

COWBOYS, POSTMODERN HEROES, AND ANTI-HEROES: THE MANY FACES  
OF THE ALTERIZED WHITE MAN

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This thesis investigates how hegemonic white masculinity adopts a new mode of material accumulation by entering into an ambivalent existence as a historical agent and metahistory at the same time and continues to function as a performative identity that offers a point of identification for the working class white man suggesting that bourgeois identity is obtainable through the performance of bourgeois ethics.

The thesis postulates that the phenomenal transitions brought on by industrialization and deindustrialization of 50's through 90's coincide with the representational changes of white masculinity from paradigmatic cowboy incarnations to the postmodern action heroes, specifically as embodied by Bruce Willis. The thesis also examines how postmodern heroes' "intero-alterity" is further problematized by antiheroes in Tim Burton's films.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Umberto Eco (1997) suggests that faced with an intrusive reality a historical entity becomes a metahistory or a symbol. (p.105) Yet, if in Eco's example Hebrew receded to hieroglyphics, the white manhood of the American West in American cinema seems to have continued to accumulate identity properties and expand into a new field of representations. It seems that hegemonic white masculinity, when contested, adopts a new mode of material accumulation by entering into an ambivalent existence as a historical agent and a form of metahistory at the same time. And from that ambivalence hegemonic white masculinity draws power to reproduce its normalcy because its unequal purchase in material power enables it to monopolize the power to universalize itself as a category that transcends the particularity of class, race and gender identities. White masculinity, thus, begins to connote political power that prevents politicizing of other identities.

My thesis investigates how hegemonic white masculinity functions as a performative identity that offers a point of identification for the working class white man suggesting that bourgeois identity is obtainable through the performance of bourgeois ethics. Under this construction working class identity becomes elided and working class white males are made to conform to the idea that they compete for the recovery of a normative whiteness endangered by the marginality of their class. Hollywood cinema

discourse textually offers the ideology of redemption through upward mobility and normative whiteness as a prerequisite. In my research, I hope to establish that hegemonic whiteness is an acquisitive identity that maintains its normalcy through co-optation. When confronted by the identities it seeks to contain, hegemonic whiteness broadens its borderlines to include them as part of its system of representations. When difference is addressed through hegemonic terms, it becomes part of a system of similarities, in other words, it is assimilated. As an example of this practice, I will examine how the body of Hollywood star Bruce Willis is ambivalently coded as middle class with a working class virility as an appropriated property of its white masculinity, enabling him to serve as a figure of identification for the working class white man in a vacuum of working class representations. For this purpose, I will analyze some of the action adventure films in which Willis has starred in the 1990's, such as The Fifth Element (Luc Besson, 1997) and Armageddon (Michael Bay, 1998), which I will categorize as postmodern action adventure films. A similar project had been earlier carried out through James Stewart's persona in the Westerns in which he appeared. Thus, I will also analyze some of the "string of hits during the 1950's" (Schatz, 1989, p. 471) that I will term the Stewart-Mann project. These were the products of a deal between Universal Studios, Stewart and director Anthony Mann and they were as "close to first-run releases as anything in Universal's schedule." (Schatz, 1989, p.471)

In analyzing these two sets of films, I will postulate that the phenomenal transitions brought on by industrialization of the 1950's and deindustrialization of the 1990's in America coincide with the representational transformation of white masculinity

from a set of paradigmatic cowboy incarnations to the postmodern action heroes in Hollywood cinema. While the institutionalization of bourgeois identification has been the dominant historical project in Hollywood cinema, there are certain narrativizations of the lived experience of working class life albeit oblique and/or ambivalent ones. One such example may be found in On the Waterfront (Elia Kazan, 1954) in which unionism is a salvational move toward the legitimization of working class white manhood. In the Westerns and postmodern action adventure films I will examine, however, white manhood is represented as an archetype. Thus, apoliticized and ahistoricized, the identity of the working class white man is replaced outside of political contestations.

In explaining how by the second century AD Latin and Greek languages began to lose their status as the only languages to express “harmoniously the totality of experience,” Eco (1997) suggests:

By now, the classical rationalism elaborated and re-elaborated over centuries, had begun to show signs of age. With this, traditional religion entered a period of crisis... The imperial pagan religion had become a purely formal affair, no more than a simple expression of loyalty. Each people had been allowed to keep its own gods. (p.12)

I believe a generic practice and consumption in film may tread a path similar to this “syncretism” that follows an awakening from a cultural practice as a ritual that represents a symbolic system. As 18<sup>th</sup> century German romanticist Novalis remarked, “the dreamer who dreams that he is dreaming is really very close to waking.”(Coates, 1985, p.33) And rituals, when well-rehearsed, may lose their power of symbolic implication, the dreamy qualities that initially mystified the ritualistic practice. In examining how we may look at the period that spans the 1950’s and the 1990’s in terms of the systemization and dialectic

expansion of capitalist hegemony and its concomitant cultural projects, I want to locate similarities between the representational white masculinity of Westerns and the postmodern action adventure films as well as the differences that have established generic transformation. I hope to postulate through a close analysis of the Stewart and Willis vehicles that the need to re-establish a filmic representation practice viable to reproduce hegemonic white masculinity arises as the Western as a generic practice becomes too banal to carry out the mythologization of hegemonic ideologies and becomes merely a reservoir of ritualistic artifacts. I believe that in these two generic categories of the Western and the postmodern action adventure films we should see a continuum as well as demarcation. I suggest that the representational connectivity and transitionality between the two generic practices is a way of looking at a dynamic continuum that carries through the 1950's and the 1990's.

