine Association of America] remain committed to providing decent and wholesome comic books for children" (Nyberg 175). Only comics deemed appropriate for children may carry the CMAA's seal on their cover. However, a publisher may sidestep the code by agreeing to omit the CMAA seal from the cover,

which allows some comics not intended for children to be published through direct marketing. Direct marketing, which occurs when the publisher sells directly to a retailer, limits the retail markets available to adult comics. Additionally, because the CMAA only approves titles for children, it refuses to officially acknowledge an adult audience for comics. Ironically, in 1973 the man who was instrumental in bringing about the comics code appears to have altered his position. In *The World of Fanzines* (1973)*,* which praises fanzines – underground magazines (including the underground comix [sic.] of the 1960's) – as a unique method of communication, Werthem states, "A great impetus to fanzine production was a newly aroused or renewed interest, partly nostalgic, in 'costumed' heroes and superheroes" (*Fanzines* 57). One of the important mediums for such heros is, of course, comic books, and Werthem here cites comic books as being an important forerunner to fanzines. Werthem helped ban adult themed comics only to praise them when they resurfaced outside the commercial, corporate marketplace. For detailed discussions of Werthem's arguments see Nyberg for a general analysis (85-103). For discussions on Batman, Werthem, and homosexuality, see Brooker (101-170) and Medhurst (149-163).

15. While Sullivan is literally innocent of murder, metaphorically, he is charged with the murder of his former self by refusing to make more lighthearted movies. When Sullivan agrees to revert to comedy, he resurrects his Hollywood self. The charges are dismissed, and he is released from prison, from the punishment for not producing comedy.

16. While Wark's primary purpose here is to establish the prominence of Elvis, it is not by chance that her point of comparison is Mickey Mouse, an icon commonly thought to be the cultural stomping grounds of children. Comparing Elvis to Mickey implies that there are similarities between the two. Both are famous, but Wark's comparison strengthens the idea that Mickey and Elvis are infantile icons because Mickey is so firmly entrenched as a symbol of childhood and youth. Disney indirectly reverses the comparison in their animated feature Lilo and Stitch (2002), which features an extraterrestrial alien (Stitch) who becomes enamored with Elvis and imitates the icon's songs, clothing, hair, and demeanor. This cartoon draws on the extraterrestrial Elvis myth, but also imports Elvis into a film outwardly marketed to children but possessing deep play values concerning adoption, family, identity, and belonging.

17. Klein's website can be found at <http://elvisdetective.com/>. Included in the documents posted there are letters from Bill Clinton, thanking Klein for sending signed copies of his novels.

18. See www.elvischapel.com , http://www.theelvisweddingchapel.com/elvispackages.html, and www.lvweddingchapels.com/vivalasvegaswedding.html for examples of chapels that offer Elvis wedding ceremonies.

19. The notion of an Elvis religion based on internal rather than external struggle between, for instance, God and Satan probably originates from Presley's conversations with Geller. In 1965, Elvis Presley reported to Geller that he saw a vision in a cloud formation in which an image of Joseph Stalin fades into an image of Jesus Christ. "Elvis saw the Stalin image as the dark side of himself, and as he watched, Stalin turned into Jesus and Elvis felt himself in the presence of God" (Mason 120).

20. See www.elvis.com/graceland/ for the official Graceland web site.

21. Refer to Marcus' <u>Dead Elvis</u> (1991) pages 47-66 and Rodman pages 31-57 for in-depth discussions of Elvis and race politics.

CHAPTER THREE:

ADULT NATION: THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY OF UNCLE SAM, THE WALL, AND THE UNKNOWN

Infantile icons, which we explored in the previous chapter, imply a counterpart – icons that manifestly appeal to mature impulses instead of childish ones, to adults rather than children. Such images, which we may term "adult icons" or "national icons," often combine the aura of religious experience with explicit links to the government, nationalism, and militarism. While smoothing over contradictions, exclusions, and complications, these icons urge patriotism and nationalist identifications. Instead of addressing weighty topics through the window dressing of playfulness, these icons manifestly appeal to notions of responsibility, work, sacrifice, and duty, all of the traits the candy coating of infantile icons glosses over. This is not to say that a national icon cannot or does not address some of the same issues that constitute the deep play content of an infantile icon like Mickey Mouse, but if infantile icons appeal "down" to the childish and selfish drives that desire freedom from work and responsibility, then national icons make their claims on "higher" impulses to be mature, do one's duty to God and country, and fight for political freedom – at least within the heavily regulated boundaries of the ideology represented by a particular icon. As John F. Kennedy so famously put it in his 1961 inaugural address, these icons "Ask not what your country can do for you; [they] ask what you can do for your country."

As with infantile icons, then, the distinction between adult and child is psychological rather than a simple demarcation based on biological age or on classifying mediums like comic books as an inherently childish medium. Just as an infantile icon can be aimed at both adults and children, a national icon can appeal to both or use a medium commonly thought of as being the province of children while appealing to urges, thoughts and emotions stereotypically reserved for a mature audience.

National icons telegraph their affiliations visually, and when personified, behaviorally, and they are instrumental in constructing what Benedict Anderson terms the "imagined community" of the nation. Anderson defines a nation as "an imagined political community – and it is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6).[1] National icons provide common identification points through which citizens can funnel their political, patriotic, and nationalist impulses. Because these nationalistic images function as icons, as auratic, highly recognizable, overdetermined, and culturally variable images, they function as national points de capiton (quilting points) that encourage and hold together the imagined, without which the community could not exist. As Anderson observes, a nation must be "_imagined_ because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). National icons like Uncle Sam, The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the Unknown Soldier mediate that communion, suturing strangers into a body politic through Althusserian interpellation, Barthian inoculation, and identification appropriation.

If the metaphor of the body politic holds for the United States, then the official government body is encapsulated in the iconic Uncle Sam, who makes appearances in parades and circuses, political cartoons, comic books, folk art, assorted products, military recruitment ads, and literary and media texts. Sam's omnipresence reinforces the association of his body as the American body politic. He is a powerful and pervasive spectacle. Sam's presence in political rhetoric, children's stories, comic books and novels reveals that in the imaginary register, he is an ego ideal, a point of imagined perfection that can cause subjects to see their lives as vain and useless when they look at themselves as if their vision emanates from the ideal point of view occupied by Uncle Sam. However, Sam is also an ideal ego because he functions as an imago for citizens to emulate and internalize.[2]

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According to E.D. Hirsch Jr.'s <u>The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy</u> (2002), every American should know some basic facts about Sam to be culturally literate, to be a viable citizen. The Dictionary states that Uncle Sam is "a figure who stands for the government of the United States and for the United States itself. Uncle Sam—whose initials are the abbreviation of United States—is portrayed as an old man with a gray goatee who sports a top hat and Stars and Stripes clothing. During World War I and World War II, posters of Uncle Sam exhorted young men to join the armed forces" (354). Hirsch strips Sam down to a few facts, but this information does not do justice to the influence the icon wields in the United States. Robert Taylor, the governor of Tennessee at the close of the nineteenth century, would likely have agreed that every American should know Uncle Sam, but he phrases his introduction more colorfully. It is truer to Sam's pervasive presence and multivalent meanings in American life, and it is worth quoting at length:

> He is the composite of the wild-cat and the cooing dove, the lion and the lamb, and the "summer evening's latest sigh that shuts the rose." He is the embodiment of all that is most terrible. The world stands appalled at his wonderful power, and bows in admiration of his matchless magnanimity.
> He is the tallest figure on this mundane sphere, and when he steps across the continent and sits down on Pike's Peak, and snorts in his handkerchief of red, white, and blue, the earth quakes and monarchs tremble on their thrones. From the peaceful walks of life he can mobilize a mighty army in sixty days, and in ninety days he can destroy a powerful navy and demolish an empire. He is the boss of the Western Hemisphere, Sheriff of Cuba, Justice of the Peace of Porto Rico, and guardian <u>ad litem</u> of the Philippine Islands. He is as brave as Caesar and as meek as Moses.
> He is as fierce as a tiger, and as cool as a cucumber. He wears the tail feathers of the eagle of France in his hat, and the scalp of Mexico in his belt. He laughs at the roar of the Russian bear, and is always ready for a schooner of Russian beer.
> All that is left of Spain is her "Honah," since her combat with Uncle Sam. No longer the lion of England roars at our door, but the twain now stand together for liberty and humanity. (286-87)

Taylor's speech is interesting for the way he characterizes foreign countries and the consistent depiction of Sam as the embodiment of extreme opposites. The Governor posits Sam

as the dominant force in global politics, and the United states is the only country in his inventory symbolized by a human being. The other nations, including France, Mexico, Russia, and England, are represented by either animals or body parts. This depiction invokes the common notion that human beings are more developed than animals, and it makes Sam a souvenir collector, who demonstrates both his mastery of other countries and his multicultural constitution by incorporating their symbols into his garb. While Taylor is less severe with England, citing that nation as an ally in "liberty and humanity," he nevertheless uses England's animal avatar – the lion – instead of John Bull, who is human and probably a more accurate counterpart to America's Uncle Sam.[3] Conversely, Sam contains elements of both animal and vegetable life ("He is as fierce as a tiger, and as cool as a cucumber."), but he is undoubtedly human, or more accurately, he is a superhuman and is so great in stature that he uses mountains as chairs. Taylor combines this powerful size with a whole range of contradicting, but versatile, personality traits; Sam can be meek or wild, depending on his mood, the reception he receives, and the purposes of the speaker or writer who cites his name. In all cases, for Taylor, Sam symbolizes and affirms American exceptionalism.

In the contemporary media, Sam's name is frequently invoked, as Taylor uses it, in newspaper headlines and magazine article titles as the tax man, the military, the government, the ideal citizen-patriot, the whole nation. Like the Elvis and Barbie strategies discussed in the previous chapter, the articulation of Uncle Sam's name in an article or book title can increase attention for the writer's agenda, and Sam's moniker in a title is sometimes the only connection a text possesses to the symbolic figure. But a single mention links the text's content to the nation's avatar. "When Uncle Sam Wanted Us" by Paul Rauber invokes the national character to bolster environmental conservation. Rauber notes, during World War II citizens were encouraged "to conserve rubber, paper, aluminum, tin cans, toothpaste tubes (for the small

amount of zinc they contained), sugar, coffee, and even kitchen fats (the glycerin was used for ammunition)" (35). James Fallows presents Sam as a consumer in "Uncle Sam Buys a Plane," an article about companies bidding for a contract to build the military's new "Joint Strike Fighter" (62), and a piece in Fortune informs readers how to get "Uncle Sam [to] pay for college" (Geer 308). Articles and books routinely tie their economic, social, and political concerns to the man in the stars and stripes to hook the reader's attention. The Uncle Sam strategy is an effective means of attracting attention because Sam embodies the American government and culture, personifies the flag, and often signals this national affiliation by wearing garments decorated with stars and stripes.

Outside of the uses of Uncle Sam as such, surprisingly little historical or analytical scholarship on the nation's avatar exists. Instead, scores of books tell the narrative of the nation's origins through the Uncle Sam story. Many of these volumes are marketed for school children, and this is not simply because children are the target audience. Rather, the practice of marketing informational products for children signals that these materials are basic, not in the sense that they are necessarily easy for all adults to understand, but in the sense that they represent fundamental values and narratives that construct the country's ideological foundation upon which a nation's other values, narratives, and nationalist myths depend. These books reduce the historical complexities, misfirings, and struggles of America's national development to a whitewashed story of a few heroes, promising to educate readers about the origins of both Sam and the nation.

Uncle Sam of America (1953) by Philip D. Jordan is a representative example, presenting Sam as a necessity to the young nation: "The new America needed Uncle Sam as much as it needed wood for its ships, lead for its bullets, calico for its dresses" (4). The symbolic figure is inserted here in a list of material goods: America needs wood to build ships, and it needs Uncle

Sam to build the symbolic infrastructure of the nation. Jordan shares Taylor's belief that Sam signals the exceptional nature of the country: "Without Uncle Sam the new America might have been just another country [. . .] It had to have somebody big enough to wade the western lakes, climb mountain peeks, follow freedom to Pennsylvania shores and on across the heartland of the country to Pacific shores. It needed an Uncle Sam to make other nations sit up and take notice" (5). Uncle Sam, in Jordan's account, both authorizes and undertakes manifest destiny – the notion, first articulated by John L. O'Sullivan in 1845, that it is "the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to over spread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (289). Similarly, Thomas I. Gerson and Flora M. Hood end their account of the Uncle Sam story by answering the question of "Is there an Uncle Sam?" with a reply taken from a news column by George E. Sokolsky that runs along the lines of "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus": "Uncle Sam is in the hearts of those who believe that freedom and equality [. . .] come to us from God and will survive all the errors of stupid and selfish men and women" (158).

Uncle Sam, according to these writers, is a spiritual, if not a flesh and blood, reality, and he is an actuality that receives divine authority. Bill Holton, in his study on the origin and history of Sam, makes this connection to religious authority more explicit when he alludes to the phrase "born-again Christian," by claiming that he "became a 'born-again American'" (3). God, then, operates through Uncle Sam, and Sam functions as God's spokesman to every citizen. This structure promises a plan for American national development, claiming that God and Uncle Sam oversee and legitimate the project. By twinning the functions of God and Sam, Holton and those with similar views posit the existence of a civil religion where patriotism mounts to the level of faith and devotion normally associated with metaphysical religions like Christianity or Islam.[4]

These books purport to analyze and explicate the past, but they propagate Uncle Sam and history as a myth – a myth that washes out the more unsavory aspects of America's history. These stories offer an ideal national image and "protect" American citizens from history's pain. Even ostensibly analytical or adult works take part in this process of glorifying the symbols they set out to analyze. Alton Ketchum's Uncle Sam: The Man and the Legend (1959), while containing some useful information for those interested in the genesis of Uncle Sam, also casts every comment or reflection in a patriotic tone, lauding American individualism: "No robot, no collectivist mass man in boots and tunic, is Uncle Sam. He is as he has always been: a disciple of liberty under law, convinced that every man is a little different from every other man, and entitled to whatever eccentricities he may wish to cultivate" (90). Indeed, Ketchum's study of Sam's origins and symbolic life was condensed and reprinted for the National Association of Realtors, who issued it as a memorial volume to celebrate the nation's bicentennial.

Therefore, Uncle Sam's origins are shrouded in patriotic myth, which obscures the cultural politics involved in his rise to fame. E. McClung Fleming states, "A study of the symbolic figures used to identify the American Colonies and the United States between 1755 and 1850 reveals extensive and overlapping use of six major images: The Indian Princess, the Neoclassic Plumed Goddess, the American Liberty, Columbia, Brother Jonathan, and Uncle Sam." (1). Similarly, Ketchum traces developmental trajectories from Pocahontas to Columbia and from Yankee Doodle to Brother Jonathan to Uncle Sam in the development of the national symbolic (14). Of all the national personifications Ketchum and Fleming explore, the Indian Princess, or Pocahontas, is the earliest. European influence already surfaces here; the title of "Indian Queen" or "Indian Princess" grafts a European view of political hierarchy onto native cultures. This process continues until all traces of native influence are banished from the official symbols of the United States. The Greek influenced Columbia, Liberty, and related hybrid

figures still hold a place in the official and quasi official national symbolic, but Pocahontas, from the sexualized Indian nymph in John Barth's The Sot-Weed Factor (1960) to Disney's animated Pocahontas (1995) film, exists largely in folk and popular culture.[5] Even so, Pocahontas possesses many characteristics of the official national icons. Robert S. Tilton maintains that she is a fantasy space icon that allows the projection of multiple ideas and agendas onto her identity. Tilton states,

> An examination of some of these works finds that for the most part they are not actually about Pocahontas or her narrative. For example, Helen C. Rountree's Pocahontas's People (1990) tells the story of the Powhatan Indians over the course of four hundred years. Pocahontas herself virtually disappears from the book after the third of ten chapters. [. . .] Although neither Pocahontas nor her narrative is the primary concern of any of these texts, the authors [. . .] presumably included her name in their titles because it would have an immediate resonance with their target audience. [. . .] Part of the power of the Pocahontas myth has been based on the multiplicity of correspondence available to the author who invokes the name of the heroine of Jamestown. (2)

That is true, but Pocahontas' multivalence has limits. She is a liminal icon, the Native American who stands on the border between Native American and European life. A transitional figure like Pocahontas implies a movement away from something in favor of something else: movement away from an American Indian identity towards Euro American and British life. Tilton acknowledges this by dubbing Pocahontas the "heroine of Jamestown," which is an English and not a Powhatan settlement. She splices the two cultures together by allegedly saving John Smith from imminent decapitation, converting to Christianity, changing her name to Lady Rebecca and traveling to England. Most versions of the Pocahontas myth honor her for her ambassadorial role, whether voluntary or coerced, and in one sense, this marriage of cultures is literal because Pocahontas leaves Kuocum, her Powhatan spouse, and later weds Englishman John Rolfe.

Ketchum says nothing regarding the cultural politics that replaces the Indian Princess or Pocahontas with the euro-American figure of Columbia, but Fleming argues that Columbia "is a

more unique and specific symbol for the United States than the Indian Princess, the Plumed Goddess, or Liberty" (18-9). Fleming is vague on this point, but, presumably, Columbia's uniqueness derives from the fact that she, like Uncle Sam, is often depicted in garb fashioned from the national flag. Additionally, Columbia's name is a feminized version of Christopher Columbus' name, and Fleming notes that Columbia "represents a European force" as opposed to the Native American identity of the Indian Princess (19). For both Ketchum and Fleming, the replacement of the Indian Princess with the Eurocentric Columbia appears to represent a cultural improvement that demonstrates "the more formal and idealistic aspects of the American character" (Fleming 18). Ketchum states, "We have seen how Pocahontas grew into Columbia and Yankee Doodle into Brother Jonathan, both developments reflecting the expansion of the American spirit and the deepening sense of nationalism. But in Uncle Sam, America was to find its truest and most eloquent expression" (14).[6] Apparently, this true and eloquent expression derives from European and Euro-American influences that washes away Native-American culture and downplays female icons.

Most sources, including Ketchum, attribute a biographical genesis for Uncle Sam in Sam Wilson of Troy, New York, who lived from 1766 to 1854 and was known to locals as "Uncle Sam."[7] The legend, coming from several sources, with various alterations of detail, reports that during the War of 1812, Wilson held a contract to provide the United States Army with supplies. Each cask of food was marked "US," indicating that the barrels were destined for the United States government. However, when one of the workers in the packing plant was asked what the "US" on the casks signified, the worker replied that the letters must initial Uncle Sam, Uncle Sam Wilson. The designation "stuck" and began to circulate in Troy and the surrounding areas: Uncle Sam was taking care of the troops in the field. In the following years, the figure of Uncle Sam appeared in newspaper articles and editorial cartoons, growing into an American icon.

Despite the facetious and accidental nature of Sam's origin myth, it is significant that his initials correspond to the common abbreviation for United States and that his name posits a familial relation. Sam's initials link him to the nation, and the familial relation established by "uncle" connects him to individual citizens. Langston Hughes' Simple declares that we all have an Uncle Sam: "I have [an Uncle Sam]. You have, too. But we are not responsible for him. I am talking about the old man in the tight pants, the swallowtail coat, and the star spangled hat who lives in the attic above the President at the top of the White House" (176). Like the traditional paternalism invested in European monarchs, "uncle" figures the nation as family, as a personal and intimate bond rather than a civic, public relation. However, an uncle is, at least on first glance, less authoritarian than the father figure of monarchies, but it is also less egalitarian than the brotherhood conjured by Brother Jonathan (but not, as we will see in the next chapter, by Big Brother).

The most famous articulation of Uncle Sam is undoubtedly James Montgomery Flagg's painting, which the Army first used as a recruiting poster during World War One, and, since this poster debuted, recruiting has been one of Sam's primary functions. He recruits, forms, and disciplines military subjects, and this function has been expanded to many other sorts of recruitment. Flagg's painting originally appeared without the famous "I WANT YOU" caption as a magazine cover in 1916 and appears to have been modeled on a painting by Alfred Leete used for a recruiting poster in England during World War One. Leete's depiction of General Kitchener, a British General that rose to prominence for his military prowess in the colonies, features the same pose as the Uncle Sam poster and a similar caption – "YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU."[8] In any case, Flagg's Uncle Sam was adopted by the army as a recruiting poster in 1917 when the "I WANT YOU FOR U.S. ARMY NEAREST RECRUITING STATION" was added. The poster features a kind of triple gaze, three features that interpellate (in Althusser's

sense) the viewer into Sam's field of vision. While Sam's eyes meet the look of the audience, his gaze is punctuated by the index finger that points at the viewer, and if these two elements are not enough, the caption further addresses the (male) audience. Sam does not want someone else; he wants you. It is the second person pronoun that drives the personal context of the mass message to its conclusion. The poster gazes at the subject as it simultaneously recruits and forms that subject, offering the audience a jingoistic and militant ideal ego.

Flagg's image is the paradigm for most twentieth century portrayals of Uncle Sam. The top-hatted uncle has remained a staple of political cartoons and regularly makes appearances in contemporary newspapers and periodicals like Harper's, The Atlantic Monthly, and The New Yorker. Given Sam's perpetual presence in political cartoons, it is no surprise that Sam should also find his way into the pages of comic books, a medium that combines words and images into narrative and is traditionally thought of as a staple of young adolescents' reading material. Sam made his comic book debut in July 1940 between the covers of National Comics # 1, a comics anthology. Then, under the auspices of Uncle Sam Quarterly, which ran for eight issues from the fall of 1941 to the fall of 1943, Uncle Sam's adventures received full treatment as the feature character of his own series.[9]

The entire series addresses social and political issues surrounding World War II, but the first issue of Uncle Sam Quarterly by William Eisner includes a particularly noteworthy story entitled "Forged Faces," which presents a plot that revolves around the splitting of Uncle Sam into heroic and nefarious incarnations. Predictably, the evil Uncle Sam, who wishes to place the nation's children in labor camps, is an imposter. So convincing is the deception that even Bristol, the corrupt senator behind the plot, cannot distinguish between the real Sam and the imposter he creates. In a King Solomon-like solution, Bristol declares, "Hey . . . What th . . . Two Uncle Sams!! . . . One of you is the real Uncle Sam, and I'm going to blast him with T.NT.

<u>Both</u> of you are going to <u>beat Buddy</u> [Sam's young, male sidekick] with that <u>whip!!</u> The <u>real</u> <u>one won't do it!!</u>" (Eisner 10). Sam must affirm his identity as the authentic Uncle Sam and defeat his evil twin. Ostensibly, the narrative objects to Nazi concentration camps and thinly veils this critique by substituting "steel helmets," the organization behind the crime, for Nazis. Even so, the comic book is somewhat prophetic since in February 1942, less that a year after the initial publication of <u>Uncle Sam Quarterly</u>, the federal government issued authorization, not for placing children in camps, but for placing Americans of Japanese extraction in such camps, and by doing so, the government effectively turned these citizens into children of a sort, wards of the state.