#### 1. Reading a Dynamic Connection between the 1950's and 1990's

In arguing that we must see features of continuity rather than exclusively emphasize demarcation in the generic and representational practices of the Westerns of the 1950's and the postmodern action adventure films of the 1990's, I will examine how these practices are linked to the on-going cultural project of capitalist expansion, especially as a process of "flexible accumulation" as David Harvey puts it in The Condition of Postmodernity (1990, p.146). Here, I will try to summarize a few points that are pivotal in the development of this thesis.

There are indeed distinctive transitions in the period between post World War II and the 1990's, from the postwar economic boom and the unprecedented prosperity of the

1950's that set the norm for American economic growth thereafter to the first major recession of 1973. The aftermath of the recession lasted throughout the 1980s: the economic expectations of the middle class remained stagnant, working class economic conditions were devastated, and the richest Americans become far richer. In the 1990's, while devastation in certain domestic sectors continues, the world economic system has been reorganized by the imperatives of transnational capital. Transnational capital replicates the Fordist production system in formerly colonized countries transporting outfits of Americanized industrial production system into those countries while itself taking the increasingly ephemeral form of global capital management.

Borrowing from Harvey (1990), it is possible to look at this span of time in the context of a "regime of accumulation." (p.121) The merit of such postulation becomes clear when considering Harvey's observation that "the basic rules of a capitalist mode of production continue to operate as invariant shaping forces in historical-geographical development." (p.121) So the transition from the industrial peak of the 1950's to the deindustrialization by the transnational capital impetus of the 1990's can be viewed as one in the regime of accumulation and its associated modes of social and political regulation that strive to "bring the behaviors of all kinds of individuals- capitalists, workers, state employees, financiers, and all manner of other political economic agents- into some kind of configuration that will keep the regime of accumulation functioning." (Harvey, 1990, p.121) A capitalist system's impetus to maintain labor control is institutionalized through the rules of hegemonic white masculinity, and the means to do so are continually revised to guarantee the expansion and growth of profit in



a fluctuating global environment. This impetus, however, doesn't mechanically materialize itself. Rather, it is manifested through consensual issues that involve the hegemonic ordering of social institutions and sensibilities. For example, Hollywood cinema as a social institution has mirrored the individually subjectified desire to search for a consensual collective identity.

The capitalist regime of accumulation navigates through economic thresholds and at each turn it devises and acquires the new terms and conditions of accumulation, hence, the concept of "flexible accumulation." According to Harvey, "flexible accumulation is marked by a direct confrontation with the rigidities of Fordism," (Harvey, 1990, p.146) which ideologically coincides with modernity. The globalized capital of the 1990's, ever more free from the boundaries of nation-states, reinstitutes its modes of accumulation through "paper profits," profits through financial arrangements. This marks an irrevocable departure from the production oriented industrial economy into the transnational movement of disembodied capital that enables the capitalist institution to unload the burden of production and organized labor, a sector that has been historically constituted by the working class white man. This transition entails a domestic deindustrialization that substantially undermines the material basis of the working class white man. In that sense, globalization and concomitant postmodern phenomena are definitely a departure from the previous modes of production and cultural practices. However, this change cannot be seen as a fundamental change in the world order organized by capitalist hegemony. Rather, it implies the capability of transnational capital to easily transform particularities of its system into a prevalent mode, while its oppressive

mechanism and fundamental impetus of expansion remain intact.

## 2. The Conditions of Alterity in White Masculinity

### The Case of Cowboys

Capitalist hegemony mobilizes whiteness as a cultural constructor that reifies the signs and codes of hegemonic identity. These signs and codes constitute a system of identification that forecloses a politicized sense of class identity, thus, stabilizing a hegemonic consensus that class contradiction is to be eradicated in the course of capitalist expansion or at least overridden by the emulation of bourgeois consciousness. In co-constructing race, gender and class identities along this consensus, whiteness appoints white masculinity as a sentinel of bourgeois morality with all the historical and representational trappings encoded to define and confine the identities of white masculinity as well as those of racialized and classed others. The power relations in this ordering are, however, volatile as the materiality of white masculinity fluctuates according to class differentiation, most significantly within the middle and working class in postmodern America. In my research, I will try to identify the sites in Hollywood cinema that hint at how class as an identity property may disrupt hegemonic identity politics.

Hollywood cinema is an intrinsically bourgeois medium first because the bourgeois ideology sanctioned by capitalist hegemony has defined its production and representational modes; and second, because a modernist bourgeois life style, believed to be nominally achievable to the point of leisure and disposable income even for the working class as part of the reproduction process, have supported the material basis of the

film industry. This seemingly complacent arrangement between the commodifier and consumer of film as cultural product is, however, an anxiety-laden exchange in which the conveyance of norm and consensus is constantly contested and reconstituted. This contestation may intensify in the postmodern context because identifications of formerly colonized others inevitably infiltrate dominant discourse in commodity form as these othered identities intersect with “the Historical Same,” in Fatimah Tobing Rony’s words, (1996, p.13) in global goods and the capital market system. I believe that the quasi-colonial relationship within the societies of “the same” may be delineated by examining the class contradictions that have been forced to hide behind representational vacancy, in a social structure that fundamentally denies justice in resource distribution which reproduces unequal political purchases within class relations. In Hollywood cinema, social, economical, and political contestations within postmodern experience are textually evinced through what Peter Wollen (1999) describes as “the end product of ‘secondary vision,’ which hides and masks the process which remains latent in the film ‘unconsciousness.’” (p.532)

White masculinity is the ideological and representational totality of class, race, and gender privilege. Yet at the same time, it is also an object of containment and policing through a differentiation policy. My assumption here is that hegemonic white masculinity draws its contents from a bourgeois identity that expands through the appropriated properties of otherness. In the Westerns and postmodern action adventures co-opted working class masculinity is mobilized to persuade the working class white man to subjectify universal white identity. Understanding the politics of hybridization offers a

way of addressing the potentially subversive differences in class identities between the working class white man and white bourgeois manhood. Class identity differentiates classes of white masculinity but the differences are textually overcome. In the Stewart vehicles I will examine, Western males are no longer the keepers of a mythical power to restore the disturbed universe with their virile self-assertion surrogating universal justice. They are instead consumed by the desire to restore their white masculinity. While normative white bourgeois males are always already propertied, Western males in the Stewart vehicles are without property. A white man without property is dangerously close to the othered identities that represent the criminalized proletariat sphere. His whiteness is, therefore, suspect or ambiguous at best. In other words, men without property are marked as lesser whites while even those who have succeeded in the competition to declare a right to property ownership find the ability to perform bourgeois morality continually under surveillance.

The distribution of social resources as a means of class containment in a capitalist society implies the class implications of othered identity. The working class white man, once a reservoir of reproductive labor in Fordist factories, cannot escape from systematic proletarianization in the deindustrialization era. The proletarianized white man may be even further criminalized when descending to the lumpen-proletariat class which was once necessitated in a capitalist production system because this was the class that supported the politicized labor control over the working class by remaining a reserve army of industrial labor. These are the classes of white men whose representational masculinity is embodied by racialized signs. Rendered as classed others, signified by

racialized markers, these men effectually deconstruct the naturalized borderline between whiteness and ethnic others whose otherness has been the depository of significations of a classed and racialized identity. The deployment of the persona of James Stewart, whose fan discourse has ranked him alongside John Wayne and Gary Cooper in his capability to combine virility and middle-class Americanness (Cohan, 1997, p.32), can be understood along these lines. Stewart's unambiguously legitimate white masculinity was necessary to neutralize the racial aspects of the lesser white man and anticipate the possibility of redeeming his whiteness. Thus, the benign virility constructed within the Stewart star persona will lessen the anxiety in legitimizing and assimilating into the hegemonic norm an othered white man marked with racialized identity properties.

Excessively racialized bodily signs as part of the performative identity evoke the anxiety within a bourgeois subjectivity which comes from the knowledge that borderline construction in identity politics is always already fissured. Bodies are relative not absolute "statements," as Michel Foucault notes (as cited in Nealon, 1998):

A statement always has margins peopled by other statements...there is no statement in general, no free, independent statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them: it is always part of a network of statements. (p.25)

To read a white body as a relativized category, it is necessary to recognize the intra-alterity built into a white identity, because the historicizing of a white body involves considering other bodies it has encountered, co-opted, and alterized in a quasi-colonial exchange. Then, it may be recognized:

[The self is]... a fiction, just as the kinds of 'closures' which are required to create communities of identification—nation, ethnic group, families, sexualities,

etc.—are arbitrary closures; and the forms of political action, whether movements, or parties, or classes, those, too, are temporary, partial, arbitrary. (Hall, 1996, p.136)

Therefore, the self is a contextuality that is enclosed by the trappings of its own historicity, yet to be opened up by recognizing the constructed-ness of “identification.” If whiteness is enclosed by the “created communities of identification” that construct the white self as an abstraction, a concept of a unified entity, marking its departure from the lived-life context, then whiteness contingently escapes the state of abstraction through othering of the self by putting on, like drag, the conspicuous/colorful otherness that is excluded from abstract whiteness. Alan Nadel (1995) recognizes that:

[D]oubleness [within male identity] has always haunted American mythology because that mythology embraced two tenets that were mutually exclusive: that America was a classless society and that upward mobility...was possible for everyone. The paradox...[is] that the only way to demonstrate upward mobility is to measure it against class markers...whose existence militates against mobility...[c]lass requires a monolithic order, while mobility threatens it.(p.128)