In 1999 Steve Darnell and Alex Ross use the same split identity plot in their comic book <u>U.S.: Uncle Sam</u>, indicating that the preoccupation with sorting out the good Uncle Sam from the bad Uncle Sam, the imposter from the authentic, is an ongoing concern.[10] Ross and Darnell, however, present a wider ranging critique that takes the true Uncle Sam on a tour of contemporary and historic events in the nation. In this version Uncle Sam appears as an amnesiac homeless man who is expelled from a hospital and thrown in jail. He spouts bits and pieces of rhetoric from past presidents and other high ranking politicians, but he has been displaced from his symbolic home at the heart of the American dream and cannot remember that he has a manifest destiny to claim.

Darnell and Ross figure Sam as an abject subject, as a suffering and fallen icon who must fight to reestablish his authority as the true American Dream, a vision that has values other than capitalistic profiteering. Uncle Sam begins to recover his identity and sense of purpose as he undertakes a psychological tour of America's present and historical problems. In one such prophetic moment, Sam says, "And then the whole nation comes into my view. For one brief stinking moment. I feel sick. There's a husband and wife who are learning to hate peace.

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There's a mayor suggesting that his city could gain additional revenue from a river boat casino. There's a town where a lot of babies born have similar defects. And there's a state's attorney asking the Supreme court to let them execute a 14-year-old. A nation cries. It's like they're cryin' to <u>me</u>."[11]   Sam here becomes a sacrificial figure that takes on the burdens of the entire country. In this casting, Sam functions as an ego-ideal, an imagined point of perfect civic emotion and responsibility that illustrates the distance between the ideal and the reality, showing readers how the country's citizens fail to measure up to the standard Uncle Sam represents. This Sam is vulnerable; he makes mistakes, experiences confusion, and feels deep emotional pain about the country's status as depicted through the mistakes and plights of "common" Americans in both fantastic and mundane situations. These visual flashes of protest, crime, and despair are separated into individual frames that converge in the point de capiton (quilting point) of Sam's consciousness. Sam's internal monologue provides his glosses on the events, allowing the reader to tap directly into this first-person-portrayal of the national spirit's consciousness. The "I WANT YOU" of the Flagg poster becomes "I NEED YOU" in a promotional poster for the comic, which depicts a tattered and worn looking Sam with a mournful countenance, implying that Sam needs every American's help to survive. The notion that individuals' actions pain Sam is calculated to make contemporary American life appear repulsive and dirty: we have made Sam homeless; we are, this narrative argues, killing the iconic spirit of the nation, who is also a flesh and blood person capable of bleeding and shedding tears.

The writers depict this wounded Sam as an iconoclast who wishes to destroy the media spectacles that seduce citizens into ignorance and apathy. When Uncle Sam confronts his evil counterpart, who smokes cigars rolled in dollar bills and ensconces himself on a throne made of television sets, Sam states, "I won't deny that mistakes were made – Even if the history textbooks <u>do</u>. But I won't pretend that mistakes never happened. And once in a while –

sometimes very slowly – we made some progress. I tried my best to take pride in <u>facing</u> the problems. You're telling them [American Citizens] to take pride in <u>ignoring</u> problems. What you've got here, son – it's all vanity. It's a big advertisement for a product that doesn't exist. You <u>are</u> the spirit of a nation. But it's <u>not</u> America." This confrontation aligns the evil Uncle Sam with the power of spectacle and turns the authentic Sam into an iconoclast who seeks to crush the influence of corporate media over the nation that has been deceived into accepting an imposter as the representative of the (false) American dream.

The splitting of Sam into positive and negative articulations, in both the 1940's and 1990's, demonstrates an ongoing anxiety about the direction of the nation, of the American dream. Both <u>Uncle Sam Quarterly #1</u> and <u>U.S.: Uncle Sam</u> evoke and seek to address ambivalent feelings concerning American citizenship and the actions of the government through the iconic representation of Uncle Sam as an avatar of the nation. It is as if these comics present an explanation to the varied editorial cartoons in periodicals that sometimes feature a wise, benevolent, and moral Uncle Sam, but at other times depict a bloated, greedy, miserly, or warmongering Sam. The answer provided in the pages of these comics is that there are positive and negative portrayals of Uncle Sam because both of these "persons" exist in a Manichean struggle for the nation. One of them is authentic, representing the true nature of America, and the other is an imposter. In making this argument, these stories point to the seductive power of specular identification and proclaim that not all that is dressed in stars and stripes stands for an ethical and responsible notion of the nation.

Darnell and Ross urge readers to look behind the surface to the substance beneath, or rather, they urge readers to favor one spectacle that they see as positive over another which they perceive as undesirable. The critique of evil clothed in patriotism provided by "Forged Faces" and <u>U.S.: Uncle Sam</u> allows, even encourages, readers to repudiate responsibility for the actions

of the American Government in both the past and the present. Opening the way to selective identification, the splitting of Sam, or any other icon, into good and bad versions allows readers to strengthen their national identifications via the good Uncle icon while rejecting the government's undesirable actions as the result of a clever counterfeit, something that looks like America but is not America. These narratives place the responsibility for anything reprehensible or immoral on the other, claiming that undesirable actions were false moments perpetrated by imposters behind a facade of national spirit.

Darnell and Ross peer behind the facade by raising the specter of "forgotten" history, but in the process, Sam displaces responsibility for these actions onto the other, the imposter. The true, and therefore admirable, Sam takes a tour of America's history, which includes broken treaties with Indian tribes, the execution of John Brown, and lynchings. The purpose of this review is "Because you need to *know!* That's <u>why!</u> Because you [Uncle Sam, the nation, the reader] have a tendency to <u>forget</u> these things." "Firing on a white flag," Sam says when faced with the slaughter of Black Hawk's tribe in 1832, "That's not fit behavior for an American Soldier," and he adds, "<u>I</u> didn't open fire on this man and his tribe." In this rendering, the attack on Black Hawk's tribe was not in keeping with the true national spirit, and therefore it is something that we can remember and acknowledge as a tragedy while also denying responsibility for the event. Sam does concede that he "let it happen," a statement which implies that Indian removal was not an integral part of the nation's development but something that, at worst, occurred because the American spirit was somehow a passive spectator that did not act in time to halt the reprehensible actions of others.

For all of the effort to distinguish and separate the true Sam from the imposter, the two characters fuse together at key points in the narrative, raising the question of whether sorting out the pure and positive American spirit from exploitative and morally corrupt jingoism is a

feasible project. The authentic Sam realizes that the evil Sam, on some level, represents the most reprehensible aspects of his own psyche. After Sam battles his doppelgänger in an effort to regain his star spangled hat (read his crown, his badge of office), he declares, "It's a strange and frightening thing – to see yourself at your worst." After Sam defeats his nemesis and regains his hat, he is once again on the streets of contemporary America, and his foe has evaporated, leaving him sprawled across a pedestrian filled sidewalk. Sam concludes that the fight was only "Another lousy dream." However, Žižek states, in the context of discussing Fritz Lang's film Woman in the Window (1945), "The message of the film is not consoling, not: 'it was only a dream, in reality I am a normal man like others and not a murderer!' but rather: in our unconscious, in the real of our desire, we are all murderers" (Looking 16). Similarly, Sam's fight with himself, even if it is a dream, does not mean that the evil Sam does not exist, that the exploitative Sam is simply a nightmare that has no true reality in the American nationalistic project. Rather, if the confrontation is a dream, this indicates that the threat posed by the nefarious incarnation is an internal threat rather than an external foe. That is, the evil incarnation exists alongside and inside the national symbolic of Uncle Sam. If the bad Sam is a threat to the American way of life, he is a danger that emanates, not from some foreign other, but from the heart of the American spirit's incarnation. But is the fight between the Sams a dream? Sam claims it is a hallucination, but he also wakes from the "dream" with his hat, which he never had before facing his dark counterpart.

Darnell and Ross, then, play with a degree of uncertainty in their narrative. By representing Sam as a homeless and abject subject, the authors raise the possibility that the protagonist is not really Uncle Sam at all. Perhaps, as Greil Marcus suggests in his foreword to the comic, he is just an old man suffering from delusions of grandeur: "He might be a bum, he might be a judge; as you follow his story you keep changing your mind." Yet, this nebulous

reading, which, like many forewords, instructs readers on the "proper" interpretation of the text is undermined by several factors, including the stress placed on differentiating the two, opposed representations of Sam throughout the narrative. The blurb on the comic's back cover asks, "IS HE UNCLE SAM – OR ONE OF U.S.?"[12] The question exploits the use of capitalization and the slide of signification between the name Uncle Sam and the initials U.S., which can signal Sam's initials, the common abbreviation for United States, or the plural objective pronoun "us." Ostensibly, this blurb inquires whether the protagonist is the avatar of the American spirit or an ordinary citizen (one of us). However, the typography and slide of meaning ensures that no matter how a reader responds to the question, the answer is the same and includes all the possible meanings: The protagonist is U.(ncle) S.(am); the protagonist is U.(nited) S.(tates); the protagonist is one of us ordinary citizens. Holton's America is My Home (2001), a patriotic history of Uncle Sam, takes a similar stance: "As the personification of the collective conscience and national will of the American people, he is us – all of us – past, present and future. The Constitutional us. The moral us and the ethical us. Us as a noisy and fractious citizenry and as patriotic and loyal Americans" (3).[13] An expanded version of this equation might read: we are all ordinary citizens, and we, as a group, constitute the democratic United States; since Uncle Sam is the United States personified, we are all Uncle Sam, and because we are all equal, this means that Uncle Sam is one of us and represents all of us at the same time. The question posed on the back cover of U.S.: Uncle Sam, then, interpellates the reader as part of and "inside" of Uncle Sam and implies that he represents the collective ideal ego for citizens. He represents a sum that is, paradoxically, both equal to and greater than its parts. Nonetheless, the binary of Uncle Sam or U.S. elides the issue of who is included in the group "us" and who has been or remains excluded from the workings of democratic society in America.

The most compelling evidence that Darnell and Ross introduce uncertainty about the protagonist's identity only to assert once and for all that the character is Uncle Sam occurs in the gathering of national symbols and motifs on the comic's last page. In a hopeful conclusion that hints at a return to power for the authentic American dream, Sam places his hat, which "still fits," on his head as he sings "Yankee Doodle"and walks down the street under a sign painted with the reverse side of the Great Seal, which appears on the one dollar bill. This image associates Sam with finances, and moments before a passerby drops a dollar into Sam's hat as it lies on the sidewalk. When Sam moves the hat, the dollar falls to the ground, and a disembodied hand snatches it up again. Unlike his evil counterpart, Sam does not burn up cigars rolled with large bills, but carelessly and magnanimously distributes the small amount of money donated by one citizen to another, anonymous citizen. Rather than consuming the money himself, Sam passes it on to an individual. The authentic Sam's attitude toward finances is a kinder, gentler form of taxation where the citizen donates money rather than surrendering money to the government. Furthermore, the image of the Great Seal, dangling from a store sign, immediately flashes over Sam's head. The representation of the unfinished pyramid and the eye is accompanied by the Latin mottoes "Annuit Coeptis" and "Novus Ordo Seclorum." The former translates as "Providence has favored our undertakings," and the latter means "A new order of the ages." Once again, Sam receives the blessing of divine authority. Having over come his amnesia and defeated his shadow self, Sam reclaims his place as the symbol of the American spirit. Both Sam and the American dream are reinvigorated; the ghosts of history and homelessness are exorcized. The slate is wiped clean; hope has been restored, and Sam is once again R. W. B. Lewis' "American Adam" at the dawn of a new order.

Uncle Sam Quarterly #1, U.S.: Uncle Sam, and other incarnations of nationalist icons participate in what Barthes terms "inoculation" after the medical process of introducing an

amount of pathogen or antigen into an organism to stimulate the production of antibodies, which

ward off that same pathogen. In other words, the purposeful and controlled injection of disease

produces defenses against future, uncontrolled exposure. Barthes extends the logic of this

medical procedure to cultural entities:

> To instill into the Established Order the complacent portrayal of its drawbacks
> has nowadays become a paradoxical but incontrovertible means of exalting it.
> Here is the pattern of this new-style demonstration: take the established value
> which you want to restore or develop, and first lavishly display its pettiness, the
> injustices which it produces, the vexations to which it gives rise, and plunge it
> into its natural imperfection; then, at the last moment, save it in spite of, or rather
> by the heavy curse of its blemishes. (Mythologies 41)

This is precisely the mechanism used by Eisner as well as Darnell and Ross to bring their

narratives to a happy conclusion. A nefarious and unjust Uncle Sam pollutes the national waters,

and the reader is led to believe that these comics critique the established social order in the

United States. Then, a duplicate Sam rushes in to save the day and the nation's honor, resulting

in a resolution wherein the initial problem (Uncle Sam) is also the solution (Uncle Sam). These

narratives show the social order policing itself, weeding out the false from the true.

   Unlike the tortured, but ultimately positive, portrayal offered by Darnell and Ross,

Robert Coover's Uncle Sam offers a more cynical view of the national character, one who is

always sure of the proper course of action but who is not overly concerned with ethical

dilemmas. Darnell and Ross conceive of Uncle Sam as a person who, although threatened,

finally harmonizes the evils and contradictions of American history, cleansing and revitalizing

the American dream, but Coover's The Public Burning (1976) places the burden of

reconciliation and interpretation on the citizens who compete for Sam's blessing. As a symbolic

aggregate and the representative of the official American dogma in Coover's novel, it is not Sam

who must live up to the nation's ideal by facing the ghosts of "forgotten" history. Rather, Sam *is*

the American paragon, but he is an image of a dubious perfection. With elements of political

cartoon satire and comic book hero exaggeration, he is the flawless image of what ideal

American identity is, not an idea of the icon Americans should use. This Sam is not plagued by

internal conflict or the shadow of an evil twin; the Manichaeanism exhibited by the comic book

incarnations has been displaced from internal domestic politics to "The War Between the Sons

of Light and the Sons of Darkness," to the conflict between the United States and Soviet

Communism (Coover 149).   He represents an America rife with gaps and paradoxes, and it is

the other, mortal citizens who experience conflict and doubt while Sam is concerned with

furthering America as a world power and defeating Communism by any means necessary.

In Coover's rendering, Sam is a puzzle, a conundrum, a field of discourse that must be

navigated by citizens who wish to rise in the national hierarchy of wealth and prestige.[14] Uncle

Sam symbolizes all the features of the 1950's American spirit: freedom, politics, anti-

communism, baseball (for the middle classes), golf (for the upper class), apple pie, mom, God.

He reconciles the paradoxes, contradictions, and hypocrisy of American consciousness,

including racism and sexism, into a seemingly cohesive whole. As in Darnell and Ross' version,

his speech is cobbled together from the rhetoric of past Presidents, the language of government

documents, American films, and works of literature, especially Mark Twain's The Adventures of

Huckleberry Finn (1885). Sam is language. Coover's Sam is American language condensed and

reified into a specular image.[15] This language does not, as Coover's Sam embodies it, divide

into good and bad or true and false components. The split comes, not between an ethical and an

evil Sam, but between Sam and the citizens of the nation he embodies.

Coover personalizes the conflict between the individual subject and Sam, as the

embodiment of American history and ideology, through the character of Richard Nixon, who

comes to doubt the wisdom of executing the Rosenbergs for treason when the couple may be

innocent and when the executions may be unconstitutional. Simultaneously, Nixon perceives

Uncle Sam as the American ideal, and the Vice President strives to make himself into an acceptable receptacle for receiving the spirit of the American populace. Nixon, then, is a bifurcated subject, and Sam is his ideal ego, but, for Nixon, Sam is also the primary signifier that grounds the structure of American culture. Coover utilizes the split between Uncle Sam and Nixon in The Public Burning as a metaphor for the gap between individual subjects and the collective ideology of the American populace.

Uncle Sam, the avatar of public tradition and the reification of American discourse, operates in much the same way that Lacan's "name of the father" works. According to Lacan, "The subject, while he may appear to be the slave of language, is still more the slave of discourse in the universal moment of which his place is already inscribed at birth, if only in the form of his proper name" (Écrits 140). Upon entry into the symbolic, the subject must conform to the order that exists previous to his inscription within it because the signifying system will not alter simply because it has a new member. Lacan states, "Symbols in fact envelop the life of man with a network so total that they join together those who are going to engender him 'by bone and flesh' before he comes into the world; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gift of the stars, [. . .] the shape of his destiny; so total that they provide the words that will make him faithful or renegade" (Écrits 67). Sam, regardless of his enigmatic corporeal reality, is essentially the sum of the dominant American discourse on society, religion, and politics. As Maltby observes, "the Uncle Sam of The Public Burning is not just the Uncle Sam of the political cartoonist's imagination . . . Coover's Uncle Sam is also the incarnation of the discourse of 'America,' specifically, the discourse of cold war America" (119-20). Nixon, who has entered Sam's sphere of influence, must conform to this American discourse, or risk being marginalized and labeled as a "Communist" or a "traitor." Although he assiduously attempts to

master this discourse, there is always a gap between Nixon and the symbolic order that Sam represents, between the individual subject and the collective discourse.

It is impossible to completely master a field of discourse, and all meaning is an approximation, which prohibits complete mastery of any semiotic system. As Nixon himself observes, "Everything was so fluid, nothing stayed the same, not even Uncle Sam. Of course, this <u>was</u> what stayed the same" (334). Nixon perceives the gap between Sam and himself in the mirroring that occurs, quite literally, between the two. Twice, Uncle Sam appears to Nixon as a mirror reflection: "I looked in the mirror and saw that I had given myself quite a whack on that wall. I looked puffy and hairy, I hardly recognized myself, some kind of monster. I seemed to see Uncle Sam's face behind me, his blue eyes glinting with amusement. Or, fury. I can only do my best, I thought. What more does he want of me?" (180). Later, Uncle Sam catches the Vice President masturbating while he is fantasizing about Ethel Rosenberg, and the mirroring recurs: "I caught a furtive glimpse of him [Uncle Sam] in the mirror over my shoulder. His face was in the shadows, his back to the window. He might have been giving me a look of utter disgust. Or he might have been laughing" (331). Mirror images are generally associated with narcissism, but as discussed in Chapter One, mirrors have a prominent place in several theories of human development and ideology. In this case, Nixon looks into the reflective surface and sees Uncle Sam gazing back at him. As in Althusser's formulation, Sam calls out to Nixon, hailing him, but the message Nixon receives is ambiguous; Nixon does not know whether Sam is angry or pleased, amused or disgusted. If ideology hails subjects, as Louis Althusser claims, it is still up to the addressed individual to interpret that call, and the ideological call is subject to the same problems of any other signifier in the symbolic order. Nixon knows there is a gap between himself and the public discourse Sam represents, but, at this point, he is unsure of how to attempt

the closing of that gap, unsure whether Sam's gaze is encouraging him to try harder or deriding his shortcomings.

This interpretive dilemma does not preclude Nixon from attempting to master the public discourse represented by Sam even though Nixon reads the icon's gaze as both positive and negative. For Nixon, Sam is both ideal ego and ego ideal. Nixon desires to become the "Incarnation" of Uncle Sam, a condition he believes is identical with the Presidency, and this identification arises out of Nixon's current feelings of inadequacy: "How much must I give? What more can he possibly want from me? I've done everything a man can be expected to do. . ." (340). Under Sam's gaze, Nixon feels that being the Vice President of the United States is a paltry achievement. Sam is not what Nixon is now but represents an anticipation on Nixon's part of what he can be if he masters the American discourse represented by Sam. He must strive for more; he must strive to become Sam's incarnation. The Nixon looking in the mirror is riddled with flaws and doubts, but the Nixon/Sam that looks back at him has not only mastered the discourse of American ideology but is American ideology.

While the mirror episodes serve as a metaphor for Nixon's desire to achieve the cognitive and spiritual abilities of Sam (Nixon does not seem to consciously entertain the notion that he will actually look like Uncle Sam after becoming the incarnation), there is a physical component to Nixon's desire, which carries over into his perception of others. Nixon believes that others have managed to heal the split between the individual subject and the physical manifestation of American ideology. That is, Nixon thinks that other people such as Eisenhower, past presidents, and other high ranking officials have managed to reconcile their personal doubts with the American icon. Looking at these "subject[s] supposed to know," Nixon perceives in them the unity he sees when he peers in the mirror but does not feel in himself (Lacan Seminar XI 232). And there is some historical evidence to support Nixon's belief that prominent Americans have

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been affiliated with Uncle Sam. During his time at West Point, Ulysses S. Grant, who served as the eighteenth President of the United States from 1869-1877, earned the nickname of Uncle Sam. Ulysses S. Grant III states, "Of Course, the initials 'U.S.' stood out and suggested many possibilities It was probably a first classman named William Tecumseh Sherman who suggested that 'Uncle Sam' would be a proper name for this particular new cadet," who became known as "Sam Grant" among his classmates at West Point (23).[16] Many people believeThomas Nast, a prominent nineteenth century cartoonist who added a goatee to Uncle Sam, based his renderings of Uncle Sam on Lincoln's tall and lanky build (Panati 275).[17] A 1941 poster by Flagg features Sam in his classic pose from the recruitment poster diagonally positioned from an image of Franklin Delano Roosevelt; the caption reads, "I WANT YOU F.D.R. STAY AND FINISH THE JOB!".[18] In any case, Nixon's perception that other people have become Uncle Sam or received the icon's public blessing leads him to conclude that he, too, is a candidate to receive the divine light and that he is merely a "heartbeat away from the Incarnation!" (234).

Despite Nixon's declaration that he is on the verge of reconciling the gap between his I and his ideal ego, the distance between Nixon and Sam vacillates as Nixon moves farther away from Sam and comes to identify more with the Rosenbergs. Ironically, it is Uncle Sam himself that sets the Vice President on this path when Sam asks Nixon what he thinks about the Rosenberg case at Burning Tree. Sam's inquiry prompts the Vice President to scrutinize the case closer than he ever has before, and what he discovers is a growing affinity with the traitors. After examining the biographies of the Rosenbergs, the Vice President concludes that he shares similar backgrounds with the couple: "Ethel was two years older than I was, around Don's age, Julius was younger. We all probably went to the same movies, sang the same songs, read some of the same books. We were the generation of the Great Depression. Now I was the Vice President of the United States of America. They were condemned to burn as traitors. What went

wrong?" (143-44).   Both Julius and Nixon come from religious backgrounds, had sickly

childhoods, had fathers who fell upon hard times, and both have a sweet tooth. Similarly, Nixon

and Ethel have a good deal in common; they were both shy honor students and dreamers. They

also share an affection for books and drama. Nixon concludes, "I'd become Vice President of

the United States by a chain of circumstances not all that different" from those of the Rosenbergs

(128).   Nixon's sympathy with the Rosenbergs continues to grow as he begins to uncover the

contradictions and whimsical nature of the American Dream that ostensibly offers every person

an equal opportunity. Nixon is caught between his conflicting identifications with Sam and the

Rosenbergs, especially Ethel, who he finds sexually attractive. As Larry McCaffrey observes,

Nixon's position becomes "the role of the middleman caught between his desire to be loyal to

Uncle Sam (and perhaps move himself closer to the day he can be transformed into Sam's

incarnation) and his sympathetic identification with the Rosenbergs" (93).