Othering as the expression of power relations occurs between different subjecthoods and within a self. If between different political powers, othering entails a hierarchical order which implicates a caste-like system of differentiation along gender, race, and class lines, sometimes privileging one identity property over others, which is informed by a shift in power relations or a hegemonic strategy’s emphasis on the relevance and significance of certain identity properties. Differentiation is not to be treated simply as an isolation of categories but as a dialectic process in which subjectivities are established as relative alterities. As Anne McClintock (1995) observes, “different groups—women and men, colonizer and colonized, middle and working class—occupied different positions...[the story to tell is] about how the subjective and

collective meanings of women and men as categories of identity have been constructed.”(p.16)

In recognizing the alterity constructed in subjectivity, we may assume a Hegelian dialectic process in which a higher state in concept or materiality comes into being from the abrogation of the previous lower state. Dialectically synthesized, the new terms of higher being retain the contents of the previous term yet only in a meaningfully qualified state. Therefore, identity as the term of being is never an origin itself, rather a collection of the transformed, negotiated, and qualified contents of other beings. The process of othering as a social exchange, both for intra- and extra-alterity, is a contextual intricacy of those who other and those who are othered, and they cannot be materially, nor textually, separated. In my research it is pivotal to understand ‘other’ as a sliding scale that measures the degree of unassimilability in particular identities rather than a signifier of a fixed identity measured by an exclusive standardization. “The same” must be understood as membership in the hegemonically moralized performative identity expressed through orders of similarities.

#### The Case of Postmodern Heroes

The problematization of hero status in postmodern action adventures begins in reading excessive bodily signs that signify the impossibility of containment/assimilation. In identity performance, an excessive incarnation of a normative identity property disrupts the universality of an order of normative identities by harking back at particular signs that are regarded as excessive, therefore, censured. Judith Butler states (as cited in Nealon, 1998):

There is an “outside” to what is constructed by discourse, but this is not an absolute “outside,” an ontological thereness that exceeds or counters the boundaries of discourse...The point has never been that “everything is discursively constructed.”; that point...refuses the constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosures, abjection, and its disruptive return within the very terms of discursive legitimacy.(p.28)

And “...[t]he subject is never completely sutured to normative imperative...and the terrors of social norm—its demand for totalization—are simultaneously the tool of its undoing.”(Nealon, 1998, p.139) The unassimilable identity is, therefore, liminal. I regard postmodern heroes in the context of the liminality in whiteness as yet another sliding scale that measures the subject’s distance from the normalcy of hegemonic white masculinity. In many activations of Bruce Willis’ star persona, he represents a middle class man with a manifest destiny whether it is to purify whiteness as in The Fifth Element or to champion a bourgeois family as a hegemonic reproduction system as in Armageddon. Yet, the otherness of working class virility hybridized with middle class white masculinity loosens rigid class identity politics. Hybridization may also loosen gender identity. In examining the gender-ambiguous male body as embodied in Marlon Brando’s star persona, Steven Cohan (1997) suggests how the elements of bisexuality and performativity in Brando’s star persona in the 1950’s are externalized in his eroticized body as an object of the desiring male/female gaze that problematizes the normative meaning of Brando’s primitive masculinity. (p.247)

I suggest that the rules of hegemonic masculinity based on imageries of white bourgeois masculinity (the economically viable, socially upwardly mobile, heterosexual white man) are fundamentally qualified when they are practiced as a set of performative rules by the working class white man. The normative bodily signs are most likely



exaggerated on a marginalized white body. I consider the performative identity of a professional wrestler, Hitman Hart, until recently one of the most important names of the World Wrestling Federation (WWF), as an example of the exaggerated masculinity of a marginal white man. Hart's wrestling matches have been designed to connote the triumph of a patriarchal authority that sanctifies "family values" against the unruly machismo embodied by his "enemies." His hypermasculinity is domesticated through his star persona as a family man with a strong sense of morality. A major part of his fan discourse is constructed around his extended family life which includes his father and brothers, all of whom have been pro-wrestlers, and he publicly states that he will not be involved in a fight that is not suitable for his children to watch.

However, his persona remains amenable to contradictory meanings that compete with the thrust to reduce his distance from normative masculinity through various domestication tropes. For example, contrived Canadian-ness in his star persona, when militated against American-ness eventually fractures his whiteness by territorializing his masculinity as a particular incident. If made local, therefore, particular, white masculinity becomes dubious because white privilege is constructed through monism striving to remain a universal identity. Hart's re-enforced Canadian-ness was regarded within American fan discourse as an unfavorable move away from normalized white masculinity, which seems to suggest that in consuming professional wrestling as a working class cultural product white masculinity is closely linked with American-ness as expressed through quasi-compatriotism.

I suggest that the problematics of the postmodern action adventure films are

concerned with such ambiguity in body and identity as embodied by the exaggerated white virility of Hitman Hart. In other words, the postmodern heroes inevitably embody the mercurial identity of the racialized white male. And to disguise fractures on white bodies these films assemble postmodern heroes with the fragments of a discarded modernity into an archetype embedded within repressive masculinity and militant assertions of whiteness.