Perceiving this conflict, Sam explains to the Vice President that "It ain't easy holdin' a

community together, order ain't what comes natural, you know that, boy, and a lotta people gotta

get kilt tryin' to pretend it is, that's how the game is played" (531). Sam's function as a national

icon is to smooth over the contradictions and gaps in the American way of life. He holds "the

imagined political community" of the nation together (Anderson 6). Sam contains the

inconsistencies and presents this bundle of history and belief as a cohesive whole. One of the

ways that Sam seeks to strengthen the unity of the American nation is by using the Rosenbergs

and directing the public's attention to the "threat" of Communism. To nullify the threat of

Communist "traitors," represented by the Rosenbergs, Sam incorporates them, absorbs them,

kills them, and turns the alleged traitors into a portion of the American mythos: "she's [Ethel]

part a me now, both her and her brave engineer, just as much as Pocahontas, Billy the Kid, or

Bambi-" (531).

The Rosenbergs, through their death, become part of the American narrative to be recounted and analyzed in articles, books, and documentaries for years to come, another episode in a history that includes Benedict Arnold and John Wilkes Booth. John Ramage writes, "Coover's Sam, then, is very much an expression of the American popular mind in all its manifestations from Ben Franklin to John Wayne" (56), and Marshall Fishwick states that an essay collection on American icons, "looks at objects of everyday man, convinced that in a democracy, Uncle Sam's icons are by, of, and for Everyman" (5). Icons, as part of the nation's cultural identity, can be, and frequently are, symbolically associated with Uncle Sam as the purveyor of all that is American. Furthermore, the varied American icons are meant to appeal to every citizen, and in their sheer number and variety, there is presumably an imaginary identification point for most, if not all, citizens. Coover's version of the Rosenberg executions argues that if someone does not perform the expected rites of national identification because Uncle Sam lacks an object, belief, or idea, Uncle Sam responds by attempting to appropriate what that subject already identifies with as American. This process of absorption transmutes Nixon's identification with the Rosenbergs into increased identification with Uncle Sam as the quilting point from which all things American, from the Constitution to James Dean, radiate, and Nixon's identification conflict is resolved if only because Sam has removed the alternative identifications, claiming them as his. Sam is not simply overdetermined; rather, he is constantly redetermining, altering, expanding, and continuously shifting what it means to be an American. To identify with the Rosenbergs after their death is to identify with American history is to identify with Uncle Sam. By killing and absorbing the Rosenbergs, Sam redirect's Nixon's identifications and desires by appropriating the object-cause of Nixon's desire as American, as his own.

The executions help dissolve Nixon's crises of faith, but they do not move him closer to becoming Sam's incarnation, a goal to which he still clings because Nixon apotheosizes Uncle Sam into an American civil religion and couches much of his patriotic zeal in biblical terms. For instance, Nixon believes that to receive the spirit of Sam is to participate in a nationalistic Eucharist and receive the "host." Sam first appears to Nixon in Chapter Five at Burning Tree, which is both where the historical Eisenhower actually played golf and a location reminiscent of God's appearance to Moses via a burning bush in the book of Exodus. Making this connection explicit, Nixon states that he likes to think of the golf course as "the Burning Bush because it was there that Uncle Sam most often dropped his mask and talked with me directly" (83). The Vice President refers to Sam as omnipresent and states, "Only Uncle Sam is real: there's no one over his shoulder" (232-3). Therefore, Nixon believes that Sam is the American deity, the primary signifier, the anchor at the center of the system; Sam, according to the Vice President, grounds the American structure and gives it meaning. If the rest of the world is caught up in ambiguity and a play of meaning, then this primary signifier is allegedly the ultimate quilting point that eternally stabilizes the slide of signification and keeps it from going too far. It is the solid rock that a subject can cling to in a storm and the one thing that relativity leaves untouched. It is the theoretical gold standard that underwrites the paper currency of signification and ensures its stability and worth.

By wishing to become Uncle Sam's incarnation, Nixon hopes to become the primary icon of American society. The Vice President, who was earlier unsure of what Sam expects from him, now believes that Sam wants him to talk, to use words based on the primary signifier to restore the American spirit from the Communist threat: "I had to go before the people tonight and unleash a real philippic, communicate the facts, publicize the truth, help them all stand taller and feel proud to be Americans! That was what Uncle Sam was expecting of me! That was

what language was for: to transcend the confusions, restore the spirit, recreate the society!" (234). As Gordon states, "Richard Nixon knows all of this – and even more. He knows that a person is, finally, his linguistic function" (70). After all, Sam himself is the collective language of the American people, and Nixon models his own salvation plan for the nation on the methods and existence of his ideal ego.

At the same time, the Vice President knows that language can produce the very confusions he seeks to clarify with words. He speculates, "We have not yet begun to explore the true power of the Word, I thought. What if we broke all the rules, played games with the evidence, manipulated language itself, made History a partisan ally? Of course, the phantom was already on to this, wasn't he? Ahead of us again" (136). Even though Nixon believes that the Phantom (Sam's Communist counterpart in the novel) is ahead of "us," the fact is that Uncle Sam's servants understand the power of the "Word," and Nixon comes to appreciate the obfuscating abilities of language as he delves deeper into the trial of the Rosenbergs. He realizes that someone (the FBI is one of the likely candidates) has played word games with the evidence. He even begins to doubt that there was ever a spy ring all: "And then what if, I wondered, there was no spy ring at all? What if all these characters <u>believed</u> there was and acted out their parts on this assumption, a whole courtroom full of fantasies?" (135). If, as Nixon begins to suspect, someone has fabricated evidence, then this occurs, to a large extent, in and through language, and all it takes is for Hoover to make the assertion that there is a spy ring. Nixon thinks, "Hoover, reacting with 'shock and anger' had grabbed up the intercom in 1949 and said: "Get that spy ring!' And so, like unquestioning soldiers of Christ, they had gone out and got one" (135). The Vice President is aware that language is a powerful social and political force, and he hopes to replace the old constructs with fictions of his own: "What was missing was the middle ingredient . . . the true America. My America. Dwight Eisenhower and Julius Rosenberg would

never understand each other, but I could understand – and contain – both. Was this to be my

role? To urbanize the countryside and bring the wilderness back to the cities? To lead the new

revolution? To bring the suburb to all America?" (373). Nixon believes that he can provide the

sagging American structure with new stability, that he can be the center. He plans to contain and

reconcile the contradictions of American life, claiming an understanding of the varied walks of

life that compose the national culture. In other words, Nixon seeks to take on Uncle Sam's role;

he desires to be the new model of American ideology and to embody the primary signifier.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the primary signifier is the phallus: "the phallus is the

privileged signifier" (Lacan Écrits 277).[19] Lacan states, "In Freudian doctrine, the phallus is not

a fantasy, if we are to view fantasy as an imaginary effect [. . .] Still less is it the organ, penis or

clitoris, that it symbolizes," and "the phallus is a signifier, a signifier whose function, in the

intrasubjective economy of the analysis, lifts the veil from the function it performed in the

mysteries" (285). The phallus may not necessarily be a literal male sex organ, but the phallus, as

Lacan says, does symbolize the penis, and the penis / phallus link provides Coover with an apt

metaphor for the phallus as the primary signifier in the climactic scene of The Public Burning,

which emphasizes the public spectacle of the Rosenberg executions by moving them from Sing

Sing Prison to Times Square amid a televised circus atmosphere.

Nixon, in a moment of inspiration, thinks he can simultaneously minimize his

embarrassment for emerging into Times Square with his pants around his ankles and fulfill his

divinely inspired mission to revitalize the American populace by literally showing the people the

phallus that presumably anchors American ideology. Nixon shouts, "MY pants are down!

YOUR pants are down! EVERYBODY'S pants in AMERICA are down! Everybody's —

EXCEPT HIS!" (484). By calling for Uncle Sam to drop his pantaloons, Nixon urges the public

to examine the most private regions of Sam and the ideology he represents. He wants to reveal

the underlying "Truth" of the American ideology. The people take up Nixon's suggestion, but Sam will not allow it, claiming that this is a project of "national sooey-cide" and that Nixon is a "fool" for "going to far" (485). Perhaps Sam knows that the undergirding of the American ideology will not bear the weight of so close a scrutiny because there is no primary signifier to bind the system together, but, in any case, one is reminded of the Old Testament injunction that no man can look upon the face of God because the American hero vanishes in a cloud of smoke as he drops his pants.

Through his sudden disappearance, Sam gives Nixon and the American public a small taste of what it is like to live with a ruined ideology and all "the goddamned stuff we make up to hold the world together" (436). In the wake of the American superhero's disappearance, panic erupts in Times Square. It is as if night has descended upon America; people scream in fear, push and wrestle with each other, and loudly condemn Nixon for "killing" Uncle Sam. Sam may be an ideological fiction; but he is a necessary fiction even if he is "no better than the Phantom" (531). As Sam tells Nixon, "You wanta make it with me . . . you gotta love me like I really am" (531). If Nixon wants the power and order provided by Uncle Sam, then he has to be willing to accept the costs, which include fabricating evidence and executing people who may be innocent.

Sam eventually returns to save the day from the people's fears and the Phantom, leading Nixon to believe that he has finally bridged the gap between himself and Sam. However, the Vice President finds this fulfillment a dubious honor: "Maybe the worst thing that can happen to you in this world is that you get what you think you want" (534). Critics such as Gordon and McCaffrey generally agree with Nixon's interpretation; they believe that Nixon receives the power of the "Incarnation." Gordon refers to "the incarnation ritual," and McCaffrey states, Sam "invest[s] him [Nixon] with the 'Incarnation of Power' that will manifest itself publicly fifteen years later" (90). The historical Nixon did, in fact, become the President of the United States of

America in 1969. However, this does not mean that the Nixon of The Public Burning manages

to realize his ideal ego. The idea that a person can completely master the elusive public

discourse of America is ultimately an illusion. The very structure of the signifying chain

precludes the sort of mastery that Nixon desires, and the belief that people can close the gulf

between themselves and public discourse is held by many members of the same American

populace that are so easily seduced by the media spectacles of Time (the National Poet Laureate)

and The New York Times. The Vice President's assessment of the situation and the critics'

endorsement of Nixon's interpretation seems a little skewed; Nixon does not get what he wants.

Nixon wants to be the incarnation of Uncle Sam, to close the gap between his ego and his ideal

ego, to become *the* American icon, and to resolve the problem of the individual subject faced

with mastering an elusive public discourse. Instead, he gets raped.

The rape is symbolic of the way that the phallus (in this case quite literally) screws over

individual subjects. Commenting on the rape, Tom LeClair states, "America[ns] allow ourselves

to be physically mastered by our own constructs" (121). Nixon first seeks to possess the phallus:

"I was a heart beat away from the Incarnation!" (234). Then the Vice President seeks to reveal

the phallus / penis to the public. This ploy fails. In both cases, Nixon seeks to find the primary

signifier that anchors the structure of public discourse, believing that if he finds, possesses, and

embodies the mythical signifier, he can breathe new life into the American conscious by erasing

the gap between individuals and our national ideology. However, the phallus proves to be an

elusive object; Nixon never possesses it and never sees it; the phallus, as Lacan says it must,

remains veiled. Of course, he does feel it, and as it turns out, being taken by Uncle Sam is about

the same experience as Nixon imagines being possessed by the phantom feels like: "What did it

feel like, I wondered, to be possessed by the Phantom? . . . Some believed he invaded through

the eyes, like a hard light you could feel, others that he used the genital organs, that he could

fuck like a man, but had no semen, leaving his chosen ones feeling all filled up . . ." (144).

When Sam rapes Nixon, the Vice President exclaims, "Oh my God, so this is what it was like! I

felt like a woman in hard labor, bloated sewn up, stuffed with as enormous bag of gas I couldn't

release" (533). Nixon becomes intimately aware of the fact that the phallus looms over the

subject as an ultimately unreachable goal, but he is equally aware that the phallus can invade us

in highly personal ways.

In the end, the Vice President is left alone, sodomized by the American ideology but,

Nixon continues proclaiming his allegiance to Sam: "I . . . I love you Uncle Sam!" (534). This

statement of love is a testimony to the power of ideology. Nixon knows ideology is a construct,

knows that it is rife with gaps and contradictions, knows that it fabricates evidence and kills

those who may be innocent, but he still desires to be the incarnation of that ideology and to

reconcile the split between the individual subject and the collective discourse. In spite of

Nixon's belief that Sam has anointed him with the power of the American spirit, Nixon does not

become the incarnation of the American discourse. The gap between the individual and the

collective remains: "But he was already gone, I was alone" (534).

The problem of rebellion also remains. Coover's novel provides an account of the ways

American ideology hails and recruits subjects to its cause, and the comic book versions of the

Uncle Sam myth show how the system maintains itself by supposedly purging evil even when it

is clothed in the guise of patriotism, but like Althusser's theory of Ideological State Apparatuses,

these narratives provide little room for successful rebellion against the master's discourse.[20]

Coover's novel does, however, feature unsuccessful rebellions. Nixon, identifying with the

Rosenbergs, momentarily doubts Sam until the American superhero absorbs the Rosenbergs into

his ideological arsenal of American history. Additionally, Supreme Court Justice William

Douglas resists Sam's anger and stands his ground when Sam demands that he revoke the

execution stay granted to the Rosenbergs. In both the novel and history, this stubborn show of independence is futile because the full court revokes the stay, allowing the executions to proceed on schedule.[21] Yet, there is a difference between Nixon and Douglas. On the one hand, Nixon's abortive mutiny ends with the production of a loyal subject who has lost his desire to act against Uncle Sam. On the other hand, Douglas' move to halt the execution is thwarted, but he is never won over to Uncle Sam's cause. Unlike Nixon, there is no evidence that Douglas, at least as he is represented in the novel, wishes to become Sam's incarnation. Therefore, in Coover's formulation, those who wish to rise further in the social and political hierarchy are constrained more than those who have no such motivations.

Furthermore, history demonstrates that those who exist outside of the imagined community of the nation have little trouble rebelling against Uncle Sam. When the United States attempted to close off immigration from Mexico in 1993, "Some [Mexican] protestors burned Uncle Sam in effigy, a traditional ritual" (Suro 267). The U.S. Embassy was overrun in the Iranian revolution of the late nineteen seventies and early eighties when American hostages "were often paraded with crude blindfolds as effigies of Uncle Sam were burned in the background by angry youths" (Wright 13). These examples show that it is possible, especially for foreigners, to protest against Sam. It is conceivable for such mutiny to exist within the geographic borders of the country because a nation is much more an idea than a place. It is conceivable that someone could be physically inside of a country's boundaries while being outside of the nation's "interpretive community" (Fish 171).[22]

Being inside the country's geographic border but outside the nation leads Samantha A. Hughes, the protagonist of Bobbie Ann Mason's novel In Country (1985)*,* to answer Sam's gaze by shooting him the bird: "Next door, in the window of the U.S. Army recruiting station, was a poster of Uncle Sam thrusting his finger out demandingly at her. She gave him the finger back

and raced by" (76). It seems Samantha rejects the call of American ideology outright. She refuses to be recruited by the poster, and at first blush, Samantha's rebellious, if ineffectual, act appears to contradict much of what Coover claims in The Public Burning regarding Sam's extreme powers of persuasion. However, unlike the allegorical, living depiction of Sam in Coover's narrative, this Sam is a frozen image that functions as a spectacle in precisely the way Debord theorizes: The poster's message has the potential to recruit subjects for the armed forces, yet the message is not harmed by the teenager's gesture. The poster hails subjects, but Samantha does not harm the poster or interfere with the poster's communication with other passers-by with her middle finger. Conceivably, Samantha could engage in a whole range of futile protests. She could, for instance, yell at or deface the poster, but ranting at the image would be the same as yelling at herself, an angry monologue with no audience. Defacing the poster would, at best, be a fleeting rebellion until the recruiting office replaced the altered ad. The Uncle Sam spectacle distracts Samantha into protesting against an image that absorbs the rebellion without even acknowledging its occurrence instead of registering her concerns with an entity capable of listening and responding.

Samantha does, however, resist Sam's call, and this resistance is an effect of her alienation from the national community, but it is a social isolation she actively seeks to end. The teen's rebellion comes in the midst of a complex set of relations involving the Vietnam conflict approximately a decade after the 1975 fall of Saigon and the withdrawal of U.S. forces. Vietnam permeates Samantha's existence while she is also excluded from understanding or taking part in the national experience generated by the conflict. Her father was killed in Vietnam before her birth, and she lives with her Uncle Emmett, a veteran emotionally and physically scarred by combat experiences. Emmett and Samantha watch reruns of M*A*S*H every evening, a show that is ostensibly about Korea but is commonly regarded as a commentary on Vietnam. As the

after affects of Vietnam ripple through Samantha's life, her mother instructs, "Don't fret too much over this Vietnam thing, Sam. You shouldn't feel bad about any of it. It had nothing to do with you" (57), but Samantha feels "the delayed stress of the Vietnam War. It was her inheritance" (88).

Samantha attempts to claim her heritage and wants the experience of being "in country," a phrase that functions in the novel as an expression for being in Vietnam during the war and a shibboleth of cynical American national identification. It is the kind of regional, antifederalist patriotism that is proud to be American, loving American cars, music, and mom, while also harboring a deep distrust of the federal government. As Berlant, commenting on the 1989 film version of the narrative, states, "Samantha then sees that <u>everyone</u> she knows is a Vietnam veteran: the men who are living with horrible memories and no economic or sexual prospects; the women who are desperately trying to produce normality for the men" (32). While Samantha sees it, she also desperately tries to change the conflict from what Roland Barthes terms a readerly text that exists as dead history to a writerly text that situates her as actively involved. To this end, Samantha, who is out of country in both senses, reads history books, her father's love letters to her mother, and his wartime diary. She asks her uncle and his veteran friends endless questions about their time in the military, attends a Vietnam veteran's dance, and develops a crush on Tom, a local Vietnam vet. She even camps out in a swamp, attempting to recreate the experience of jungle warfare. These strategies lead her to conclude that "Dwayne [Samantha's father] had died with his secrets. Emmett was walking around with his. Anyone who survived Vietnam seemed to regard it as something personal and embarrassing" (67). Samantha perceives the conflict as the avenue to understanding her father, her uncle, herself, and her nation while those around her see the conflict as a rupture in nationalist ideology because of the violent protests, ethical questions, and ongoing wounds generated by American involvement

in Vietnam. Samantha's quest is frustrated by the embarrassment and guilt of others over this rupture, and Tom tells her, "It's hard to talk about and some people want to protect you [. . .]" (95).

Tom's wish to protect Sam, which is shared by her uncle and her absent father, is somewhat superfluous because Samantha's place in history as well as her sex bar her from the Vietnam experience and the national identification she seeks. Tom states, "Nobody else could ever know what you went through except guys who have been there" (78). Tom's sentiment leaves Samantha outside of the experience not only because she has not been there but because she can never go there. The conflict has already concluded with America's retreat; Sam has been born too late. And even if she was the right age, she could not live the Vietnam narrative Tom constructs because he specifies "guys" in his group of understanders. Samantha is the wrong sex. Emmett tells her, "Women weren't over there [. . .]. So they can't really understand" (107).

Samantha protests that women were over there, pointing out that women nurses served in Vietnam, but she also acknowledges, "Women didn't kill" (210). Men, in Samantha's view, "were nostalgic about killing. It aroused something in them," and one reason that Samantha can answer Sam's index finger with her middle one is that she falls outside of and is excluded from his recruiting mandate (209). In the United States, women are not allowed to serve in combat units, and the "you" in Sam's "I WANT YOU" is implicitly a male subject. Like Tom and Emmett, The Uncle Sam poster constructs a national war narrative that forbids women from much, if not all, of the war experience, restricting female involvement to the traditional role of care givers for wounded soldiers. Glenda Goodacre's Women's Vietnam Memorial, placed near, but out of sight from, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, commemorates this care giving function and depicts three women tending to the wounds of a prone, male soldier.

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While Samantha does take care of Emmett, as both her mother and Emmett's girlfriend Anita have done previously, the novel does not mention Goodacre's sculpture, but instead looks to Maya Ying Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, commonly known as "the Wall," for a solution to Samantha's identification crisis. Unlike monuments such as Goodacre's or the practice of honoring an Unknown Soldier, the Wall does not present an emblematic and representational image of a few soldiers' bodies. Benedict Anderson states,

> No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely because they are deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times. [. . .] Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings. (This is why so many different nations have such tombs without feeling the need to specify the nationality of their absent occupants. What else could they be but Germans, Americans, Argentinians . . .? (9-10).

In the United States, Unknown Soldiers from World War One, World War Two, the Korean Conflict, and (until recently) Vietnam have been housed in the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.[23] Perpetually guarded by military personnel, the Unknown Soldiers fulfill a symbolic office of public mourning for those who fall in combat, but, for one reason or another, cannot be identified or recovered. The anonymity of these soldiers displaces personal mourning onto the military uniform, onto the symbolic function of the soldier who dies in the service of nationalistic rhetoric. In turn, identification with the uniform is transferred to the flag as the national symbol that covers the coffin before entombment. Finally, identification comes to rest at the spectacle of the national monument dedicated to the Unknowns, which serves as a site and image of quasi-religious and nationalistic pilgrimage for mourners, veterans, and tourists.

The militaristic and national trappings of Arlington block off a fantasy space that pivots on the soldier's lack of personal identity. The unknown soldier, who is honored with national

entombment and elevated to the status of national icon, could be anyone; it could be a son, brother, father, husband, lover, friend. However, the ability to project an identity onto the Unknown is limited by several factors. To project an identity onto the Unknown, one has to accept his status as soldier of a particular nationality. The question of military rank and branch (air force, navy, army, marine), however, is effaced; the Unknown stands in for a lowly private and a decorated general. Furthermore, the Unknown is emphatically and tacitly male if only because war has traditionally been a male vocation in western cultures. Even now the United States government forbids females from enlisting in combat units, and the fantasy is that the Unknown died a glorious death in heroic combat against the enemy. Of course, this assumption does not stand much scrutiny; precisely because the soldier is unknown, the circumstances of his death are also the product of a constructed fantasy narrative. Just as the Unknowns are male, they are also Caucasian in practice even if they are theoretically capable of eliding racial distinction. America's military was racially desegregated, at least on paper, by an executive order issued by Harry Truman in 1948, but the anonymous subject is still the white subject in our culture. It is only the nonwhite who is marked by skin color in narrative description.