In examining how postmodern heroes reiterate and perform white masculinity I will investigate the material and representational problematic of white masculinity inherited from a Western context, yet compounded through a postmodern context. In this context, I will analyze Heat (Michael Mann, 1995) to illustrate not only the thematic but also the representational concerns that postmodern action adventures share with Westerns. Heat narrativizes the endangered white masculinity of classed white men engrossed in the performing of solipsistic moral codes similar to those that are conscripted to men of the West. The representational Western artifacts are utilized to evoke the imageries of the West as a now futile dream for the working class white man. One such example of the reproduction of the West as artifact can be seen in “Drive,” an episode of the Fox television drama “The X-Files,” aired in November 1998. In this episode, because of an accident during a Navy sound experiment in Nevada, an extremely low radio frequency starts to vibrate in tune with the frequency of the human skull. The metallic “hum,” thus created, eventually causes a rising pressure on the inner ear and shatters it. Crump, a middle aged white man who lives in a neighborhood impacted by the experiment, is affected by the metallic hum. To survive, Crump must remain in

continuous motion toward the West at a certain speed level, which accelerates as time passes. The only way to save him is to insert a needle through his inner ear and make him deaf. Crump declares that an “international Jew conspiracy” is behind his victimization intimating the fact that white masculinity is constructed through “altero-referentiality.” Agonizing due to the excruciatingly painful pressure build-up in his inner ear, he demands that FBI Agent Fox Mulder, whom he takes hostage, call him Mr. Crump declaring that “Taking away dignity is no way to treat a man. It’s better just to kill the man.” While heading toward the far Western edge of the U.S. on a California highway, Crump realizes that “we are running out of West.”

In an era of manifest destiny, white men on the verge of falling into a condemned class without property have gone West believing that upward mobility is possible as long as the West is endlessly open. Crump is a working class white man whose bodily conditions have been altered and whose body has degenerated into a carrier of a biological time bomb. His is a body alienated from his own subjective agency, therefore, uncontrollable. To escape from a ‘fatal environment,’ he goes West just as did the men of the old West for whom Western progress was a quest in which life and death on real and symbolic levels was at stake. Crump’s is, however, an exhausted West and the boundedness of it makes his West an uninhabitable space. A bounded West will not save a white man who has lost “dignity” and the material means to govern his own livelihood.

As an intermediate point in my move toward the analysis of anti-heroes as a possible site of deconstructing hegemonic identity politics, I will analyze The Phantom Menace: Episode 1- The Phantom Menace (The Phantom Menace, George Lukas, 1999).

I consider this film as part of a project signifying a hegemonic move made against the “counter politics” of classed and racialized others that have found expressions in postcolonial space. In this move, hegemonic ordering is reinstated by positing the nation-state as a unifying agency where capitalist hegemony is secured. The Phantom Menace project is constructed around celebrating the expansion of a capitalist nation-state as a teleological end of history. Although intertextual knowledge of Star Wars history informs us that the sovereignty of the intergalactic state established in the project will continue to be contested in a mythologized battle between good and evil that masks postcolonial contradictions, the nation-state regardless remains a sanctified unity. I find this sanctification of the nation-state significant because it seems to reflect bourgeois anxiety in facing the fact that globalizing capitals, which primarily strengthen the material basis of the upper middle class while holding the purchase on others through class sensibilities and ethics, are effectually negating borderlines and demarcations established within a modernist world order. While the impetus of transnational capital fundamentally suspends modernist border politics, in a bourgeois consciousness the idea of the unified nation-state still maintains currency because it harkens back to the time before contested white identity.

And perhaps in a move to reiterate the monistic power of white hegemony, The Phantom Menace project incarnates otherness as inter-galactically hybridized bodies. Individual biographies are replaced by categories of archetypal experiences, therefore, a particular identity with its own particular historicity is submerged in collective identity without history. The racial signs are caricatured, thus, the humanistic properties of the

signified and their histories are erased. Otherness is a non-identity and its chaotic bodily signs are commodified to be visually consumed. I suggest this is the context in which whiteness in postmodern action adventure films obtains oppressive power. That is, the power of whiteness is reproduced by differentiation between purified white bodies and the excessive signs of ethnic bodies. In examining this aspect of the reproduction process of whiteness, I will try to establish that the strenuous enforcement of body politics inevitably anticipates the on-going transactions between hegemonic 'same' and marginal 'other'; because "contact with a human other cannot simply be reified into a moment or movement of appropriation...[Bakhtin maintains] 'there always remains an unrealized surplus of humanness' in the dialogic encounter with others."(Nealon, 1998, p.36)

### 3. Anti-heroes: Heroes in Drag

In defining anti-hero status it is my assumption that identity is a tenuous agreement among the identity performers based on their power relations and contingent with the possibilities of the renewed articulation of power and strife, or even a disorder. Despite the fact that anti-heroes may be coded by floating significations, or a "pastiche identity" as in the Michael Keaton character, Beetlejuice (Beetlejuice [Tim Burton, 1988]), the films I will categorize as representations of anti-heroes are a disruption of the projects of postmodern action adventure films.