Therefore, the Unknown Soldier allows for projection but also imposes limits on that projection in terms of profession, nationality, gender, manner of death, and race. These boundaries stipulate that accepting national ideals and norms are the admission price for identification and projection, for the valorization and public mourning provided by the Tomb of the Unknowns. While allowing projection, the figure of the Unknown interpellates mourners and pilgrims as subjects who reinforce and internalize national norms. Once these disciplinary demarcations are set and accepted, the Unknown could be anyone. This can have surprising results as William Faulkner demonstrates in A Fable (1954). Originally conceived as a screen play, this heavy handed allegory (not Faulkner's best work) projects the image of Jesus Christ

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into France's Unknown Soldier for World War One. The Unknown Soldier in this novel is

Christ, and the plot mirrors the last days of Jesus, complete with the last supper and a betraying

Judas figure (Polchek), "One of his own squad. One of his close and familiar own – as always"

(279). Known only as "the corporal," the Unknown Soldier/Christ figure sets off a rebellion that

stops the war for three days when an entire French regiment lays down their weapons, refusing

to fight. For this act of peace promoting treason, the corporal is executed by a firing squad and

left in a field until a detachment collects his body to take the place of the Unknown Soldier. In

claiming that the Unknown could be Christ, Faulkner stays within the limits of the fantasy space

demarcated by the frame of identification and even changes the ethnic identity of Christ from

Jewish to French. However, A Fable does specify that the Unknown is a corporal as a trade off

for making him anonymous in nearly every other respect.

The projection of the Unknown as Jesus infuses the Unknown with a moral and religious

disciplinary effect. Christ has come again, and we have sacrificed him again. In fact, we have

murdered Christ to prevent peace and perpetuate a world war. This results in an interpellation of

the reader as guilty, as complicit in the death of Jesus. Jesus' sacrifice did not occur in distant

centuries but was effected in the visitable past. Moreover, A Fable grafts the voyeuristic

attribute of the divine onto the nationalist project of the Unknown. The corporal participates in

the narrative events, but his presence also proclaims that God, in the person of Jesus/the

corporal, watches and knows what is occurring among Earth's nations. Faulkner's scenario

emphasizes the victimization of both Christ and the Unknown Soldier; both die as a sacrifice so

that others can be redeemed in the religious and the nationalist, Jeffersonian "blood of patriots

and tyrants" sense. As he did elsewhere, Faulkner lambasts politicians and generals to affirm the

nationalism and fellowship of the common man, the common soldier who is validated in the

figure of the unknown soldier.

Both Faulkner's project in <u>A Fable</u> and the Unknown Soldier ensconced in the Arlington National Cemetery depend upon anonymity. The Unknown fulfills the symbolic function assigned to him only so long as his identity remains fluid. Even Faulkner never says outright that the corporal is Christ, and the feasibility of the narrative vision is plausible only so long as there is never a firm statement of the corporal's identity. Fixing identity closes off the fantasy space of projection and identification, cutting off the symbolic office the Unknown occupies. This is why the tomb for the Vietnam Unknown is now empty. Genetic testing made the identity of First Lieutenant Michael Joseph Blassie, formerly the Unknown Soldier from Vietnam, real. Restoring Blassie's personal identity in the symbolic register makes him unfit to be the public emblem of all other lost and anonymous soldiers. In 1998 his body was returned to his family, but the Medal of Honor, awarded to the Unknown as a collective and symbolic award to all unidentified and lost soldiers, was not. The crypt remains empty, a hollow signifier that performs the same imaginary function without Blassie's remains.[24]

<u>In Country</u>, set in the 1980's, takes place before Blassie's identity is established; during Samantha's search for her father there is still an Unknown for Vietnam. And while the visitors, tourists, and pilgrims converging on Arlington may share some commonalities with those visiting the Wall in Washington, the two sites address nationalist mourning concerns in different ways. Both the Unknowns and the Wall honor troops who have fallen in battle. However, the Wall focuses exclusively on one conflict whereas the Unknowns are a more diffuse memorial. And while an unknown possesses many strengths in its ability to allow projection, it assumes that the mourner has associations or memories to project. Samantha, despite her reading and questions, still feels that she knows too little about her father and does not have much of him to project into the Unknown. Because of her ignorance and her all consuming focus on Vietnam that is stoked by the veterans around her, the Unknown is not likely to have a strong effect on

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her. The Wall, however, makes no assumptions about what the visitor wants to project onto the nationalist figure of the Unknown; the Wall is designed to evoke rather than merely allow projection because it is both more and less specific than the Tomb of the Unknowns.

Set between the Lincoln Monument and the Washington Memorial, the Wall, dedicated in 1982, lists, in chronological order, the name of approximately 58,000 U.S. soldiers from the Vietnam conflict who are dead or missing. According to Maya Lin, the monument's designer, "The use of names was a way to bring back everything someone could remember about a person. [. . .] The ability of a name to bring back every single memory you have of that person is far more realistic and specific and much more comprehensive than a still photograph, which captures a specific moment in time or a single event or a generalized image that may or may not be moving for all who have connections to that time" (4.10). Not only is the monument designed to encourage the projection of personal memories into the national mourning process, but it is structured to draw attention to this projection, to reflect the viewer's image. The polished, black marble surface of the Wall is a mirror; the viewer can see his or her reflection in the wall, which forms a palimpsest, combing the person's reflection and the casualty names engraved on the memorial. In a kind of visual math that adds the reflection of the audience with the name of the fallen soldier, the mourner experiences the illusion of reconciliation with the dead soldier in an image that momentarily sutures the imaginary and the symbolic in a way that the Unknown does not. Lin states, "To find one name, chances are you will see the others close by, and you will see yourself reflected through them" (4.11).

Samantha, who visits the Wall with Emmett and her paternal grandmother at the novel's climax, literally searches for "the name of the father," for the reconciliation offered by the memorial's palimpestic image. Samantha locates her father's name, but this is not the main source of gratification for the teen. Instead, the narrative's conclusion focuses on Samantha's

name, which links her to herself, Uncle Sam, her father, Vietnam, and the nation.[25] Throughout

the novel, Samantha, who generally goes by "Sam," attempts to discover the source of her first

name and wonders "if her mother had named her after Uncle Sam because she was a burden to

Uncle Sam, or maybe a consolation prize from Uncle Sam" (167). Samantha shares her name

with the nation's personification, but she discovers that the immediate source of "Samantha" was

her father, who named his daughter in a letter home while fighting in Vietnam. At the same

time, she discovers that her father's first name choice is "Samuel;" her father wants and expects

a boy. Samantha is disappointed that her father, like Uncle Sam, wants boys: "Sam felt cheated.

He was counting on a boy. Samantha was an afterthought" (182). Still, Samantha advocates the

root of her name as gender neutral: "Sam's an all purpose name. It fits boys and girls both" (82).

Samantha, apparently, is correct, for when she visits the Wall, she finds her name, "Sam

A. Hughes," listed in the directory: "There were so many Hughes boys killed, names she doesn't

know. His name is there, and she gazes at it for a moment. Then suddenly her own name leaps

out at her" (244). She "rushes to panel 14E, and after racing her eyes over the string of names

for a moment, she locates her own name" (244). Samantha's name crystalizes into a

constellation of meaning that binds together all of the references and sources of her name. A

quirk in the symbolic order allows both Samantha and a soldier to share a name, and when

Samantha sees her name engraved on the black granite, she sees herself, a double exposure of

her name and reflection. Samantha is inscribed on the wall as a casualty of Vietnam; her pain

and loss are recognized in a national space.[26] She gains no new understanding or insight into

Vietnam; the wall does not resolve the problems of history, nationalism, or gender inequality.

But it tells Samantha she is in country, and she is satisfied.

The Wall diffuses Uncle Sam's presence, transmuting the nationalist icon into a form

Samantha accepts – her own reflection in both the symbolic and the imaginary. But if the finger

pointing image evaporates as Samantha peers at the wall, Sam's presence lingers in the name that links Samantha to both Uncle Sam and the dead soldier. While the comic book Uncle Sam is a self-policing entity who, though momentarily threatened, saves both himself and the nation from the false consciousness provided by imposters, In Country and The Public Burning are recruitment narratives. These novels show how the icon uses disciplinary technologies to draft subjects into a national identification despite the holes and contradictions that identification carries. Samantha's identification crisis resolves in much the same way that the Rosenberg executions settle Nixon's crises of faith in The Public Burning. Both solutions bind what the subject wishes to rebel against to what he or she wishes to identify with as constitutive of social identity, making it impossible to embrace one without the other or to reject one without repudiating the other. Both narratives include possibilities for and moments of rebellion against the prevailing ideology, but these novels recognize that there is no totality in either the master's or the rebel's discourse.

As novelist Pat Conroy's autobiographical essay "My Heart's Content" (1992) illustrates, discipline and rebellion oscillate in cycles and even mix in odd formulations across a subject's life. As a draft dodger and war protester in 1972, Conroy believed he "was serving America's interests by pointing out what massive flaws and miscalculations and corruptions had led her to conduct a ground war in Southeast Asia" (287). As a young man, Conroy feels protesting is a patriotic activity, but he also notes that some protestors went too far in urging violence as a necessary adjunct to rebellion against the war. Additionally, his father, a Marine officer, is in Vietnam during these protests, and Conroy's convictions are tempered by concerns for his father's safety. As a writer in 1992, Conroy states, "I understand now that I should have protested the war after my return from Vietnam, after I had done my duty for my country. [. . .] America is good enough to die for even when she is wrong" (228-9).[27] Looking back from the

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vantage point of a man well beyond the draft age, he thinks protesting is only permissible after the obligatory rendering to Caesar, after what the citizen decries has already conscripted him or her into serving the very cause the protest seeks to defeat. However Conroy revises his beliefs or alters his behavior now, it does not erase his involvement in Vietnam protests. His life presents a shifting tension between discipline and rebellion, and his protests are restrained by his connections to a military father and schoolmates who served in Vietnam. Despite the title, "My Heart's Content," written shortly after an interview with a former prisoner of war who attended the Citadel with Conroy, the essay encapsulates the struggle between the master's and the rebel's discourse.

Like Conroy's essay, Uncle Sam Quarterly #1, U.S.: Uncle Sam, The Public Burning and In Country conclude with resolutions that dissolve, deny, or question rebellion. Because beginnings and endings are privileged places in narratives, these texts stress this point. However, each conclusion must be examined in its own context. The comic books end unambiguously; Uncle Sam wins the day by defeating the false articulations of the national spirit. There is no need to rebel because there is nothing left to rebel against; there is no social control here, but only a national spirit triumphing over evil. In Country is more problematic because there is no enemy to defeat, no choice between a true and false Uncle Sam. It isn't a question of choosing between two clear and present options of national identity; rather, it is a girl's search to construct any kind of national belonging. The text gives little indication of whether Samantha's experience at the Wall is a genuine catharsis or a cynical statement about a narcissistic sense of community produced by Samantha's own reflection. Because the novel ends at this pivotal moment, the reader must speculate whether Samantha's identification crisis has been resolved in a lasting way or if she will continue her search for an imagined community. Susan Clarke Holstein argues, "The novel and its main character, then, eventually entertain

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unresolved contradictions and raise questions about both memory and history. It is probably a

mistake, therefore, to search for the key to reconciling either the dissonances within Sam herself,

or, on a larger scale, within her perceptions of Vietnam." While The Public Burning also ends at

a moment where the protagonist is at peace with himself and the nation, evidence suggests that

Coover's novel situate's Nixon's revival of faith in Sam as an oppositional statement against

nationalism at least in its extreme renderings. The comparisons Nixon makes between Uncle

Sam and the Phantom establish that Sam shares many characteristics with what he claims to

stand against, and the final scene invokes Nixon as a Winston Smith figure. As Nixon proclaims

love for Sam after being sodomized, Winston loves Big Brother after being tortured in George

Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four (1949): "He loved Big Brother" (245).

NOTES

1. See Anderson 6-7 for a detailed explanation of this definition.

2. In his essay "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914) Freud writes of the ego ideal as "an
ideal   [. . .] by which he measures his actual ego [. . .]" (557-58). In the following paragraph,
Freud states, this ideal ego is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by
the actual ego" (558, emphasis added).   Lacan comments, "And Freud makes use there of the
Ichideal [ego ideal], which is precisely symmetrical and opposed to the Idealich [ideal ego]. It's
the sign that Freud is here designating two different functions" (Seminar I 133). While these
terms are two sides of the same coin, the ideal ego is associated with the imaginary register, and
the ego ideal is attached to the symbolic register (Seminar I 134). The ideal ego, existing in the
imaginary register, is the image of perfection that the ego strives to imitate and is first
encountered in the mirror phase. The ego ideal, occurring in the symbolic register, occurs when
the subject sees him or her self as if looking from the vantage point of the imago, the position of
perfection as opposed to the ego's vantage point. The subject then sees him or herself as the
perfect subject might; magnifying the ego's flaws and shortcomings, the subject sees his or her
life as vain and useless. In colloquial terms, the ideal ego is the carrot, and the ego ideal is the
stick that each subject finds in the imago.

3. According to Hirsch, John Bull is a "Figure who stands for England in literary and political
satire and in cartoons. John Bull is a stout, feisty man, often in a suit made out of the British
flag. John Bull is the British equivalent of the United States' symbol Uncle Sam" (318).
Washington Irving's The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (1819-20) contains a
description of John Bull. Describing the English icon and national character, Irving writes, "It is
difficult to cudgel him out of a farthing; but put him in a good humor, and you may bargain him
out of all the money in his pocket. He is like a stout ship, which will weather the roughest storm

uninjured, but roll its masts overboard in the succeeding calm" (267).

4. For both an overview of the debate on whether the United States possesses a civil religion and their own stance on the issue see Marvin and Ingle 15-40. Couching their points in a totem structure derived principally from Durkheim, they argue that "religion, civil or otherwise is what culture is" (15).

5. It is often difficult to distinguish between visual representations of Columbia, Liberty, and Freedom because all three share a Greek goddess aesthetic. Of these three figures, Freedom, also known as Lady Freedom, is the most obscure. A sculpture of Lady Freedom designed by Thomas Crawford tops the dome of the United States Capitol. The statue was erected shortly after the Civil War and was briefly removed for restoration in 1993. When replaced, Poet Laureate Rita Dove commemorated the event with her poem "Lady Liberty Among Us." Images of Lady Freedom are, however, scarce in popular culture. In contrast, Columbia has served as the logo for Columbia pictures since 1924, and her name graces a number of institutions and geographical locations. She appears in political cartoons with Uncle Sam throughout the nineteenth century, and these cartoons frequently depict her advising Uncle Sam to rein in his exuberance or anger. Liberty, of course, is always in the public spotlight because of the prominent place The Statue of Liberty, originally titled Liberty Enlightening the World, occupies in New York Harbor. She plays a role in many immigrant narratives and has been featured in films such as Alfred Hitchcock's Saboteur (1942). The height of recent attention to Liberty came in the nineteen eighties when the statue was renovated for a centennial unveiling.

6. Although historians have several theories, Dr. Richard Shuckburgh, a British surgeon, is commonly attributed with authorship of the "Yankee Doodle" song, where the term originates. Supposedly, Shuckburgh wrote the tune to make fun of Colonel Thomas Fitch V's colonial troops during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). The song marks colonials as bumpkinish dandies, but during the Revolutionary War, Colonial troops used "Yankee Doodle" as a marching song, turning an accusation into a virtue. Yankee Doodle was rarely depicted visually. Brother Jonathan, on the other hand, often appeared in political cartoons, and during the nineteenth-century, foreign editorialists preferred the use of Jonathan as a symbol for the United States. By the beginning of the twentieth-century, Uncle Sam had entirely replaced Jonathan. The origins of Brother Jonathan are uncertain, but Ketchum speculates that General George Washington's references to Connecticut Governor Jonathan Trumball as "Brother Jonathan" is a possible genesis (13). He adds that British soldiers commonly referred to colonial troops as "Jonathans" during the American Revolution (13).

7. The U.S. Congress passed a Resolution on September 15, 1961 recognizing Wilson as the biographical inspiration for Uncle Sam: "Whereas no congressional action has ever been taken to make that symbol of the American tradition , the symbol of 'Uncle Sam,' official and permanent: Therefore be it Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives Concurring), That the Congress salutes 'Uncle Sam' Wilson, of Troy, New York, as the progenitor of America's National symbol of 'Uncle Sam'" (United States Statutes 966). It is noteworthy that the resolution legislates that Sam is a permanent fixture of American identity; he is, then, in one sense, immortal for as long as the nation exists. In the senate conversation preceding the vote on the Uncle Sam resolution, which includes a debate on Wilson's birthplace and early residency, Senator Keating of New York explains, "The purpose of this motion is to rejuvenate 'Uncle Sam.'" (Congressional Record 19628). Senator Ellender enquires, "What method has the Senator

decided to use to rejuvenate 'Uncle Sam'? Is he old?" (<u>Congressional Record</u> 19628). Keating never answers the question directly.

8. Another version of the Kitchener poster, with the same graphic, reads, "BRITONS 'WANTS YOU' JOIN YOUR COUNTRY"S ARMY! GOD SAVE THE KING."

9. Uncle Sam was not the only patriotic hero featured in the pages of comic books on the eve of America's official entrance into WWII. While noting the existence of other nationalistic heroes, William W. Savage, Jr. valorizes Uncle Sam above other patriotic heroes. Savage states,

> The comic -book industry fashioned a number of patriotic heros for popular consumption. These included the Fighting Yank, descendant of a Revolutionary War soldier who received his powers from that long dead ancestor; Captain America, a chemically enhanced human being created by the military as the first member of a proposed army of super soldiers ; and perhaps the most peculiar – and peculiarly American – hero of all, Uncle Sam . . . Once these and other such characters were in place, it was a relatively simple matter to match them against Axis villains, anticipating the day when the United States would have to join the conflict in an official capacity. (8-9)

It is tempting to conclude that comics publishers, who were facing charges of printing immoral material in the 1930's, sought to deflect negative reactions by voicing nationalistic support through patriotic characters and plots. As Savage notes, comic books were filled with ads for war bonds, and these comics became "an integral part of the Allied propaganda machine" (10). In any case, criticism of comic books by teachers, journalists, politicians, religious groups and others declined sharply during the war, resurfacing again in the 1950's.   It is possible that the war itself drew attention away from comics, but it is equally plausible that comics became useful for war propaganda and were therefore spared heavy scrutiny during the war.

10. Scott McCloud's comic <u>The New Adventures of Abraham Lincoln</u> (1998) uses the doubling of Lincoln in a similar fashion: The Lincoln that Brian Johnson meets at school spouts patriotic dogma that often ignores historical facts, but the Lincoln that materializes in his home from the history books he has been reading is a more thoughtful and caring man. The two Lincolns clash, competing for national power and recognition with a debate in "the tradition of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates [. . .,] and this time, it's Lincoln versus Lincoln!" (50). The ethical and authentic Lincoln loses the debate, resorting to violence to reclaim his place in American tradition. In doing so, he discovers that his rival is Benedict Arnold, who conspired to compromise an American fort at West Point, New York in 1778. Fantastically, Arnold has been employed by extraterrestrial aliens (read national aliens) to impersonate Lincoln and brainwash Americans into "worship[ing] the symbol but forget[ting] the meaning" (93). As in the comics featuring Uncle Sam, the evil double is unmasked and discredited. The authentic version reinvigorates the American way of life and restore's Brian's faith in Lincoln as an American hero, but fails to alter the school Brian attends, which still hands out detentions to students who think too much. In a real life version of the fight for Lincoln's identity, the Illinois Historic Preservation Society has concluded that people such as General Douglas MacArthur and United States Senator Trent Lott have wrongfully attributed quotations to Lincoln. Whether conscious or not, the desire to have the backing of the man who inspired the Lincoln Memorial and whose face appears on both the penny and Mount Rushmore is a strong enough temptation that people will attribute quotations to him without verifying sources. Thomas Schwartz has begun to collect a list of items wrongfully attributed to Lincoln on the Illinois Historic Preservation

Society's web site, which is located at <http://www.illinoishistory.gov/facsimiles.htm>.

11. Darnell and Ross' comic book, unfortunately, does not include pagination.

12. Commenting on The Public Burning, John Ramage uses the same slide of signification: "Coover's Uncle Sam, U.S., is us" (55).

13. Emphasis appears in original.

14. The same observation can be applied to the novel itself. The Public Burning weaves material from historical documents regarding the Rosenberg executions with fiction, and as several critics have noted, the synthesis of historical occurrences with the writer's invented material is so smooth that it is often difficult to differentiate the historical "facts" from Coover's inventions. Lois Gordon argues, "Ultimately, the degree of fact and fiction in Coover's book is irrelevant, because one can never sort out and finalize motivation, event, or truth. Coover's novel, like the news documents of the 1950s, is another arbitrary construct, another metafiction, concerning the Rosenberg event" (56). Paul Maltby notes, "Coover's sign-reflective techniques work to undermine the authority of hegemonic historical narratives by exposing and contesting the ideology inscribed in them" (99).

15. Richard Walsh contends, "Recognizing the value of character but addressing abstract issues, Coover has turned the latter into the former, and so enabled his presentation of what would otherwise have been a thematically overburdened argument" (337). The gathering of multivalent meanings in one image is not unique to Coover's depiction of Uncle Sam. Rather, it is one of the defining characteristics of cultural icons, and writers who work with these images, whether they know it or not, are dealing with theoretical, cultural material that has been codified into a compact image. Certainly, Coover knows this to be the case because Sam says as much in the narrative, and the character of Richard Nixon comes to understand that Sam is the avatar of all things American.

16. See also Conger 2, Foote 196, and Wilson 31. Foote adds that General Grant once used a boat christened "the New Uncle Sam as a headquarters boat during the Civil War (196).

17. Flagg claimed that his version of Uncle Sam, which was used in official U.S. Army recruiting efforts, was based on a self portrait (Meyer 36). If Nast's infusion of Lincoln in his images of Uncle Sam effects a perception that the president is connected to Sam, then Flagg's rendition is the writing of the individual subject into the national myth, a projection of the individual's ego as the national ideal.

18. The Uncle Sam and F.D.R. poster is reproduced in Susan Meyer's James Montgomery Flagg (93). However, not every Roosevelt has received the blessing of being endorsed by a national icon. The 1886 New York City mayoral race between Henry George, Abram Hewitt, and Theodore Roosevelt was a heated affair. According to Boime, "So inextricably tangled became the rhetoric of the three candidates for Mayor and the publicity surrounding the Statue of Liberty that the New York World [a newspaper operated by Joseph Pulitzer] decided to publish an imaginary interview with 'Miss Liberty' in order to determine which candidate had the greatest claim to her virtue" (118). Liberty passed over Roosevelt in favor of Hewitt, who won the election.

19. Many commentators have offered glosses on Lacan's concept of the phallus and its relationship to the penis. Jane Gallop points out that "Probably all of Lacan's advocates somewhere make the point that his detractors misread him by failing to distinguish the 'phallus' from the 'penis" (134). Judith Butler, in the process of theorizing "the lesbian phallus," comments, "The phallus, which Freud invokes in <u>The Interpretation of Dreams</u>, is considered the privileged signifier by Lacan, that which originates or generates significations, but is not itself a signifying effect of a prior signifying chain. To offer a definition of the phallus – indeed, to attempt denotatively to fix its meaning – is to posture as if one *has* the phallus and hence, to presume and enact precisely what remains to be explained" (60).

20. The same is true of Ishmael Reed's <u>The Free-Lance Pallbearers</u> (19670, which shares a good deal with <u>The Public Burning</u>. In Reed's narrative, Uncle Sam becomes "HARRY SAM," which is both the name of the country and the head of state. The novel concerns Bukka Doopeyduk who, like Nixon, hopes to rise in political power. Bukka becomes disillusioned when he gains a long sought after audience with SAM, but discovers that the ruler kidnaps and eats children and rapes his male subjects in a process Sam calls "GOAT-SHE-ATE-SHUNS" (137). Bukka subsequently rebels, losing his desire for a political career. Bukka is executed for his rebellion and dies hanging from meathooks.

21. When the full Supreme Court voted to vacate the stay, Justices Black and Frankfurter joined Douglas in dissenting. Historically, an unsuccessful motion was introduced in the House of Representatives to impeach Douglas for initially granting a stay. Another impeachment attempt was made in 1970, but the consistently liberal Douglas eventually retired from the Supreme Court in 1975.

22. Stanley Fish declares, "Interpretive Communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions" (171). By citing Fish's formulation in a national context, I extend the idea of interpretive communities to national identification, which is, in part, an acceptance of certain interpretive strategies that cover everything from texts to international politics.

23. The official web page for the Tomb of the Unknowns is located at < http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/tombofun.htm>.

24. Since the military now collects DNA samples from all soldiers, it is unlikely that human remains will be used in future incarnations of the Unknown Soldier. Possibly, an empty crypt will be used to perform the same symbolic office. Moreover, other methods of nationalist identification and anonymity can be used to supplement the Unknown, who has historically been honored in his death after hostilities have ceased. However, <u>Time</u> magazine named "the American Soldier" as "Person of the Year" for 2003 for "his" efforts in the War Against Terrorism taking place in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other locations. Since 1927, <u>Time</u> has recognized a person each year as making an important contribution or posing an especially dangerous threat. The Person of the Year's image graces the cover of a special issue and various articles are dedicated to him. Typically, the Person of the Year is an individual subject; Charles Lindbergh (1927), Franklin D. Roosevelt (1934), Adolf Hitler (1938), Joseph Stalin (1939 & 1942), Queen Elizabeth II (1952), John F. Kennedy (1961), and Ted Turner (1991) have all received the honor. Less often, <u>Time</u> has named groups as the Person of the Year, contradicting

the singular title of the award. In 1966, "Young People" received the nomination, and in 1969 the "Middle Class" was honored. In 1950, the periodical gave the honor to "G.I. Joe," also known as "The American Fighting Man," for his efforts in Korea. Examining the history of the award can doubtlessly produce some important insights into the cultural history of the twentieth century, but in the context of the Unknown, both the 1950 and 2003 award perform the same function and operate on the same logic as the Unknown. The difference is that Time is a private entity rather than an official part of the U.S. government. Additionally, the nominations of G.I. Joe and the American Soldier as Persons of the Year is likely to have less of a cultural impact in terms of the nationalist identification fostered by the unknown because the honor is both more inclusive, having included business people, politicians, etc., and more frequent.

25. Timothy O'Brien adds that Sam's name also links her to the Viet Cong, which is an abbreviated form of Viet Cong Sam meaning Communist Vietnam: "Cong Sam (Communism) means to share (Cong) property (Sam). [. . .] Sam is both Uncle Sam and the Viet Cong" (178).

26. The film version of In Country, directed by Norman Jewison and starring Emily Lloyd (Samantha) and Bruce Willis (Emmett), omits Samantha's name from the Wall and therefore eschews the connection to Uncle Sam, which is not mentioned in the film.

27. Conroy here echoes U. S. Naval Commander Stephen Decatur's famous toast, made in 1816 at a banquet in Norfolk, Virginia: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong." The toast pledges allegiance to the nation no matter what, but it also admits that the nation is capable of being wrong.

CHAPTER FOUR:

OUT OF COUNTRY: ICONIC SCAPEGOATS AND THE CONTINGENCIES OF IDENTIFICATION

By invoking Big Brother in <u>The Public Burning</u> (1976)*,* Coover draws a set of parallels between Big Brother and Uncle Sam, Nixon and Smith, the Phantom and Goldstein, Communism and the Brotherhood. In both <u>The Public Burning</u> and Orwell's <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u> (1949), an icon deceives the subject into betraying his own best interest, and these disciplinary figures are complimented by foreign icons, which represent "outsider" ideologies. If Uncle Sam and Big Brother embody the state, the Phantom and Goldstein represent everything the state repudiates. Framed by the designation of outsider, the Phantom and Goldstein provide fantasy spaces that offer citizens an easy object/cause for their fears and hostilities. As Žižek notes,

> The divide of friend/enemy is never just the representation of a factual difference: the enemy is by definition, always – up to a point, at least – <u>invisible</u>; he looks like one of us; he cannot be directly recognized – this is why the big problem and task of the political struggle is providing/constructing a recognizable <u>image</u> of the enemy. [. . .] one has to 'schematize' the logical figure of the Enemy, providing it with concrete tangible features which make it an appropriate target of hatred and struggle. (<u>Welcome</u> 109-10)

By harnessing the human capacity for projecting onto others what we dislike in ourselves and our communities, these images of the Enemy, these iconic scapegoats*,* keep many negative emotions from being associated with both infantile and national icons, indirectly strengthening the appeal of domestic icons. An iconic scapegoat is an icon that represents a frequently ill-defined or illusory threat to a nation's perceived moral, political, military, racial, or religious integrity, which encourages citizens to blame the foreign other or to perceive it as threatening.   Such a representation is a scapegoat because it carries, by popular consensus, the responsibility for some or all of a nation's ills. While possessing the general iconic traits of an image that is auratic,

highly recognizable, overdetermined and culturally variable, icons in The Public Burning, Nineteen Eighty-Four, Hart's War (2002), Decoration Day (1990), and the current "War on Terrorism" exemplify what has repeatedly occurred in history – the use and efficacy of iconic scapegoats for constructing internal political cohesion. Working like the three in one configuration of the Christian trinity, the iconic scapegoats in these texts consist of a focal point, a shadowy horde, and a "foreign" ideology that sutures the two. Together, the three interlaced elements of focal point, horde, and ideology form the triangle of the iconic scapegoat where a reference to any of the components implies the presence of the other two constituents.

While it is an English novel, Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four provides both Coover and this chapter with a baseline text for the Manichean conflict between the State and an iconic scapegoat that is just as applicable to the United States as it is to Orwell's culture. The phrases "Big Brother" and "Orwellian" have found their way into our lives and dictionaries. Nineteen Eighty-Four is an influential book. It is a staple of American high school and college courses and has elicited an impressive body of interpretive commentary. The narrative has been adapted to radio broadcasts by both the BBC and NBC. The BBC produced television films of the story in 1954 and 1965. It was first adapted to film in 1956 by director Michael Anderson, who cast Edmond O'Brien as Winston and Jan Sterling as Julia. Appropriately enough, the novel was also translated into film in 1984; Michael Radford directs this version, which stars John Hurt (Winston), Richard Burton (O'Brien), and Suzanna Hamilton (Julia). Supposedly, the original title for Terry William's film Brazil (1985) was 1984 and ½, but the release of Radford's film prompted a change of titles. Most recently, Lorin Maazel composed an opera based on Nineteen Eighty-Four, which premiered at London's Royal Opera House (Covent Garden) on May 3, 2005. Rage Against the Machine, a now defunct, Marxist-influenced rock group, quotes Orwell's

dystopian story in their song "Testify" (1999), and Disney's <u>Parent Trap</u> (1976 &2003) features a discussion of the novel in a high school English class. Michael Moore's documentary <u>Fahrenheit 9/11</u> (2004) concludes with a comparison of the United States' current political situation to elements of <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u>, and <u>The Merriam-Webster Dictionary</u> defines "Big Brother" as the personification of the state in George Orwell's <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u>, "the leader of an authoritarian state or movement," and an omnipotent "government or organization monitoring and directing people's actions."

As the dictionary definition of "Big Brother" demonstrates, we should, at the outset, distinguish between the novel and its cultural dissemination. Big Brother's role depends on point of view. The Big Brother of Orwell's narrative is a nationalist icon for Oceania's citizens. Outside the novel's pages, including the audience's realization of the novel through the act of reading, Big Brother is a shibboleth of heavy handed, oppressive government.[1] While we have posited that icons are rooted in the imaginary, Big Brother's existence in culture at large is interesting for the disappearance of the image developed in the novel. Big Brother becomes a shapeless icon that can appear in an infinite number of guises, ranging from a shadowy government agent to your next door neighbor or the camera's eye. Existing in the symbolic register, Big Brother has no stable form in the imaginary and is identified only by the moniker Big Brother. In this respect, Big Brother is much like the Communist Phantom that Coover invents in <u>The Public Burning</u>. The phantom's name implies that he lacks a substantial existence; he is a malleable boogie man that can be blamed for nearly anything and can manifest himself anywhere at anytime, including a taxi driver whom Nixon encounters (Coover 274). Like the Phantom, Big Brother has no specific appearance because his primary associations

include surveillance and censorship, and anything that can watch or censor can be Big Brother's incarnation.

As versatile as he is, Big Brother is nevertheless marked as masculine. Laura Mulvey notes, "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly" (442). While Mulvey adds biological determinism to the Lacanian distinction between masculine/symbolic and feminine/real (Lacan Seminar XX 81), her basic premise provides insight to the workings of Big Brother's surveying gaze. However, this gaze is a masculine manifestation that feminizes both male and female subjects. Big Brother's privileged position in the symbolic is allegedly capable of censoring subjects, depriving their access to the "masculine" symbolic and the ability to express their desires. In other words, Big Brother symbolically castrates subjects by restricting expression of desire in the symbolic order.

The masculine censorship in the icon's broader cultural existence differs, but develops, from Orwell's construction of Big Brother in Nineteen Eighty-Four, where Big Brother reigns as the patriarch who deprives subjects of their free will and subjectivity. The novel's narrative viewpoint lays bare to the reader what is presumably kept secret from or repressed in most of Oceania's citizens: the Party's contradictions, lies, propaganda campaigns, and manipulations. This narrative construction illustrates the features of political Manichaeanism and seeks to demystify the mechanisms of social control by defamiliarizing the workings of national and scapegoat icons. That the novel, at least to some extent, realizes this goal is demonstrated by the frequent invocations of Big Brother's name to signal displeasure with a government or organization's actions.

Michel Foucault, who studied with Althusser, has developed a theory of power and discipline that clarifies his teacher's model of interpellation on points helpful for understanding Big Brother. Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon design is central to Foucault's ideas about discipline. Bentham's plans call for a prison space dominated by a tower that gazes at the inmates in their cells: "Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so" (Foucault 201). The inmate always sees the tower without knowing whether the tower's occupants gaze back at him, but because the gaze may or may not be operative, the inmate assumes that it is functioning at all times. Power, then, is located in the structure not only of a prison, but as a general principle of social organization; Foucault asks, "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (228). It does not matter who, if anyone, is in the tower; agency is provided in the interaction between the structure and the subject. Foucault states, "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (202-03). The panoptical structure is similar to Lacan's gaze and Althusser's interpellation. In all of these models, the subject looks at the object, the object gazes back, and the subject internalizes the force of the gaze.

The master's discourse interpellates and disciplines subjects. In both Foucault's and Althusser's accounts, internalization plays a key role as the subject (mis)recognizes that public, ideological discourse is "aimed" at him as an intimate message. Foucault's conception parallels Lacan's mirror metaphor with panoptical surveillance, and for Althusser, the individual acquires

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(and constantly reacquires) his status as subject as he is interpellated or "hailed" by ideology.

These theories of ideology and voyeurism account for the ongoing construction of the subject.

He is continuously initiated to a set of mores and laws that interpellate or discipline him into

adopting cultural ideals. God is such a formulation in an iconic form; the deity addresses

subjects through religious discourse and both surveys and judges them (God is watching you;

God knows all; what would Jesus do?; etc.). Appeals to the nation's "founding fathers" or other

prominent politicians like John F. Kennedy and invocations of Freud's image in psychoanalytic

circles operate on the same principle.[2]

Nineteen Eighty-Four extends panoptical surveillance to every facet of human activity,

but orchestrates this observation as if it occurs from a single, omnipresent point, as if an entire

culture is one, large panoptical structure. That point is Big Brother, "the embodiment of the

Party" (214):

> The hallway smelt of boiled cabbages and old rag mats. At one end of it a colored
> poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall. It depicted
> simply an enormous face, more than a meter wide: the face of a man of about
> forty-five, with a heavy black mustache and ruggedly handsome features. [. . .]
> the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those
> pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move.
> BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran. (5)

A commonplace of Nineteen Eighty-Four criticism holds that Orwell based Big Brother's

appearance on Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator who reigned from approximately 1922 to his

death in 1953. However, Big Brother's portrait also shares something with Flagg's Uncle Sam

recruiting poster and the British depiction of Kitchener it is based on. Instead of wanting or

needing YOU, Big Brother watches, pointing with his hungry eyes instead of his index finger.

And the poster is not the only lookout manned by the Stalin-Uncle Sam-Kitchener hybrid: "On

the other face of the coin [appears] the head of Big Brother. Even from the coin the eyes pursued

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you. On coins, on stamps, on the cover of books, on banners, on posters, and on the wrapping of a cigarette pack – everywhere. Always the eyes watching you and the voice enveloping you" (26).

The images do not lie. Big Brother is watching. Big Brother's likenesses, even those not physically capable of surveillance, capitalize on the mechanics of the gaze, making citizens believe they are monitored perpetually. Even though it is, as Foucault points out, "guesswork" how often an individual is watched, Big Brother monitors his subjects through telescreens that function much like the two way mirrors commonly seen in interrogation rooms (6). He watches through the thought police. Parsons, who is turned in by his own children for muttering "Down with Big Brother" in his sleep, discovers that Big Brother watches through children (193). It is even possible, as Carl Freedman points out, that the dictator observes Winston through his lover Julia (168).   However, we can never know this for sure. Freedman states, "By a scrupulous attention to detail, Orwell has managed to keep the reader in a state of anxious uncertainty that mimics the mental condition in which a citizen of Oceania must live" (169).

Given the wretched living conditions of Oceania's citizens, it is perhaps surprising that Big Brother's agents manage to maintain a tight grasp on the populace, but the extreme surveillance accompanies social control techniques designed to convince citizens that submitting to Big Brother is in their best interest. Among these strategies, one of the least direct, and therefore one of the most effective, is the use of an iconic scapegoat. Whether the enemy of the moment is Eastasia or Eurasia, Oceania is always at war because a scapegoat is always necessary to soften the harsh rule of Big Brother through comparison to the greater alien threat. Therefore, Emmanuel Goldstein's face provides a counterpoint to the ubiquitous images of Big Brother. The two are locked in eternal struggle, and one can never fully defeat the other.

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Julian Castle says of a similar political standoff in Kurt Vonnegut's <u>Cat's Cradle</u> (1963) that *"McCabe was always sane enough to realize that without the holy man [Bokonon] to war against, he himself would become meaningless"* (175), and one White House Aide in <u>Elvis and Nixon</u> (2001) tells another, "Defeat the enemy, and we defeat ourselves" (Lowy 277). The threat of a Boknonon or a Goldstein helps create an apparent need for the rule of a McCabe or a Big Brother. If the threat, the scapegoat, ever dissipates, then a justification for the ruler's existence is compromised, which is why the Party maintains the Manichean balance of Big Brother versus Goldstein. Big Brother does not want to defeat Goldstein, and given that Winston's job is to rewrite history for the Party and that Goldstein never appears in person, Goldstein may very well exist only as a creation of the Party's propaganda machine.

A former Party leader, Goldstein allegedly turned renegade against Big Brother in the same way that Leon Trotsky rebelled against Stalin after Vladmir Lenin's death in Russia. According to the official party line, "He [Goldstein] was the primal traitor, the earliest defiler of the Party's purity. All subsequent crimes against the Party, all treacheries, acts of sabotage, heresies, deviations, sprang directly out of his teachings," and he appears on the telescreen at regular intervals against a backdrop of enemy soldiers (14). According to the Party's propaganda, Goldstein leads both the invaders and the domestic resistance; he is, paradoxically, both outside and inside the nation. He is inside because only a person who once pledged allegiance to the state can be a traitor, and he is outside of it because he repudiates that allegiance. Nevertheless, he remains inside the nation as an infiltrator who supposedly sabotages the Party's efforts.

Figuring Goldstein as simultaneously a foreign and a domestic threat allows Big Brother's agents to deploy a wider range of propagandistic activities in his name. He is a traitor

to his country, the worst sort of citizen, and is rumored to reside within Oceania's borders, which allows the Party to blame him for internal problems. Moreover, the Party uses rumors of the Brotherhood, a domestic resistance group presumably led by Goldstein, to entrap and discipline would-be rebels like Winston. Because he is also outside, the Party can disown him and label him a foreign threat, which frames the basis for international politics and allows a certain amount of distance to develop between the party and the traitor.

On the telescreen, Goldstein urges citizens to throw off Big Brother's rule, and while the nationality of the supporting soldiers changes, Goldstein remains constant as the focal point of the domestic and foreign threats. Goldstein is the scapegoat's name, face, mouth, and personality. Representing what is allegedly a mass movement through one man is necessary to focus the audience's attention on the threat. The focal point translates the abstract workings of international conflict into the everyday disputes people have with families, coworkers, bosses, or neighbors. The scapegoat icon's focal point creates a specific threat. It allows citizens to direct their anger, hurt, and fear at a single human being and makes the threat personal: Goldstein wants to hurt you is more convincing than Eurasia wants to hurt you. It gives Oceania's populace a tangible target: "Goldstein was burned in effigy, hundreds of copies of the Eurasian soldier were torn down and added to the flames" (124). The focal point also implies that victory is assured by eliminating the enemy's leader. The implication is that if Goldstein, the focal point, is eliminated, the opposition will tumble like a house of cards. Defeating an entire country sounds like an enormous task, but eliminating one man seems feasible.

Yet, no matter how influential a focal point like Goldstein may be, he is still only one man, which is not exactly an overwhelming invasion. For morale purposes, the Party doesn't want the enemy to appear too powerful, which might prompt citizens to cast their lot with the

enemy or might bring the populace too close to open rebellion against Big Brother. However, the enemy cannot appear too weak or the domestic cohesion produced by the enemy's threat is compromised. The solution to this quandary is to pair the focal point with a nameless horde by placing the focal point at the apex of a group of anonymous followers. The followers, who are often soldiers, are the mass and muscle of the iconic scapegoat; they are the stick Goldstein wields.

Because Goldstein serves as a dual role focal point, leading both the domestic resistance and the foreign armies, he has two groups of followers, – the Brotherhood and the Eurasian or Eastasian soldiers. The Brotherhood remains in the shadows; there is no graphic depiction of these rebels precisely because they are domestic spies that look like every other citizen. The members of this secret organization are your coworkers, your neighbors, your parents. Anyone could be a member of the Brotherhood, including, Winston mistakenly believes, a high ranking member of the Inner Party like O'Brien. Winston may, in fact, be the only member of the Brotherhood, and when Winston asks whether or not the organization truly exists, O'Brien says, "That, Winston, you will never know" (214). Even if the actual existence of the Brotherhood is in question, the propaganda value for inspiring paranoia is not. What matters is that the populace believes there is a group of citizens loyal to Goldstein.

Unlike the Brotherhood, Goldstein's other horde, the soldiers on the telescreen, are visually marked as the enemy by their race and uniforms. War is distant from average citizens until the enemy threatens them, their family, their friends. The telescreen's images bring the distant rumblings of war into the workplace and home, showing the audience the danger enemy troops pose. The enemy is anonymous, devoid of personality or any humanizing characteristics, an infinite replication of menace.

One soldier is comprehensible. As Erich Maria Remarque demonstrated for Allied Nations in <u>All Quiet on the Western Front</u> (1929), we are capable of understanding and even identifying with an enemy soldier, who experiences the same hardships, thoughts, emotions, and needs as any other subject. But as Alfred Hitchcock shows in <u>The Birds</u> (1963)*,* something benign or marginally threatening in small numbers can, in large quantities, become inscrutable and terrifying. Furthermore, Winston reads in <u>The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism</u>*,* allegedly written by Emmanuel Goldstein, that "It is absolutely necessary to their [the Party's] structure that there should be no contact with foreigners except, to a limited extent, the war prisoners and colored slaves. [. . .] If he [an Oceanic citizen] were allowed contact with foreigners he would discover that they are creatures similar to himself and that most of what he has been told about them is lies" (162).

The Party dehumanizes the enemy by blocking contact with foreigners and by producing huge numbers of images, depicting the enemy in an attacking posture. Abdul JanMohamed, writing of racial Manichaeanism, states, "The perception that organizes this [colonial] universe is simultaneously allegorical and metonymic. It is allegorical in that it explains and orders external, accidental physical differences in terms of internal, moral differences, in terms of the binary opposites of good and evil; it is metonymic to the extent that it conflates parts and wholes. Once black skin is categorized as a sign of moral inferiority, black individuals become interchangeable units of an evil group" (269). The same principles apply to the international politics of <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u>. Once Big Brother defines Eurasian or Eastasian soldiers as racially marked by their ethnicity and nationally marked by their uniforms, they are visually marked as the enemy. The Eurasians and Eastasians become devoid of individual, differentiating characteristics. Every soldier is the same as every other soldier: he is evil and wants to harm our people.

Like an Old Testament plague, the Eurasian soldiers threaten to overwhelm Oceania,

moving from the telescreens to the streets of Oceania:

> A new poster had suddenly appeared all over London. It had no caption, and
> represented simply the monstrous figure of a Eurasian, three or four meters high,
> striding forward with expressionless Mongolian face and enormous boots, a
> submachine gun pointed from his hip. From whatever angle you looked at the
> poster, the muzzle of the gun, magnified by the foreshortening, seemed to be
> pointed straight at you. The thing had been plastered on every blank space on
> every wall, even outnumbering the portraits of Big Brother. (123-4)

The posters employ the same gaze technique as the portraits of Uncle Sam and Big Brother. The

soldier, however, gazes at the viewer with the muzzle of a gun instead of the pointing finger or

tracking eyeball. The Soldier's image outnumbers the posters of Big Brother; the guns

outnumber the eyeballs, implying a sense of danger and an always deferred possible defeat for

Big Brother and Oceania's populace. While this is not an invasion in fact, it is a symbolic

invasion designed by Oceania's own government, and next to a submachine gun, the ever present

surveillance network looks almost benign. The gun justifies and explains Big Brother's gaze,

and a dialogue scripted by The Ministry of Truth emerges between the two portraits, converging

in an audience who is familiar with both images: Yes, being watched might be unpleasant, but it

is necessary. We are at war. The enemy is at the gates, wanting to conquer and take everything

we have. Should the enemy overtake our defenses, soldiers will come. No one will be safe.