I will examine how self-conscious and self-reflective white masculinity in drag may resist hegemonic assimilation through Tim Burton films such as Beetlejuice and Batman (1989). Although some of these films are made in the 1980's I believe that the representational white masculinity in these films continues to inform unassimilable

masculine identity in the popular imagination by becoming an immediate predecessor of identity cross dressing. For example, I believe that there is a considerable comparability between Keaton's putting on a Batman drag (immediately after that of Beetlejuice) and the fictionalization of identity as showcased in Wild Wild West (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1999) as I will elaborate below. In the case of Beetlejuice, the ambivalent identity of Beetlejuice defies any distinctive definition of identity: he is living and dead (he is dead yet possesses the material power to manipulate the environment of the living), gazer and gazed (he spectacularizes female sexuality yet his own extremely manipulated bodily images are also made a spectacle). This liminal identity hints at the fact that wearing an othered identity like drag on the white body even for a morality play entails a danger of completely 'going othered' beyond the discursive possibility of redemption even though wearing otherness is part of institutionalized co-optation in a global market place where otherness is packaged to sell as cultural commodity. This will happen even when the white man puts on an identity that is not normatively othered but rather part of masculine norms, a point I will elaborate on in another Michael Keaton/Tim Burton films Batman and Batman Returns (1992).

Will Smith's James West in Wild Wild West propounds Smith's bourgeois masculinity as an end product of the normalization process of Smith's star persona that began with TV's "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" (1990-1996) in which Smith's street smart kid from Philly was progressively gentrified as his persona became increasingly institutionalized in middle class space and sensibility. Smith's current status as an established Hollywood elite, which posits his persona in the sphere of quite non-

problematic hegemonic masculinity, then dwells on his capability to perform middle class identity. The hegemonic construction of the hero status of James West is textually identified with the middle class in alignment with the Will Smith star persona in popular discourse. As an elite government agent working directly for Washington, West's blackness as a particular identity property is accordingly co-opted and he is invited into a hegemonic middle class whiteness. Despite this narrativized co-optation performed on his black body, in other words, despite the distinct hegemonic construction of bourgeois identification that prevails in the film narrative, which Smith's cultivated hegemonic identity facilitates, I treat West as an anti-hero because his normative masculinity still betrays blackness as a particular identity. In the film, black stereotypes are mobilized to save the day for the West anti-hero momentarily blurring the line between the bourgeois elite persona and a ghettoized black identity. For example, when caught naked by a gang of confederate renegades, West escapes while white renegades are frozen aghast at the sight of West's exposed genitals. West even tries to "jive" his way out of hanging by playing "negro."

However, it must be noted that these deployments of particularity become obscured because the hegemonic construction of the West/Smith hero persona through the performing of a normative masculinity against a fallen white man effectively displaces black particularities. A fallen white man is the common enemy not only to the alliance of the legitimate masculinities of West and his white side kick Artemus Gordon, but also to the North as a legitimate community. Dr. Arliss Loveliss, a Kenneth Branagh character coded as an emasculated Southern man complete with a contrived southern

accent, incarnates a fallen white man of an aristocratic standing nominally condemned by immoral choices and unethical behaviors in seeking to destroy the nation-state of America. His fallen-ness is manifested by his bodily signs: an exaggerated whiteness in his death- mask-like white face, and a body amputated below the waist and mutated into a half machine, which is once again exaggerated into a gigantic replica of his mechanized body part, Tarantula. At the closing of the film, West and Gordon ride together into the sunset in the remains of the battered Tarantula that was an extension of Loveliss' mechanized body, an imagery almost evocative of a cannibalistic feast on an othered body. I believe that the body politics of Wild Wild West enable us to postulate that othering between different political powers entails a hierarchical order of identities that privileges one identity over others, and is informed by a shift in power relations or assimilative impetus, which may leave any performative identity transient.

The construction of anti-heroes may be another instance of hegemonic co-optation when a particular identity is displaced in hegemonic address as seen in Wild Wild West. However, anti-hero status may still suggest the possibility of a disruption to hegemonic identity ordering.

#### 4. Organization

While the construction of white masculinity as an absolute category has been a historical project, in practice white masculinity is a flexibly expanding identity. It is necessary to recognize the acquisitive power of white masculinity as a normative identity because this identity maintains purchase on working class white males as a disenfranchised group. There is a powerfully hegemonic consensus that ours is the time



that signifies the end of history where capitalist behaviors and disciplines are the only viable way of life. With white bourgeois maleness as an epitome of normalcy, class identity is to be written off. However, this consensus is never unique nor new. It is rather a reiterating of existing power relations embedded in a capitalist world system.

Hollywood cinematic discourse refuses to politicize normative identity and finally evacuates it into the hegemonically defined postmodern space where time and space are conjointly dimensionless and vacuous. Middle class white manhood as a point of identification cannot be addressed in historicized and politicized terms because its power to assimilate and contain othered identities depends on its symbolic power. In this arrangement, white working class as identity cannot be maintained without becoming an archetype. In this light, I will examine how representational differences in Westerns and postmodern action adventures may be understood through connectivity in not only generic but also ideological practice. Believing that particularized anti-hero identities can disrupt the hegemonic impetus to totalize identity, I will locate instances of such rupture in a number of representations I will term “drag texts.” For the purpose, this thesis will be organized as follows:

- I. Introduction
- II. The Brotherhood of Cowboys and Postmodern Heroes: The Alterity of White Masculinity
- III. The Case of Cowboys
- IV. The Case of Postmodern Heroes
- V. Dressing Up, Dressing Down: Heroes in Drag

In the Introduction, I introduced David Harvey's concept of "flexible accumulation" as a paradigm to locate a continuum between the 1950's and 1990's not only in the spheres of political economy of a capitalist world system, but also in Hollywood white masculine representations. In this chapter, I try to establish how modern desires to expand capitalist hegemony may assimilate the "differences," not only between different economic organizations but also between normative and othered identities into a system of similarity by explaining how the transition from modernist to postmodern social reconfiguration entails the transition in organization and representations of white masculinity.

In Chapter 2, under the postulation that white masculinity is fundamentally an 'altero-referential' identity, I examine how 'other' identities become an intricate part of syncretized white masculinity as a point of identification for working class white men in hegemonic social organizations and cultural signification system. I try to locate the connectivity between James Stewart's cowboy incarnations in the 1950's Westerns and Bruce Willis' postmodern hero incarnations of the 1990's in an effort to illuminate a high modern desire to dematerialize and dehistoricize the class identity operating behind the hegemonic white masculine construction. Through textual analysis of the James Stewart/Anthony Mann Westerns and Bruce Willis' postmodern action adventures, I examine the syncretism of bourgeois performative ethics and working class virility in these two star personae to historicize and relativize hegemonic white masculinity that passes as a universal identity, thus, emphasizing the alterity within the construction and representation of white masculinity.

In Chapter 3, I examine how the precursory syncretic white masculinity as embodied by Stewart's star person diverges into Willis' ambivalent hybridization of masculinity, and further deviates into the more unstable terrain of lesser whiteness as embodied by lumpen- proletarian white men. I try to locate the origin of the destabilization of hegemonic male representation in the disintegration of the cowboy trope already rendered ironic in Stewart/Mann Westerns and self-conscious in Stewart's cowboy incarnation in the later part of his career. However, I note that the Western's formalistic elements mobilized in the narrativization of white masculinity as a gender and class privilege is still a potent form of identity containment.

In Chapter 4, I examine how the public discourse on Willis' star persona and the filmic representation of Willis' masculinity inform each other. Through textual analysis of Willis' postmodern action adventures in the 1990's, I examine how Willis' hybridized masculinity may anticipate a full-blown alterized identity as his hybridized identity approaches the state of self-conscious fetish.

In the last chapter, I examine how normative masculinity may become ontologically indistinguishable from freak identity as bourgeois performative identity becomes merely drag or a means to negotiate the alterity of masculine identity within a hegemonic system of cultural production and consumption. I try to locate the connectivity between Rock Hudson's 'man in disguise' and male freaks as incarnated by Beetlejuice, Batman and Edward Scissorhands in the films of Tim Burton as anti-heroes antithetical to hegemonic identity management.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BROTHERHOOD OF COWBOYS AND POSTMODERN HEROES: THE ALTERITY OF WHITE MASCULINITY

#### From Colony to Metropolis: The Condition of Alterity

Homi Bhabha (1994) ironizes the ‘mimicry’ that a colonial subject performs in an encounter with a white colonizer: “[As] the fetish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them...mimicry rearticulates [white] presence in terms of its ‘otherness’, that which it disavows.”(p.91) It may be further extrapolated that the unequal material purchase in the colonial relationship renders “interdictory otherness,”(p.91) as Bhabha puts it, to be a site in which a colonizing subjecthood authenticates itself while otherness remains a fetishized identity that may be circulated within the system of signification as a censored or rehabilitated identity. I postulate that colonial mimicry can be rearticulated in quasi-colonial relations, not only between the formerly colonizing and colonized subjects, but also within the boundary of bourgeois nation states in the form of identity and body politics. A postmodern reorganization in the Western metropolis brought about the dissemination of quasi-colonial relations as former colonizers of modern nation states strive to reassert hegemony by reproducing their modern infrastructures in the formerly colonized nations. This reorganization may be understood as capitalist expansion and a process of “flexible accumulation,” as David Harvey puts it (1990, p.146).

However, while the strategy of flexible accumulation sustains the dissemination of globalized capital, it also entails a domestic deindustrialization that substantially destabilizes the material basis of working class white men. Bustling factories, once a scene of working class territorialization, have now vacated the urban space of the western metropolis. As the fetishized media images of ethnic others, along with their embodied flow, migrate into the western metropolis and become markers of lower identity, quasi-colonial economy of “white presence and black [other] semblance,” (Bhabha, 1994, p.90) seems to be inverted. The racial identities carried by ethnic bodies, connoting excessively particular identity properties, become free floating signs that may be applied to any non-normative bodies, thus, racializing them. Thus, both white and other can serve as “presence” and “semblance” at the same time.