Their guns will spare none, but they will point at all. Worse, the guns are pointing at you now.

Big Brother watches to keep you safe, to protect you from Brotherhood spies who gather

information, make bribes, look for weaknesses in our defenses. Of course, most of Oceania's

population does not hear a direct statement of this script. Recognizing that our own ideas are

often more convincing than political rhetoric, the telescreens and posters nudge the populace

towards a predetermined conclusion, allowing the audience to feel they arrive at the idea of imminent invasion and possible defeat on their own accord.

The individual focal point as well as the shadowy and uniformed hordes are manifestations of threats that the Party wishes to sew up into a cohesive danger to Oceania. Goldstein is the head, the Brotherhood members and foreign soldiers are the body, and, in addition to visual images on the telescreen, the ideology of oligarchical collectivism, produced, Goldstein tells Winston, by the Party itself, sutures the head to the body. In other words, what connects Goldstein to the anonymous hordes is a common belief system that they allegedly wish to force Oceania's people to accept. As Žižek states, "When the Enemy serves as the 'quilting point' (the Lacanian point de caption of our ideological space), it is in order to unify the multitude of actual political opponents with whom we interact in our struggles" (Welcome 111). Together, the three interlocking components of focal point, horde, and ideology construct the iconic scapegoat, and a reference to any one of the three invokes the presence of the other two. The mention of Goldstein invokes associations to the Brotherhood and foreign soldiers as well as "oligarchical collectivism," and the mention of the Brotherhood brings connections to Goldstein and oligarchical collectivism. Additionally, these three basic elements are often supported by any number of ancillary items like flags, uniforms, symbols, etc. Thus, both domestic and foreign resistance to the Party are bound up with Goldstein's image, reducing a polyphonous political situation into one coherent and organized threat that must be defeated for the good of Oceania and its citizens.

The political situation described in the preceding paragraphs exists within the pages of Orwell's novel, but those pages are informed by real political events, and while the narrative contains satirical elements, it also contains political commentary that some see as a gloss on

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events contemporary to the book's publication in 1949 and others view as a prophecy that has been fulfilled, has yet to come to pass, or never will come to pass.[3] Shortly after its publication in 1949, Lionel Trilling argued that the novel is a commentary on Russia: "Russia, with its idealistic social revolution now developed into a police state, is but the image of the impending future and that the ultimate threat to human freedom may well come from a similar and even more massive development of the social idealism of our democratic culture" (27). Robert Plank writes, "<u>1984</u> [sic]*, while on one level a novel of the destruction of a man, is on another level a statement of political convictions, a warning against a danger that the writer believed threatened mankind at its very heart" (11). Harold Bloom asks, "Is it satire or science fiction or dystopia or counter-manifesto?" (1). Bloom concludes that "Our edge of foreboding has vanished" because the year 1984 has come and gone, and "<u>1984</u> [sic.] threatens to become a period piece" (3). Bloom's claims are only valid if we read the novel literally, as Bloom insists we must. If, however, we interpret the novel as an exploration of Manichean politics manifested through national and scapegoat icons, we find the three-in-one structure that <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u> lays bare provides a model for understanding scapegoats that clarifies the political workings of scapegoat icons from both past and present, both literature and politics. If <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u> is a period piece, as Bloom claims, that period will not be ending in the foreseeable future.

As demonstrated by the visual similarities between the Soviet dictator and Big Brother, Orwell did have his narrative eye on Stalin, but, written on the heels of WWII, the rise and defeat of Adolf Hitler surely helped provide the impetus for the novel. When Orwell wrote <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u>, Hitler's empire was in ruins, Germany had surrendered, and the Nuremberg trials were well under way. The Nazi threat of WWII had been largely nullified, and the sweep up was in progress. It is understandable that Orwell would have been more concerned with Stalin as a

present and future threat because he, unlike Hitler, was still in power, and the soaring

temperatures of World War II were still dropping into the lower, but more prolonged,

temperatures of the Cold War that would persist into the 1990's. Orwell could not foresee that

Hitler's corpse would have a far greater impact on cultures and social memories in the coming

years than Stalin. But it was Hitler, not Stalin, that became the chief image of incarnate evil,

casting his swastika shadow across the second half of the twentieth century.

Despite Anthony Burgess' argument that, because of Big Brother's immortality, <u>Nineteen</u>

<u>Eighty-Four</u> contains "no Hitlerian or Stalinist cult of personality," the widespread perceptions of

Hitler in the United states correspond with many aspects of the Party's depictions of Goldstein

(34). At first blush, the comparison of Hitler and Goldstein may appear inappropriate. Even

within the fictional world of Orwell's novel, there is a strong possibility that Goldstein exists

only as a fiction of the Party's imagination, but Hitler did exist, and the pain and loss resulting

from his actions are all too real. Whereas Goldstein and his disciple Winston are likely to gain

the audience's sympathy for standing up to the excessive control of Big Brother, Hitler is reviled

as the most despicable monster. On the surface, Hitler shares much more with Big Brother than

he does with Goldstein.

Perspective is crucial. For most of Oceania's citizens, hovering namelessly in the

background of Orwell's novel, Big Brother is a national icon, a leader to be trusted and followed,

but readers of the novel find Big Brother to be the worst kind of tyrant because the novel gives

them the intellectual and emotional distance necessary to demystify the ruler's manipulations.

For the people he seduced into compliance with his plans for a racially "pure" Germany, Hitler

was a national icon, a messiah figure that they believed would lift them up from the Weimar

Republic's economic depression and the humiliation of defeat sealed by the Treaty of Versailles.

For the allied nations that fought against him, Hitler became the image of pure evil; under his vision, the Reich invaded nations, produced insidious propaganda, and slaughtered between five and six million Jewish people in a genocidal campaign (Dwork and Pelt XX). Whether one sees an icon a source of national pride and power or as a foreign threat depends on the numerous other identifications that a subject possesses, including national and ethnic identifications. A person who identified himself as an Aryan German was far more likely to see Hitler as a national icon than a person who saw himself as a Jewish Hungarian.[4]

Walker Percy explores the idea of national identification and perspective in his novel <u>The Thanatos Syndrome</u> (1987) when Father Smith, a Catholic priest, confesses to Dr. Tom More:

> No, that is not my confession. This is my confession. If I had been German not American, I would have joined him. I would not have joined the distinguished Weimar professors. I would not have joined the ruffian Sturmabteilung. I would not have matriculated at the University of Tübingen or Heidelberg. I would not have matriculated at Tulane, as I did, and joined the D.K.E.s. I would have gone to the Junkerschule, sworn the solemn oath of the Teutonic Knights at Marienberg, and joined the Schutzstaffel. Listen. Do you hear me? <u>I would have joined him</u>. (269)

Father Smith believes the only thing that kept him from joining the SS, from becoming a Nazi, and from committing atrocities is that he was born in the United States instead of Germany. His lack of guilt in the Holocaust hangs on the slender thread of a historical accident that he could not control. It was a turn of chance that instilled him with American instead of German identifications, especially since he is in Europe to visit his family during Hitler's ascension to power. Father Smith believes innocence produced by chance is not virtue; it is merely happenstance.[5]

There is no icon that we can point to that would consistently be an infantile, national, or scapegoat icon for all people in all places and times. One country's national icon is another nation's scapegoat. With that caveat, the predominant conception of Hitler is an image of pure

and malevolent evil. When videos and other materials comparing President George W. Bush to Hitler began attracting media attention in early 2004, it is unlikely that the comparisons were designed to portray Bush in a flattering light.[6] Hitler, then, is the focal point of an iconic scapegoat that is most readily associated with evil incarnate. In 1968 George H. Stein observed that

> In the years between 1933 and 1945 Hitler was the central figure in human events. Even now, more than two decades after his death, his name and something of his reputation are almost everywhere known. His face too–the lank hair slanting across the high forehead, the burning eyes, the toothbrush moustache smudging across the upper lip–is instantly recognized by millions of people throughout the world. The most catastrophic events of our century are indissolubly linked with the figure of Adolf Hitler. Indeed, the word <u>Hitlerism</u> has become a recognized part of our language, a synonym for the most brutal of totalitarian dictatorships. In a very real sense, moreover, Hitler is still with us, for his deeds and misdeeds have left us a legacy of political and moral problems that have not yet been solved. (1)

Designating the Hitler described by Stein as a scapegoat is a delicate matter because the common sense definition of scapegoat carries the association of victim, of an innocent who has been treated unfairly. Hitler is no innocent. As René Girard observes, "It is even possible that the crimes of which [scapegoats] are accused are real [. . .] " (17). And Hitler's crimes are real. Calling Hitler a scapegoat is not about mitigating or lessening his acts; rather, it concerns examining the Manichean view that perceives the United States as the unsullied saviors of Europe and the Jewish people while seeing Hitler and his Nazis as the epitome of all that is depraved and wrong in the world. Depictions of Hitler and Nazism have been used to gloss over the crimes and shortcomings of the United States, making it appear that Hitler and his followers were responsible for every heinous action and attitude during WWII. The United States bears some culpability as well.

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Nazi persecution of the Jewish people, from Kristalnact (Night of the Broken Glass) on November 9, 1938 and onward is well known and documented. We revile Nazis for the death camps where families were separated, starved, tortured, raped, and gassed. This is nothing new. Thousands of studies, documentaries, and memoirs recount the atrocities committed by Hitler's Reich. Debórah Dwork states, "Locked for days on end into wagons intended for the transport of animals, with two small barred windows for light and air, little food or water, and no sanitary facilities, Jewish children and their elders were shipped to the gates of Auschwitz" (217). Lucette Lagnado and Sheila Dekel explore the special treatment that twins received from Dr. Mengele in Auschwitz: "Twins as young as five and six years of age endured torture, daily blood tests, and starvation diets, as well as facing exposure to epidemics of cholera, tuberculosis, and other diseases that were rampant because of unsanitary conditions" while Mengele lulled them into cooperation with candy, toys, games, and hugs (9). Art Spiegelman translates the horrors of the Holocaust into the Pulitzer Prize winning comic book Maus (1976), telling the story of his father's experiences during the war through an allegorical framework that presents the Jews as mice and the Germans as cats.[7] Elie Wiesel, himself a concentration camp survivor, recalls, "Expulsed, evicted, the unexpected became the norm: families were separated, parents were humiliated, unable to protect or come to the aid of their sick or hungry children" (10). Boris Kacel, another camp survivor, writes, "Every day I noticed small groups of women walking slowly to the place of annihilation – the gas chamber under the supervision of female SS guards. Those who were able often pushed a four-wheeled open wagon that carried the physically handicapped. [. . .] Most of them quietly moaned and sobbed, knowing where the road led; the walk or ride they were taking would be their last" (176).

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The historical studies are complimented by representations in novels, short stories, poems, and film that draw on and reinforce Hitler's associations with evil. In 1945, William Faulkner wrote the "Appendix Compson 1699-1945," which was appended to his novel *The Sound and the Fury,* first published in 1929. The "Appendix" grants one final look at the doomed Caddy in the company of a Nazi officer: "the woman's face hatless between a rich scarf and a seal coat, ageless and beautiful, cold serene and damned; beside her a handsome lean man of middleage in the ribbons and tabs of a German staffgeneral" (209-210). *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), the first Indiana Jones film, directed by Stephen Spielberg and starring Harrison Ford, pits an archeologist against Nazis in search of the Ark that contains the original stone tablets engraved with the Ten Commandments. Both Faulkner's "Appendix" and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* rely on scores of uniformed Nazi soldiers as the horde incarnation of the Hitler scapegoat to communicate an atmosphere of evil to the audience. Films such as The Longest Day (1962), The Dirty Dozen (1967) and Saving Private Ryan (1998)*,* praise the wits, courage, and strength of U.S. soldiers fighting and defeating the Nazi menace. Ira Levin's novel The Boys from Brazil (1978) raises the possibility of Hitler's second coming through a plot led by Mengele to clone Hitler.[8] Implying that the threat of Hitler has not been truly nullified, this novel argues that we must remain vigilant against Hitler's return. Other novels, of which Philip K. Dick's The Man in High Castle (1962) is the most famous, explore the possibilities of alternate history, asking what would the world be like if Germany and Japan had won WWII. Stephen King's "Apt Pupil" (1982) argues that we do not need to envision other possible endings to WWII to consider the threat of contemporary Nazism.[9] Rather, King's novella tells the story of a young man who seduces a former Nazi officer into reliving the holocaust by coercing him into telling

stories and wearing an SS uniform. Hundreds of texts use the Nazi scapegoat to signify

jingoism, racism, remorselessness, cruelty, and evil.[10]

In both nonfictional and fictional narratives, the unwillingness of the United States to

accept Jewish refugees by relaxing its immigration laws receives much less emphasis than the

threat of Nazism. As David Kennedy notes, before the Holocaust, "In mid-1939, the <u>Fortune</u> poll

asked: 'If you were a member of Congress, would you vote yes or no on a bill to open the doors

. . . to a large number of European refugees?' Eighty-five percent of Protestants, 84 percent of

Catholics, and an astonishing 25.8 percent of Jews answered no. Americans might extend their

hearts to Hitler's victims, but not their hands" (417). Congress apparently agreed because the

proposals to revise or relax immigration laws, even those specifying Jewish children only, were

struck down (Kennedy 416-7).

Conversely, W. D. Rubinstein argues,

> No Jew who perished during the Nazi Holocaust could have been saved by any
> action which the Allies could have taken at the time, given what was actually
> known about the Holocaust, what was *actually proposed* at the time and what was
> realistically possible. [. . .] A corollary of the arguments made here, which can
> never be emphasized too strongly, is that Hitler, the Nazis and their accomplices
> —and only they—bear full and total responsibility for the Holocaust. (x)

Rubinstein's claim that the Nazis are responsible for the Holocaust is uncontroversial enough,

but his arguments concerning the chances of saving victims from the genocide program have

produced heated debate. Rubinstein is right to point out that we know much more about Nazi

activity today than in the 1930's, and it is easy to judge with that knowledge. As Thomas

Keneally observes in <u>Schindler's List</u> (1982), the extent of Nazi crimes were shocking even to

the Jewish people that lived in the ghettos and camps of German occupied countries: "To write

these things now is to state the commonplaces of history. But to find them out in 1942, to have

them break upon you from a June sky, was to suffer a fundamental shock, a derangement in that

area of the brain in which stable ideas about humankind and its possibilities are kept" (137).[11]

Even so, Rubinstein's arguments do not excuse the United States for its treatment of Japanese

Americans, Native Americans, or blacks prior to, during, and after WWII, and placing the focus

on Hitler and his horde of Nazis, both during and after the war, has obscured America's need to

examine its own racial prejudices and sins. Focusing on iconic scapegoats and being more

concerned with assigning the blame for European death camps minimizes the examination of the

camps within the borders of the United States, which we could have stopped. This is precisely

the function of iconic scapegoats: Direct attention to the foreign other, away from the domestic.

Regardless of whether a different policy could have saved anyone from the Nazi

crematoriums and gas chambers, the United States government barred its doors against Jewish

immigrants, and it secured "undesirables" in camps of its own. The "undesirables" were

Japanese-Americans, and 110,000 of them were "relocated" from the West Coast in the spring of

1942 (Taylor xi). The relocation was controversial; "[Milton] Eisenhower resigned as director of

the War Relocation Authority" over the decision to detain Japanese-Americans (Kennedy 754).

Despite the debates and resignations, the relocation proceeded. Roosevelt "signed over the rights

of the West Coast Japanese to the control of the military," and both Congress and the Supreme

Court approved the restrictions instituted by the military (Girdner and Loftis 480).[12]

Just as journals, diaries, and letters from victims of Hitler's genocide program allow us

inside views of the labor and death camps from the victim's prospective, similar records, written

by Japanese-Americans, allow us a glimpse into the internment camps that housed Japanese

Americans and "were surrounded by barbed-wire fences and towers manned by guards armed

with machine guns." (Ng 45). One Japanese American reports,

> At Parker, Arizona, we were transferred to buses. With baggage and carryalls
> hanging from my arm, I was contemplating what I could leave behind, since my

husband was not allowed to come to my aid. A soldier said, "let me help you, put your arm out." He proceeded to pile everything on my arm. And to my horror, he placed my two month old baby on the top of the stack. He then pushed me with the butt of the gun and told me to get off the train, knowing when I stepped off the train my baby would fall to the ground. I refused. But he kept prodding me and ordering me to move. (Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 151)

The issue was resolved when an officer intervened, rescuing the woman and her child, but a sympathetic officer was not always on the scene. Another internee recalls that "one of the military guards standing with his gun suggested that one of us should get a drink of water at the nearby faucet and try and make a run for it so he could get some target practice" (CWRIC 151). And, while mass murders like those that occurred in Nazi camps did not take place in the Japanese internment camps, some soldiers did get target practice. At the Manzanar War Relocation Center in California, Hikoji Takeuchi was shot by a guard "for being outside the center of the camp" (Ng 45). James Hatuski Wakasa, a sixty-two-year-old internee, was fatally shot by a guard for approaching the perimeter fence during daylight hours (Girdner and Loftis 243). According to Ng, "A guard shot and wounded a mentally ill internee at Gila River" (45).

All the while, Japanese-Americans were serving in the armed forces, fighting for the United States in the 100th Battalion from Hawaii, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team composed of draftees and volunteers from the internment camps, and the Military Intelligence Service (Ng 56). Of course, it is hardly surprising that some detainees, about 300 from January 1944 to November 1946, refused to serve in the armed forces (Girdner and Loftis 327). What is surprising is that the Japanese American Citizens League advocated a policy of cooperation with the government that ordered the relocation and that many internees were willing to fight for a country that had taken them from their homes and placed them behind barbed wire when the enemy consisted of the country that provided their cultural origins. Indeed, "The 442nd Combat

Team has been called the most decorated unit in the United States Army in WWII, its members earning over one thousand citations" (Girdner and Loftis 330).

Nor were Japanese-Americans the only ones who fought in the United States Armed Services while being subjected to gross acts of racial discrimination. Black soldiers faced blatant acts of bigotry in a segregated military even as the famous Tuskegee Airmen and other units entered combat under the flag of the United States. Lloyd L. Brown reports that Nazi prisoners of war were allowed more rights than black soldiers. Brown recalls visiting a restaurant only to be turned away as German prisoners were being served:

> 'You know we don't serve colored here,' the man repeated. He was still very polite, but he sounded aggrieved that we had not been polite enough to leave.
> We ignored him and just stood there inside the door, staring at what we had come to see – the German prisoners of war who were having lunch at the counter. There were about ten of them. They were dressed in fatigues and wore the distinctive high-peaked caps of Rommel's Africa Korps. No guard was with them. [. . .]
> We continued to stare. This was really happening. It was no jive talk. It was the Gospel truth. The people of Salina [Kansas] would serve these enemy soldiers and turn away black G.I.'s. (31)

Whatever the United States did or did not know about the Jewish Holocaust during the war, it is clear that we have racial sins of our own to deal with. Yet, Arnold Krammer argues that

> The issue of race discrimination in the United States remained the continued target of many German prisoners [who liked to point to the United States' hypocrisy on race issues] and would become a source of keen embarrassment to the War Department during later efforts to 'democratize' the POWs. Yet as deplorable as such discrimination was, the fact that it was exploited by the soldiers of the government which was, at that moment, exterminating people by the millions, was ludicrous. (93)

Krammer is right to point out that Nazi Germany's racism went much further than the racial prejudices present in the United States, and like many things, racism can be classified into types and degrees. Even so, it is a difference of degree, and not of kind. When our domestic racism is

brought into juxtaposition with Nazi racism, the demarcation between us and them becomes blurred and threatens to eradicate the differences between Americans and the Third Reich.

Hart's War (2002), directed by Gregory Hoblit and based on a novel with the same title by John Katzenbach, addresses the issue of American versus Nazi racism and attempts to shore up the boundaries between the United States and the Nazi scapegoat. The film, set in a POW camp, plays German discrimination with Russian prisoners against American racism toward two Tuskegee pilots. Germans guards execute three Russian prisoners caught in an escape attempt. Colonel William A. McNamara (Bruce Willis) leads the Americans present in saluting the fallen Russians, telling Colonel Werner Visser (Marcel Iures) that "My country does not make those kinds of distinctions" when the German states, "Those are dogs you are saluting, Colonel. Animals."

Two Tuskegee pilots arrive at the American sector of the camp, and it appears that Americans do make those kinds of distinctions. McNamara quarters Lieutenant Larmar Archer (Vicellous Shannon) and Lieutenant Lincoln A. Scott (Terrence Howard) in the enlisted men's barracks, making it appear that skin color precludes the black pilots from being quartered with their fellow officers. German guards subsequently execute Archer after a search reveals that he has a tent stake in his possession, but the weapon was planted by Vic Bedford (Cole Hauser), a racist American soldier from the South who has been harassing the black pilots. "Is he [Archer] a dog? A lesser race?" McNamara protests after the pilot's execution. Visser responds, "There's a word you Americans use, as I remember, but, of course, your country does not make such distinctions, and neither do you, I am sure." The German guards continue to taunt the Americans for their racism, and when Bedford is killed one night, Scott, the remaining Tuskegee pilot, is charged with the murder.

During the ensuing court martial, the difference between the Nazis and the Americans becomes muddled. On the one hand, American soldiers lie in court, and McNamara, who sits as judge, displays bias towards the prosecution. The Colonel appoints a lawyer to the prosecution, but names Thomas Hart (Colin Farrell) as defense counsel even though Hart has not yet completed his degree at Yale law school. McNamara even orders Scott to alter his testimony about how the Americans exited the locked barracks at night. Ostensibly, the alteration is necessary to protect the secret exit from the German guards who are watching the trial, but the cover up leaves Hart and Scott vulnerable to the prosecution's arguments. On the other hand, Visser provides Hart with a copy of the U.S. Army's A Manual for Courts-Martial to prevent the partially trained lawyer from being railroaded by the prosecution and judge. Visser tells Scott, "Yale is not in the habit of accepting halfwits, at least it wasn't when I was studying there." The German officer promises Hart to arrange interviews with the camp guards and even agrees to testify in the trial when Hart calls him to the stand. Visser observes, "It seems only fair with your colonel throwing you to the wolves [. . .] It is a sincere offer . . . anything I can do to help." The German's offer disrupts the standard view of both Nazis and American soldiers because the Nazis, so often depicted as racists, seem more interested in helping Hart protect the rights of a black soldier than Hart's countrymen.

Not everything is what it seems. In a classic example of Barthian inoculation, which initially displays the racism of American culture, McNamara and the other American soldiers are not only redeemed, but they receive Scott's blessing for their actions. Hart discovers that the accusation and trial are only a show to keep the Nazis occupied while the Americans plan for a mass escape. Archer and Scott were quartered with the enlisted men, not because of their race, but because McNamara does not trust men with the escape plans until they have proven

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themselves. Scott, of course, did not kill Bedford. McNamara killed him because Bedford was trading information to the Nazis in exchange for luxury items like cigarettes and new boots. Thus, there is only one "true" American racist in the film, and the highest ranked American officer kills that racist for traitorous activities that threaten the planned escape. The film links racism to traitorous activities in Bedford's character, and the narrative depicts the American military cleansing itself of these flaws by having the senior American officer administer capital punishment to the offender. The other Americans are depicted as patriots who are struggling to aid the war effort from inside of a POW camp and cleverly use a smokescreen of (false) racism to entertain the Nazis.[13]

Both the escape plan and court room facade gain legitimacy when Scott becomes a willing participant instead of an ignorant pawn in the power struggle between Visser and McNamara. When Hart uncovers the escape plan and informs Scott of the ruse, Scott agrees to go along with the strategy and declares, "How far could I get anyway, a colored man running through the German countryside? I'd be target practice."[14]   Scott's willingness to sacrifice himself for his fellow soldiers becomes unnecessary when McNamara returns to the camp after blowing up a nearby munitions factory and offers himself to the Nazis. Visser executes McNamara, and the Colonel's willingness to offer up his own life to save a black man is the film's final denial of racism in the U.S. military during World War II.

Decoration Day reverses the racial dynamics of Hart's War. In both the novella (1987) by John William Corrington and the film (1990) adaptation directed by Robert Markowitz , it is not U.S. soldiers putting on a racist charade to distract Nazi guards. Rather, a Nazi, disguised as a U.S. officer, leads a black soldier to believe his countrymen are racist enough for an American officer to shoot him during battle. In this way, American racism is portrayed as the act of a Nazi,

displacing responsibility from U.S. citizens to the Nazi scapegoat. This narrative declares that what looks like racism is a clever enemy trick.

In Decoration Day, despite the fact that he could out-shoot the best marksmen in the Army, Gee Pennywell (Bill Cobbs) served as a cook for a U.S. unit in Europe during WWII. Their camp was overwhelmed by enemy soldiers, but Pennywell singlehandedly repelled the attack after the Germans killed every other man in the outfit. Hours later, a small group of soldiers approaches in a Jeep, and Pennywell calls out to them because he needs medical attention. An officer asks, "You . . . made all this?" (62). When Pennywell acknowledges that he is responsible for the many German corpses littering the area, the officer declares, "Here's your help, nigger. Welcome to Germany . . ." as he shoots Pennywell in the chest with a submachine gun (63).

Because Pennywell believes a white U.S. officer has shot him for shooting Germans, he refuses the Medal of Honor the U.S. government proffers to him more than thirty years later in 1975. His estranged childhood friend Albert Sidney Finch (James Garner) first defends Pennywell's decision to turn down the citation, but at the prompting of government representative Michael Waring (Laurence Fishburne), Finch digs into history to find out what happened. In juxtaposition to the Jeep driven by the disguised Nazis, Finch and Waring drive Finch's old military Jeep to see Pennywell at the reclusive veteran's home.[15] The Jeep that should have heralded salvation during WWII has come again, but this time it contains real Americans, citizens who wish to honor Pennywell for his bravery and effectiveness in battle. Moreover, Waring's black skin underwrites the delegation's legitimacy. The dark skinned government representative can not be a Nazi in disguise. In the film version, Fitch explains,

> Gee, in the winter of '44, around Christmas, a bunch of German SS troops, they set out to infiltrate American positions and tie up with Von Runstead's offensive.

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> Gee, they were wearing American uniforms, some of them posing as M.P.'s, going around giving fake orders, wrong directions, shooting up scattered troops before they could get back to their units. See, we think that a jeep load of Germans rode into your camp looking for any sign of life.

The prospect of a racism so fierce that it would lead one U.S. soldier to shoot another is explained away and chalked up to enemy guile. In the novella, there is still some doubt because the shooter's identity can never be proven definitively. Waring concludes, "Whoever did it was . . . an SS man. Most likely German," and Fitch concurs, "Theirs or ours . . . an SS man" (137). The Nazi scapegoat will take the blame, these characters declare, because whether the shooter was German or American, his behavior fits more with our ideas about Nazis than with Americans. Fitch tells Pennywell, "Appearances are not what they first appear to be," and Pennywell's festering wounds of betrayal have been cleansed by historical research, by replacing the "fiction" of U.S. racism with the "truth" of German bigotry and viciousness.

Nevertheless, Pennywell persists in refusing the Medal of Honor. He does not want to be honored for killing anyone. Instead, he accepts a Purple Heart for being wounded in combat. Fitch also receives a Purple Heart for taking a piece of Shrapnel in his back during the war. Both fought in the war, were wounded, and receive the same medal. Lest there be any question about Pennywell's race being the reason that he has had to wait thirty years for recognition from his country, Fitch, a white man, also receives belated attention from the U.S. Army. However, it is Pennywell, not Waring, who presents the medal to Fitch. The narrative, then, goes to great lengths to indicate that the black man and his white friend are on equal footing in the eyes of the government.

The myth remains: the US is pure while Hitler, his horde of Nazis, and the fascism known as national socialism or Nazism are evil. The Nazi scapegoat receives the blame for domestic racism through texts such as Hart's War and Decoration Day, which use the scapegoat to deny

that these problems exist now or in the past. Other texts claim that our home grown racism is negligible when compared to the holocaust, but even if this is true, it should not be an excuse to write racism out of our history or fiction while blaming Nazis.

The continued use of the Nazi scapegoat to signify evil and downplay racism in the United States appears to defy the domestication hypothesis set out at the beginning of this study, which states that icons become tamer, losing disruptive energy over time in exchange for broader audience appeal. In so far as domestication means to make fit for domestic life, Hitler has been domesticated because his image in popular mediums like films and novels has been crafted to stress the differences between the Nazis and the United States, which is easier and more palatable than asking in what ways our own nation, in the past and present, resembles Nazi Germany.

Neither <u>Hart's War</u> nor <u>Decoration Day</u> includes a direct depiction of Hitler, but one isn't necessary. To refer to Nazis, the Gestapo, the SS, or a swastika is to refer to the Nazi scapegoat. Hitler himself is only one part of the scapegoat – the focal point. Precisely because Hitler is so well-known, and therefore not always adaptable to the needs of a specific narrative, he is often a significant absence in many fictional texts dealing with World War II or the Holocaust. Instead, many texts rely on the horde incarnation to refer to the Nazi / Hitler scapegoat, and since the horde is less realized, almost anonymous, this allows authors and directors more room to create their social and political commentaries through narrative. Still, even when not directly mentioned in a text, Hitler's presence is invoked precisely because Hitler and Nazism are bound closely together in the popular imagination; the rise and fall of Hitler as a dictator and conqueror exactly match the rise and fall of the Nazi party as a significant political force. In popular culture, Hitler is inseparable from Nazism; they are different aspects of the same scapegoat. Nevertheless, there are some texts – both fiction and nonfiction – that take on the delicate task of portraying Hitler.

Depicting Hitler as anything less than a total monster in mass distributed media is taboo.

Because of this more, it is difficult to conceive of Hitler as a human being that cared about

others, who had a family, who was loved while also being filled with a hatred so fierce that he

could oversee the ruthless extermination of six million Jews. Yet, any number of biographies tell

us that Hitler had humanizing traits: His favorite food was spaghetti, and he was a vegetarian; he

played with his pet dogs. In For Your Own Good (1990), Alice Miller, for instance, studies the

effects a harsh childhood has on adult behaviors and presents an especially poignant account of

Hitler's childhood, documenting the abusive relationships Hitler had with his mother and father:

"Within this family structure, the children are the oppressed" (147). Miller concludes, "Even the

worst criminal of all time was not born a criminal" (197); rather, according to Miller, the abusive

family relationships around the young Hitler shaped his later actions: "The Persecution of the

Jews 'made it possible' for Hitler to 'correct' his past on the level of fantasy. It permitted him:

[. . .] to take revenge on his father, who was suspected of being half Jewish [. . .]" (190).

However, she adds, "Empathizing with a child's unhappy upbringing does not imply exoneration

of the cruel acts he later commits" (Miller 197).

Editing any characteristics that might be perceived as humanizing from Hitler's public

persona lessens the potential for people to see themselves as resembling Hitler in any way. Hitler

has been domesticated in the sense that any traits or actions that might reveal a glimpse of a

complex human beneath the complete monster facade have been eradicated from the mass culture

of popular novels and films. The Hitler-as-monster image allows us to keep the enemy at arm's

length; it assures us that we are not like Hitler in even the most trivial of ways.

Don DeLillo's novel White Noise (1984) demonstrates this fear of weakening Hitler's

monster image when Siskind and Gladney deliver a tag team lecture on Elvis and Hitler.

Gladney intones, "Hitler adored his mother," and Siskind replies, "Elvis and Gladys liked to nuzzle and pet" (70). After the team teaching episode, Gladney reflects, "I had been generous with the power and madness at my disposal, allowing my subject to be associated with an infinitely lesser figure, a fellow who sat in La-Z-Boy chairs and shot out TVs. It was not a small matter. We all had an aura to maintain, and in sharing mine with a friend I was risking the very things that made me untouchable" (73-4). The dark humor of this passage rises from the unlikely juxtaposition of a rock star and a dictator. The lecture does, as Gladney states, associate Elvis and Hitler, the infantile icon and the iconic scapegoat, with each other. Both are icons, but Gladney fears the prestige of Hitler studies may be compromised by the public association with an infantile icon, as if it is possible to detract from the horrors of the Holocaust by sharing the same discursive space with an image often thought of as light entertainment. While Gladney does not specifically say he is concerned about a possible lessening of Hitler's monster status, the co-teaching reveals that the two icons have commonalities, including close relationships with their mothers and paranoia. We tend to think of Hitler as a unique monster, but the lecture has sacrificed a piece of Hitler's uniqueness by constructing comparisons between Hitler and another human being in the same intellectual space. If the comparisons go too far, Hitler's monster image may become too human, too much like other subjects, which would impair the image's scapegoat function and the clear line between us and the enemy.

As John Cusack, who plays Max Rothman in the film <u>Max</u> (2002), directed by Menno Meyjes, says,

> We like to think of our monsters as kind of cartoon caricatures. It is very convenient for us to think of them as pure evil. If they have these long moustaches and twirled them, I think we'd all feel more comfortable, but that is a convenience for us because it doesn't feel very good to try to figure out how they got there and what happened and to see them as just human beings. So, Noah

> [Taylor in the film <u>Max</u>] is playing him [Hitler] as a human being, and that makes it terrifying.

As long as Hitler is a caricature, we brand him as other, as not even human, a different species.

This conveniently simple rendition of Hitler as pure death drive, as pure destructive impulse, makes him easier to classify and distances us both emotionally and psychologically from questions about how we, as subjects and as a nation, are or are not like Hitler. Indeed, the very suggestion that the United States, its leaders, or its citizens bears even the most trivial resemblance to Hitler often results in righteous indignation.

The thick demarcations we draw between ourselves and the Nazi scapegoat allow us to repudiate even the most superficial or casual comparisons, which sometimes entails defining Hitler as a melodramatic comic book villain. David Anthony Kraft, providing an overview of Uncle Sam's spinoff incarnation, Captain America, for comic book readers, writes,

> It was a dark time. Clouds of war hung over Europe. The Nazi leader was Adolf Hitler (<u>Der Fuhrer</u>). He seemed to be unbeatable. His war machine left terror and destruction in its wake. Hitler was more fearsome than any comic-book villain imaginable! The world was being turned upside down. Hitler's defeat seemed impossible.
> But Captain America changed that! A simple comic-book character brought hope to millions of Americans. He especially gave hope to the young American men who went to war. Captain America was the greatest. He <u>was</u> America. He gave freedom-loving people every-where someone to look up to. (3)

Kraft's history reduces World War II to a war of icons locked in a Manichean struggle of Captain America versus Adolf Hitler, America versus Germany, and good versus evil. The portrayal glosses over any stains on Captain America's red, white , and blue uniform and shield, and once again, we see the United States as an unblemished force while any negative associations are attributed to the scapegoat's focal point.

When comparisons between "regular" humans and the German leader are made, it is often for comic effect as Mel Brooks' film <u>The Producers</u> (1968) demonstrates. In this narrative,

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which is currently enjoying a revival as a Broadway musical, Max Bialystock (Zero Mostel) and

his accountant Leo Bloom (Gene Wilder) discover that there is more profit to be made from

producing a bad play that loses money at the box office by overselling shares to investors who

will receive no yield from a play that flops.[16] Bialystock and Bloom find what they believe to be

a suitably horrendous script in Franz Liebkind's "Springtime for Hitler: A Gay Romp with

Adolph and Eva in Berchtesgarten." Bailystock and Bloom believe that representing Hitler as a

gentle and loving man who sings and dances his way through flowers will ensure an outraged

audience and a box office failure. Bailystock, responding to Liebkind's assertions that Hitler has

been misrepresented to the world, says, "That's exactly why we want to do this play. To show

the world the true Hitler, the Hitler you knew, the Hitler you loved, the Hitler with a song in his

heart." While misrepresenting their intentions to the addle-brained Nazi writer, Bailystock and

Bloom secure the worst director they know and cast a hippie, Lorenzo Saint DuBouis (known as

LSD), to play Hitler.

The plan, however, backfires when "Springtime for Hitler" becomes a box office smash

with audiences who laugh uproariously at the ridiculous portrayal of a happy, dancing Hitler

played by the long-haired LSD, who alters his lines into hippie lingo: "Hey, man, I can't spend

all my time with you [Eva Braun]. I took an oath, baby, Deutschland uber alles."[17] When

Liebkind jumps out of his seat, loudly objecting to the performance, the audience thinks this

interruption is a part of the comic performance that inspires one theater goer to declare that the

play is "Hysterical, absolutely hysterical." The audience's reaction to the play within the

narrative is much the same as the audience's reaction to The Producers, which has been highly

successful as both a film and a musical.

The Producers, following Charlie Chaplin's The Great Dictator (1940), is a story of comic reversals. It trades the evil, monstrous Hitler for a gentle Hitler who dances, sings, and frolics. It trades a sinister caricature for a laughably innocent one. The incongruity between the generally serious and condemning portrayal of the Nazi leader and the frivolous German in "Springtime for Hitler" results in comic farce. The Producers evokes laughter precisely because the idea that Hitler was a gentle and fun loving human is directly opposed to six million slaughtered Jews, because the audience knows that "Springtime for Hitler" is so outrageously a lie.

To portray or discuss Hitler as a human being rather than a caricature of pure evil or exaggerated innocence means grappling with difficult questions about psychology, history, and politics. Outside of academic historical research, which appeals to a limited audience of serious historians, representations of Hitler in popular culture have generally steered clear of any deep psychological or emotional complexity; Hitler has been flattened out as if he were one of the characters / sins Christian encounters on his journey to the Celestial City in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (1678). This flattening of Hitler and other scapegoat icons into pure evil is, on the one hand, a domesticating impulse because it makes the infamous German easier to portray as the originator of our national woes. On the other hand, another sort of domestication is achieved by dealing with Hitler as a human instead of a monster. As Cusack observes, the downgrading of Hitler from a villain with super powers to a psychologically and emotionally disturbed human can energize the icon with a different kind of terror. It is terror we feel when we realize that monsters such as Hitler are not caricatures; they are human beings like us.

Depictions of Hitler in novels and films generally show the audience only the political and military Hitler. For instance, Hitler, The Last Ten Days (1973), directed by Ennio De

Concini and starring Alec Guinness, and The Bunker (1980), directed by George Schaeffer and

starring Anthony Hopkins, both depict the last days of Hitler's life as Germany's leader. The

Hitler portrayed in these films is violent and paranoid as he loses control of himself, his armed

forces, and his country. In keeping with the historical occurrences of 1945, the dictator demands

impossible attacks and orders executions for officers unwilling to obey; he uses children to

defend Berlin from the advancing Russian forces, and finally commits suicide.

The Hitler portrayed as a paranoid dictator in Hitler, The Last Ten Days and The Bunker

stands in sharp contrast to the man described by Traudl Junge, who served as one of Hitler's

secretaries from 1942 until the fall of Berlin in 1945. Junge writes, "I can't tell them anything

from firsthand experience about Hitler's famous fits of rage or his carpet-biting [. . .]" (27).

According to Junge, Hitler was always a polite gentleman who eased her fears about making

mistakes during dictation sessions. Hitler even informed his secretary that he would make sure

she received no unwelcome male attention from his staff: "if I had any complaints of anyone

pestering me, never mind who it was, I was to come and tell him about it, any time" (37).   In the

documentary Blind Spot: Hitler's Secretary (2002), a tearful Junge even admits to loving Hitler

despite all of his crimes. The secretary's perceptions of Hitler have inspired a fiction film titled

Der Untergang - Hitler Und Das Ende Des Dritten Reiches (Downfall - Hitler And The End of

The Third Reich) (2004), directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel and starring Christian Berkel, that

presents a more sympathetic view of Hitler than most other texts. Mark Landler comments,

"That Hitler has become acceptable grist for a piece of mainstream entertainment, rather than a

sober documentary or a biting satire - as it has been the more customary treatment of the Führer

in postwar Germany - attests to how far the Germans have come in laying to rest their ghosts"

(A4).

Yet, Hitler's portrayal as anything other than a caricature or stern military dictator remains controversial, and Der Untergang is not the only film to attempt a more human portrayal of the German leader. In 1996, Hitler: The Rise of Evil, directed by Christian Duguay and starring Robert Carlyle, offered a Hitler who "was one of the most vulnerably human people who ever lived, and the most damaged" (Billen 45). Additionally, some recent popular texts have shown Hitler before and during his rise to power while also exploring some of the more personal and domestic details of Hitler's existence. Max depicts Hitler as a shy, frustrated, and tortured artist who cannot understand the popularity of modernist art. This film depicts Hitler's first political steps as a tragic historical accident that Hitler unknowingly initiates. Rather than depicting Hitler as an unqualified monster, the narrative stresses that Hitler's life could have taken a very different path under the tutelage of a Jewish art dealer who saw Hitler's potential as an artist. According to this film, Hitler was not born a monster, but he became one through a series of ironic circumstances that he could not control, and the film constructs a story of broken dreams and tragedy at the outset of Hitler's entrance into politics.

In the days following World War I, Hitler is torn between his art and his politics, between Max Rothman, a Jewish art dealer who urges Hitler towards his art, and his former military superiors, who steer Hitler towards politics. Hitler is caught between these conflicting influences, but finally reconciles them, telling Rothman, "I am the new avant garde! I am the new artist, practicing the new art, and politics is the new art!" All the while Hitler pleads with Rothman to show his paintings while also delivering anti-Semitic speeches at political rallies. The art dealer finally agrees to display some of Hitler's drawings of what would become the Nazi aesthetic, but Rothman is killed by a group of young men inspired by Hitler's anti-Jewish rhetoric even as the art dealer is on his way to discuss the details of Hitler's art show. Ironically,

Hitler waits for Rothman, unaware that his own speeches have killed his opportunity for a career

in art. When Rothman does not arrive for the meeting, Hitler renounces his dreams of being an

artist, resolves to pursue the path of politics, and redoubles his animosity towards Jews. The

would be artist feels that Rothman has betrayed, deceived, and abandoned him. Hitler can not

know that his own speeches have wrecked his dreams of art, cannot know that Rothman wanted

to keep his promise to show Hitler's art.

If Max portrays Hitler as a human being whose hatred is solidified by the breaking of his

artistic dreams, Hitler's Angel (1998) by Kris Rusch makes Hitler appear more human by

literally domesticating his life and stressing comparisons between Hitler and a German police

officer. By avoiding the much used story of the Holocaust and focusing on Hitler's home life,

Rusch's novel claims that many men have a little bit of Hitler in them as it tells the story of Fritz

Stecher's investigation into Geli Raubal's death in 1929. Recounting his investigative work to

Annie Pohlmann, who is writing her dissertation on criminal investigation methods, Stecher

reveals that Hitler was having an affair with his niece Geli.[18] In a fit of rage and jealousy, the

German politician shot his lover and had his henchmen make the murder look like a suicide.

Stecher is haunted by his inability to bring charges against Hitler, but is even more obsessed by

the similarities he sees between Hitler and himself. The detective declares, "'It is the secret, you

know,' [. . .] 'You all come, looking for that secret. How does the great detective solve his

cases? He solves them by understanding the criminal mind. By possessing one himself,'" and

"A tyrant is a man who destroys the people around him. [. . .] Like Hitler did. Like me" (209).

Pohlmann protests that Stecher is " nothing like Hitler [. . .] He killed millions" (209).   But

Stecher remains unconvinced by the American's assurances because he killed his wife and sees a

parallel between her death and Geli's, between Hitler and himself: "'He [Hitler] started,' Fritz

says slowly, 'with the woman he loved'" (210). Stecher finds it significant that the first verified human murder perpetrated by Hitler was his niece and lover, and the detective believes every man who has ever engaged in domestic violence is on par with Hitler. The difference between one death and six million is mathematical; for Stecher, the moral difference comes with the first step, the first murder, towards the grand total. The novel concludes that what Pohlmann "fails to realize is that he is not unique. [. . .] neither was Hitler" (211).

Hitler's attributes may not be unique, but he remains one of the most visible scapegoat focal points in American culture, and despite the movements toward complicating his caricatured image, the prevailing conception of the German dictator is still one of unmitigated evil. Perhaps Hitler's persistence in American culture may be explained by the fact that World War II is frequently regarded as America's last unequivocal victory, coming before the murkier political waters of Korea and Vietnam.

While Hitler's continued presence in cultural discourse makes him an interesting case study, he is by no means the only scapegoat present in American culture. The Communists, with the initial focal point of Stalin, carried the United States through most of the post World War II twentieth century, and it is the interaction of Uncle Sam with the Communist scapegoat – represented by the Phantom – that provides the ideological setting of <u>The Public Burning</u>. The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, weakened the efficacy of the Communist scapegoat.   In 1991, General Colin Powell, perceiving the lack of a convincing threat to America's national security, observed, "I'm running out of demons. I'm running out of villains. I'm down to Castro and Kim II Sung" (Budiansky 28).   In 2000, shortly before President George W. Bush appointed her as National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice wrote, "The United States has found it exceedingly difficult to define its 'national interest' in the absence of Soviet power" (45-62). For

years, the United States relied upon the threat of Communism, especially in its Soviet

manifestation, to justify decisions ranging from foreign policy to military planning. In the

absence of a Soviet threat, the justifications for many of those decisions also disappeared. As

Žižek notes,

> After 1990, and the collapse of the Communist states which provided the figure of
> the Cold War enemy, the Western power of imagination entered a decade of
> confusion and inefficiency, looking for suitable 'schematizations' for the figure of
> Enemy, sliding from narco-cartel bosses to a succession of warlords of so-called
> 'rogue states' (Saddam, Noriega, Aidid, Milošević . . .) Without stabilizing itself
> into one central image; only with September 11 did this imagination regain its
> power by constructing the image of Osama Bin Laden, the Islamic fundamentalist
> <u>par excellence</u>, and al-Qaeda, his 'invisible' network. (<u>Welcome</u> 110)

Indeed, the United States is presently engaged in a "War on Terrorism," and the terrorist

has now replaced the Communist, who replaced the Nazi, as the predominant scapegoat in

American culture. Nevertheless, the FBI concedes that "There is no single, universally accepted

definition of terrorism," but the agency's report Terrorism 2000/2001 cites the definition

provided in <u>The Code of Federal Regulations</u>*:* Terrorism is "the unlawful use of force and

violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce the government, the civilian

population, or any segment thereof in furtherance of political or social objectives" (iii). The

report divides terrorism into domestic and international varieties, with the chief distinguishing

factor being the location of the terrorist act. This definition is open to the objection made by

Steven Jukes, Reuters head of global news, and many others that "One man's terrorist is another

man's freedom fighter," and the enemy remains a hazy concept because terrorism and terrorist

remain ill-defined terms (Windschuttle 28). What, after all, counts as a "social objective"? This

ambiguity has tangible political consequences because the United States may justify a wide array

of diplomatic and military operations against any number of enemy states and organizations

under the guise of fighting terrorism, but the definition also represents a precipice because if the

government is fighting a "War on Terrorism," then it must define terrorism in such a way as to preclude any actions taken by the U.S. government as falling under our own definition of terrorism. Words matter. Since the United States has declared war on terrorism, the definition of terms is absolutely central to identifying who is an enemy and who is an ally, especially because the "War on Terrorism" is not confined by other, more conventional, terms such as geographical location.

This war on terrorism, initiated shortly after the World Trade Center bombing on September 11, 2001, has already been carried from Afghanistan to Iraq, and the Bin Laden focal point Žižek refers to has been eclipsed by the visage of Saddam Hussein, the former leader of Iraq. Behind these focal points stands the shadowy figures of the terrorist horde. Unmarked by nationality, the terrorist is ethnically marked in the popular imagination as Middle Eastern with all of the stereotypes that accompany that designation. Presumably, the Islamic religion, combined with a hatred of the United States, provides the ideological frame that sutures the focal points to the terrorist horde. The problem with this image is that it is inaccurate. As Timothy McVeigh illustrated with the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, not all terrorists are from the Middle East, not all terrorists are Islamic. However, it is much easier to label terrorism as a foreign threat than to grapple with questions about why American citizens would perform acts of terrorism in their own country. It is much easier to see terrorism as a unified ideology working from a centralized organization like Al Qaeda than it is to confront each terrorist threat in its unique context.

President George W. Bush alleged that Bin Laden and Hussein worked together and cited this collaboration, along with Iraq's suspected (but now disproved) possession of weapons of mass destruction, as the justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq by U. S. forces. These

allegations, whether true or false, linked Hussein to terrorist activities that threatened the United states. It worked. A survey performed by Princeton Survey Research Associates in January of 2003 found that half of Americans believed that one or more of the 911 hijackers were Iraqi citizens. In reality, none of the attackers was of Iraqi origin. Of the nineteen attackers, fifteen were Saudi, one was Egyptian, one was Lebanese, and two were from the United Arab Emirates. Nevertheless, Bush frequently referred to the attack on the World Trade Center when arguing for the necessity of war with Iraq, and the terrorist has become the scapegoat of the moment, justifying international military operations and domestic measures such as the Patriot Act and the Department of Homeland Security.

The "War on Terror" is still young, and the image of the terrorist may continue to haunt the United States for years to come in both the international and domestic arenas. While it is unlikely that the United States or the United Nations can ever completely eradicate the very real threat of terrorism, however the term is defined, it is likely that a new scapegoat will rise up to replace the terrorist just as the terrorist replaced the Communist and the Communist replaced the Nazi. What will not change is the political necessity of producing images of the enemy in our news, literature, and films that bolster a sense of nationalist allegiance by simplifying and unifying various threats – both real and imagined. Nor is it likely that the basic structure and operation of iconic scapegoats will function differently because the names and pictures of the enemy change. From the pages of <u>Nineteen Eighty-Four</u> to the evening news in 2005, scapegoat focal points, anonymous hordes, and "foreign" ideologies provide the basic context for producing and discussing images of the enemy that lump many threats into a cohesive attack against the country, reducing these enemies into caricatures of human beings.

NOTES

1. Privacy International, an organization that objects to surveillance, bestows the dubious honor of the "Big Brother Award" to organizations they feel invade personal privacy; the organization's website is located at <http://www.privacyinternational.org/bigbrother/>.

2. In this context, Lacan's own return to Freud, which he stresses in his earlier seminars, takes on a disciplinary aspect. By calling on the legacy of Freud, Lacan places himself as a successor to the "founding father" even as he radically rewrites Freudian doctrine and rejects much post Freudian psychoanalysis. Simultaneously, Yannis Stavrakakis, commenting on the ambiguities of Lacan's teaching, notes, "It seems that the difficulty in Lacan's discourse constitutes a protective device – not always successful, it has to be admitted – against an easy acceptance of his theory, an acceptance facilitated by an identification with Lacan as the Absolute Master" (5). Indeed, in structuring the four basic human discourses (master, analyst, university, and hysteric), Lacan situates the analyst's discourse as opposite of the master's, as a purposeful subversion against the master (Seminar XX 16).

3. For discussion of satire in Nineteen Eighty-Four see Freedman 161-192. See also 1985 by Anthony Burgess, which Plank characterizes as "partly a take off on 1984 [sic] : a satire of a satire" (7).

4. As we have observed, however, it is also possible for subjects to betray their own best interests and identifications. In WWII, some Jewish prisoners in German concentration camps helped exterminate other Jews. The Grey Zone (2002), directed by Tim Blake Nelson and starring David Arquette Steve Buscemi, Harvey Kietel, and Mira Sorvino, dramatizes the story of the Sonnderkommando (special units of Jewish prisoners who worked in the crematoriums) at Auschwitz. The film, roughly based on true events, follows the story of the only sonnderkommandos to rebel against their Nazi guards. The Believer (2001), directed by Henry Bean and starring Ryan Gossling and Summer Phoenix, explores the psychology of Danny Balint, a Jewish teenager from New York who joins a neo-Nazi organization. Caught between his conflicting identifications, Balint evacuates a synagogue where he has helped to plant a bomb in the altar, but commits suicide by remaining in the building when the bomb explodes. In both films, the solution provided to the characters' dilemma is death, as if the only way out of the quandary is to destroy the subject caught between the opposing forces of Nazism and Judaism.

5. In 1974, psychologist Stanley Milgram published Obedience to Authority, a book that documented the procedures and results of controversial experiments involving how authority operates on people. Milgram found that, given the right circumstances, many "average" people were willing to administer what they thought to be lethal doses of electricity to another human being in an experiment ostensibly about memory. Milgram states,

> The question arises as to whether there is any connection between what we have studied here in the laboratory and the forms of obedience we so deplored in the Nazi Epoch. The differences in the two situations are, of course, enormous, yet the difference in scale, numbers, and political context may turn out to be relatively unimportant as long as certain essential features are retained. The essence of obedience consists in the fact that a person comes to view himself as the instrument for carrying out another person's wishes, and he therefore no longer

regards himself as responsible for his actions. Once this crucial shift of viewpoint has occurred in the person, all of the essential features of obedience follow. (xii) Admittedly, Milgram's methods and findings have provoked much debate and controversy. The same is true of Philip Zimbardo's infamous 1971 Stanford prison experiment, which asked questions about prison guard authority by placing college students in the role of guards and prisoners in a mock prison (see <http://prisonexp.org/>). Zimbardo's experiment received renewed attention in 2004 when allegations that ill trained guards abused Iraqi prisoners surfaced. In any case, both experiments appear to support Father Smith's belief in The Thanatos Syndrome that virtue and evil rely, to a significant extent, on circumstance.

6. Lists of Bush/Hitler comparisons can be found at <http://www.dissidentvoice.org/Articles3/ Jayne_Hitler-Bush.htm>, <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0307-22.htm> and <http://home.earthlink.net/~sentinelnews/htilerbushiver.html>. The Bush / Hitler comparisons first attracted media attention when moveon.org held a contest inviting anti-Bush ads. Two entries featured Bush/Hitler parallels that drew criticism from the Republican National Committee and others, including many members of the Jewish community. The ads were removed from the web site at the conclusion of the contest, but still circulate on numerous other sites.

7. Volume one of Maus, My Father Bleeds History, was published in 1973, and volume two, And Here my Troubles Began, was published in 1986. Spiegelman received a "Special Award and Citation" Pulitzer in 1992 for Maus.

8. The Boys from Brazil was adapted into a film directed by Franklin Schaffner and starring Gregory Peck and Laurence Olivier in 1978.

9. Director Bryan Singer brought King's novella to the screen in a film by the same title starring Ian McKellen and Brad Renfro in 1998.

10. The first Star Wars trilogy, consisting of A New Hope (1977), The Empire Strikes Back (1980), and The Return of the Jedi (1983), all directed by George Lucas and starring Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, and Carrie Fisher, incorporates references to the Nazi scapegoat by calling the Empire's soldiers "storm troopers." The Sturmabteilung, also known as the SA, Brown Shirts, or Storm Troopers were the main body of Hitler's troops in the Third Reich and were especially important from approximately 1923 to 1934. After 1934, the SS or Schutzstaffel replaced the SA as the principal organization in Hitler's Reich.

11. The film version of Schindler's List (1993), directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Liam Neeson and Ben kingsly, won seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

12. Executive Order number 9066, signed by President Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, authorized the military to prescribe military areas and to exclude persons deemed a threat from these areas (Ng155-156 and Girdner and Loftis 521-522). The proclamation does not specifically mention Japanese-Americans. Public Law 503, enacted by the 77th Congress on March 21, 1942, provides a maximum $5,000 fine for violating the restrictions of a military area (Ng 157). In Hirabayashi v. United States, the Supreme Court ruled that establishing curfews for Japanese-Americans did not violate the Constitution and was in keeping with the military area provision

signed by Roosevelt and affirmed by Congress.

13. Mother Night (1961) by Kurt Vonnegut provides an answer to the to the "pretend" racism of Hart's War. In both its print and film (1996) incarnations, Howard W. Campbell Jr. pretends to be a Nazi propagandist during World War II at the request of an American agent. Campbell hosts radio broadcasts from Germany that have a manifest content of Nazi rhetoric and a latent content of coded messages for an American intelligence unit. The manifest content is so convincing that Campbell becomes an infamous Nazi, and after the war, he is sought by Israeli authorities as a war criminal. No one knows that he was a secret agent, and Vonnegut writes in the introduction that his novel has a moral: "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be" (v). In other words, the manifest content is just as important as the latent content, and a claim to innocence based on pretending is unconvincing. Even the agent who recruited Campbell calls him a Nazi at the conclusion of the war.

14. As with many films dealing with the issue of contrasting our country with Hitler's, the Führer remains in the shadows, appearing only briefly in an American POW musical as a caricature. However, ancillary items such as the swastika, the uniform, the flag, and German soldiers, all connected to the focal point, remind the viewer that Hitler is issuing the orders and controlling the Reich even though he never appears on the screen.

15. The use of the Jeep to visit Pennywell occurs only in the film. In the novella, the comparison between the two Jeeps becomes significant when Fitch dreams that he was present during the shooting: "I saw my own jeep materialize" (130); it is this dream that first provokes Fitch to develop the theory of the Nazi shooter.

16. Mel Brooks, who wrote and directed the film, converted The Producers into a Broadway musical in 2000. The musical has won more Tony Awards than any other production, including awards for best musical, best original score, best book, best direction of a musical, best choreography, best orchestrations, best scenic design, best costume design, best lighting design, best actor in a musical, best featured actor in a musical, and best featured actress in a musical. Performances, which began in 2001, are planned through at least 2005. The musical's official web page can be found at <http://www.producersonbroadway.com/>. The musical has also spawned The Producers: The Book, Lyrics, and Story behind the Biggest Hit in Broadway History! (2001) by Mel Brooks and Tom Meehan as well as the film documentary Recording the Producers: A Musical Romp with Mel Brooks (2001).

17. Mel Brooks' film was also a great success, winning Oscars for Best Writing, Story, and Screenplay in 1969. Gene Wilder, who plays Leo Bloom, was nominated for an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor.

18. Hitler's Niece (1999) by Ron Hansen also deals with Hitler's relationship with Geli. Hansen's narrative provides an account of the relationship from its start and ends with Geli's murder. Geli calls Hitler "Uncle Alf," and Hansen writes,"With his niece Adolf Hitler was often affectionate, softhearted, and helpless" (117). In any case, Hitler did have an exceptionally close relationship with his niece. Hansen states, "I was perhaps eighty pages into the writing of this novel in the spring of 1997 when my editor sent me the at first unwelcome news that there was a nonfiction book being published in England on the same subject: Hitler and Geli by Ronald

Hayman. [. . .] I was fascinated, and gratified, to find out that Mr. Hayman shared my suspicions of murder [. . .]" (309).

CHAPTER FIVE:

ICONIC DISCOURSES: FROM BARBIE TO BIN LADEN AND BACK AGAIN

What do Osama Bin Laden and his terrorists have in common with Barbie and her collection of accessories? On the surface, they share few similarities, and it is rare to find them discussed in the same document much less share space in the same sentence. There are few manifest parallels between Bin Laden's terrorist network and Barbie's pink wardrobe, and mentioning the probable mastermind of 9/11 in the same context as Mattel's star doll sounds like the beginning of a bad joke. Nevertheless, Bin Laden and Barbie, the scapegoat and the infantile, share some significant traits.

The terrorist and the doll seldom share company because most scholars undertaking the study of cultural icons focus on one figure, citing an image's unique fame as the reason for the study. Meanwhile, theorists like Baudrillard and Debord see only a stream of information flowing from the various modes of modern media. Under the first view, Bin Laden and Barbie have little, if anything, in common. Under the second, they become virtually indistinguishable. The truth, as the preceding chapters illustrate, is somewhere between these extremes.

An icon might possess some unparalleled traits or might have claim to individuality from a combination of traits not found together in another icon, but this dissertation demonstrates that an icon is not unique in function or meaning. Shared traits are the foundation of definition and classification. To specify that an image is an icon means to classify it based on similarities with other icons by using the term's definition as an auratic, highly recognizable, overdetermined and culturally variable image.

Beyond definition, we have also observed that icons share a tendency to become domesticated when set in motion by narrative. Barbie's rise to icon status was accompanied by a

cleansing of the more explicit aspects of illicit sexuality embodied by her predecessor Bild Lilli.

Mickey Mouse's accession is marked by increasingly good behavior coupled with a steadily

younger appearance. In Ross and Darnell's comic book, Uncle Sam initially appears as a

homeless man but regains his status as a symbol of the American dream as the narrative

progresses. The Manichean relation between a national icon like Uncle Sam or the American

flag and a scapegoat such as Hitler or Saddam Hussein means that scapegoat domestication

occurs by obscuring, omitting, or downplaying any humanizing traits that might create sympathy

for or identification with the enemy.

On a broader scale, we can also trace a general movement of domestication from infantile

to national and scapegoat icons. Despite the fact that the infantile frequently participates in deep

play, concealing serious social concerns under the pretext of play, infantile icons are often

dismissed as unworthy of serious consideration. Conversely, national and scapegoat icons

manifestly appeal to more adult concerns, and the study of these icons receives some of the most

serious scholarly attention. There is a hierarchy of status at work here that places the infantile

below the national and the scapegoat. This dissertation follows the path of that hierarchy, and it

is no accident that the majority of material considering female icons occurs closer to the

beginning of this study.

Simply put, the majority of female icons, from Marilyn Monroe to Aunt Jemima, are

portrayed as infantile. Admittedly, there is a female presence in America's national symbolic,

and the earliest symbol of America was the "Indian Princess or Pocahontas. But as Chapter Two

demonstrates, the European slowly encroached upon the Native American images, and male

icons like Uncle Sam and the "founding fathers" have largely eclipsed the earlier, female figures.

The colony and the young nation were represented by females, but, as the nation matured, Euro-

American male figures displaced native female images as the official symbols of the nation, implying that both the native and the female were perceived as infantile. It can be argued that The Statue of Liberty, which enjoys a prominent position in American symbolism, is an exception to this masculinizing domestication. However, as Albert Boime points out, "Liberty is less a female than an androgynous giant combining male and female characteristics" (110).[1] More, females are entirely absent from America's catalog of scapegoats, which is at least partially a function of historical circumstance. The most prominent female world leaders in recent memory are Queen Elizabeth II, the English Queen from 1952 to present, and Margaret Thatcher, the English Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990. If only by virtue of the fact that the United States is not at odds with England, neither of these women are scapegoat icons. In any case, this dissertation charts a general movement away from female representations towards male images. Of course, this is not meant to imply that simply adding female icons to our official national symbolism would not rectify sexism in the United States. As Peggy Phelan states, "If representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white women should be running Western culture" (10). Phelan expands, "I am not suggesting that continued invisibility is the 'proper' political agenda for the disenfranchised, but rather that the binary between the power of visibility and the impotency of invisibility is falsifying. There is real power in remaining unmarked; and there are serious limitations to visual representation as a political goal" (6). Nevertheless, this dissertation affirms that Western culture still places women beneath men in a hierarchy of value, still sees the female as a disruptive force that needs to be domesticated.

Icons trade disruptive energy and incongruous traits for wider audience appeal through the processes of intratextual and intertextual domestication. Yet this streamlining has limits. Icons, no matter how domesticated, are still complex knots of signifiers housed in compact

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images and function as quilting points around which multiple streams of discourse are organized. They contain multiple associations and support many interpretations, including contradictory meanings and incongruous traits. This plurality of associations and the similarities established by definition, however, does not mean that every icon means the same thing as every other icon, and it does not indicate that an icon cannot or should not be distinguished from other signifiers. It is true that icons exist within and participate as part of the matrix of signifiers comprising Debord's Society of the Spectacle. It is also true that both Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson, Abraham Lincoln and Joseph Stalin, are well-known, are icons. Furthermore, icons with differing surface characteristics can serve the same general function. The Manichean relation between national and scapegoat icons means that they are two sides of the same coin. National icons appeal to an adult audience through patriotic ideas of duty, and scapegoat icons strengthen the appeal of domestic icons by representing a threat to a nation's integrity and encourages citizens to blame the foreign other for both international and domestic strife. In one nation, one imagined community, an icon may serve as a national icon while simultaneously serving as a focal point for a scapegoat in one or more foreign countries. As we saw in Chapter One, even an infantile figure like Barbie, who covers over weighty issues with the appearance of frivolity, can serve as either a quasi-national icon or as a kind of domestic scapegoat; while there are many who admire Mattel's doll and revel in her version of the accessory laden version of the "American Dream," there are those who interpret her as a symbol of everything an American woman should not be, including materialistic and anorexic or bulimic.

Bin Laden and Barbie each may serve as national or scapegoat icons.[2] However, these roles occur in different contexts, and the notion that Bin Laden and Barbie serve precisely the same functions in the same ways ignores the signifying chain that surrounds an icon and creates

its context at the same time that the icon functions as a quilting point, retroactively organizing discourses that surround it. Scapegoat icons carry a built in context of a nameless horde and a "foreign" ideology that provide support for the focal point. Chapter Four argues that the ancillary items of horde and "foreign" ideology are constants that accompany any scapegoat icon, and because the presence of these elements *is* constant, I argue that they are both contextual and a part of the icon scapegoat proper.

However, other icons – infantile and national – also possess contextualizing signifiers. Uncle Sam, The Statue of Liberty, and the Unknown Soldier, for instance, all participate in what Berlant terms the "National Symbolic," consisting of a matrix of publicly owned official and quasi-official texts and artifacts that produce and support a national mythology. These signifiers are variable, and they change as the icon circulates across time and different medias. Because the surrounding signifiers are variables and because these contextualizing elements, which may include other icons, interact with an icon, they affect its meaning and function in any given situation. In other words, an icon, or any other signifier for that matter, must be examined within a specific context, within a specific discourse or signifying chain.

The development and proliferation of media technology affects communication in ways that have yet to be fully accounted for, but meaningful communication has not been destroyed. On the contrary, in a world saturated with signifiers from multiple mediums and from both present and past milieus, iconoclasm becomes effectively impossible. There is nearly always another copy stashed away in a library's stacks, housed in corporate archives, or posted on an internet page. An icon may be forgotten or discredited, but as long as one copy of the image exists, the icon has not been destroyed. An icon may lie dormant; it may become domesticated, but a revival is always possible, and an earlier version may always be recovered and may threaten

to reverse the domesticating process. Domestication is not a simple, neat, or complete process; it is ragged and half-hazard   For all of Anne Rice's attempts to replace the inscrutable Dracula with more humanized vampires, Stoker's novel still exists on library and bookstore shelves and in the minds of Stoker's readers; Bela Lugosi's image still stalks movie watchers. Narrative – historical, fictional, and analytical – enables domestication, but it also helps us unravel an icon's history and multiple associations, allowing icons to be examined with and against one another.

Much work remains to be done before we can fully grasp the impact of mechanical and digital reproduction on both public and private communication. This study defines icons, argues that they have a narrative tendency towards domestication, and identifies three iconic functions: the infant, the nation, and the scapegoat. For the most part, the icons examined in this dissertation have been placed in the context of American nationalism, but we have edged over into the international at several moments. Yet, this internationalism has always been from an American point of view (if only because it was researched and written by a person with American identifications). The question of how other countries perceive and interact with American icons, which is admittedly a broad field of inquiry, remains to be answered. Simultaneously, the possibility of state or regional icons that exert a local field of influence which does not extend to the national level needs to be examined. The study of icons needs to go in two opposite directions by taking on the international and the local while also continuing the examination of national iconography. Doubtlessly, further inquires will yield more insight, including the development of iconic functions beyond the three examined here.

<center>NOTES</center>

1. See Boime 110-113 for a detailed discussion of The Statue of Liberty and femininity, masculinity, and androgyny.

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2. Barbie, of course, is also an infantile icon, which was the primary means of analyzing her in Chapter One. As far as I know, no one has ever examined Bin Laden in a context that situates him as an infantile icon.

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