This is the paradigm through which whiteness as a historical subjectivity and otherness as an ahistorical artifact become contextualized. The body becomes a site of contestation between a normalcy and deviancy, or a juncture of authentic modern subjecthood and postmodern semblance. In postmodern space, a dialogic encounter between a ‘historical same’ and an ‘ahistorical other’ in a market place makes the modernist definitions of identity and body fluid. If the former colonies are “the slums of the world,”(Douglas, 1998, p.78) then the world must consider this “slum” as its underground structure, in other words, part of its organic self. This seems to indicate a new spatial organization in which chaotic cohabitation of same and other renders modern boundaries tenuous. However, a spatial organization is an intricate part of political power and a modernist impetus may appropriate chaotic border confusion as an organizational

strategy. As Harvey (1996) points out:

To produce one dominant cartographic image [spatial organization] out of...multiplicity is a power-laden act of domination. It is to force a singular discursive representational exercise upon multiple cartographies, to suppress differences and to establish homogeneity of representations. To engage in this is a typical discursive strategy of hegemonic power, that has the intended effect of curbing the imaginary shaping material practices and social relations as well as institutions to a dominant mode of production or...to a dominant disciplinary power. (p.284)

And the modernist body politics that are translated into performative ethics within the modern nation-states may persist.

Western white male-centered postmodern discourse may “colonize” postmodernity as the de-positioning white man’s experience who has lost the aura of avant-garde subjectivity, suggesting postmodern particularities are confined to western experiences. The modern subjecthood constructed through the imagery of enlightened European (white male) intellectuals and their epic resistance to the static world order (that of the ancient regime and the end of the century bourgeois class privilege) ceases to be avant-garde as the modernist renewal of social life becomes a formalistic affair and also becomes ballast of the class privilege of white modern men in gender and race as well as in political and economic order. Once established as the prevailing way of interpreting and configuring the world, modernist methods and expressions have to become an end of eternal new-ness as fleeting quality cannot be anchored in the material life unless it is harnessed in definite political and economic terms. Hence the irony that “Modernism could speak to the eternal only by freezing time and all its fleeting qualities.”(Harvey, 1990, p.21) As implied in the concept of flexible accumulation, postmodern reorganization of a world system masks a fundamentally high modern desire

to police hegemonic borders. For example, the marginality of working class identity may remain occluded while the (al)lure of middle class identity is permeated through consumption that mimics a middle class life style. I suggest that maintaining a normative identity as a foundational configuration of social organization is crucial to the maintenance of a nation-state's boundaries. A modernist impetus to authenticate normative white maleness is a vital part of a hegemonic nation-state.

James Schwoch (1990) suggests that market economies at the “periphery” in the capitalist world system can operate against a transnational capitalist hierarchies that privileges the central capitalist imperative to the degree that “in the long term particular areas seem to reemerge constantly as terrains of struggle, [in the example of broadcasting] including questions of patents, copyright, and culture.” (p.150) Schwoch (1990) cites the example of Latin American broadcasting practice especially surrounding issues such as video copyright and illegal distribution as evincing the existence of a “structure of opposition regarding cultural activities...between the market[regional] economy and international capital.”(p.150) I suggest adding to this insight about the contradiction and struggle between states a perspective that recognizes the continuum of capitalist desire beyond the boundaries of periphery and center to contain class identity mainly by acculturating the working class into bourgeois performative ethics. A reproduction of the bourgeois nation-state's hegemony must be seen as implicated with a capitalist impetus, even though one may try to prioritize a nation-state under the unchanging auspices of Keynesianism allowing the concept of evolution only in terms of fluctuating monetary policies. At the same time, the problematization of capitalism may

benefit from a perspective that views the relationship of the nation and capital as fleeting.

As Schwoch (1990) points out, “Capitalism, the always-international, past and present, is what discreetly surrounds the modern nation-state and remains autonomous, spontaneous, and an elusive subject beyond the empowerment of narrative closure.”(p.150) The nation-state, as capitalism navigates the terrain of the modern state, strives to advance and reproduce its hegemony within mutually beneficial terms with capital. Thus, the nation-state becomes the juncture in which the system of “disciplining of labor power to the purpose of capital accumulation”(Harvey, 1990, p.123) and bourgeois ethics conjoin. This is the context in which I see the continuum of bourgeois identity politics both in the colonial mimicry performed within formerly colonized nations and in the impetus to assimilate suspect or deviant identities within the former colonizer’s society.

South Korean transnational capitalism can serve as an example of how modernist impulse renegotiates identity politics in a postmodern environment. While the local particularities in the formerly colonized regions may require different political interventions for capitalist expansion, transnational capital, fundamentally located outside the boundary of the nation-state and its political imperatives, shares a rather cosmopolitan unitary impetus of flexible accumulation. Indigenous South Korean capital maintains ambivalent affinity with and distantiation from South Korean nationalist imperatives. At the same time, it participates in a modern nation-state project that seeks to stabilize the infra-structure through strategic investment in a Fordist industrial structure.

Samsung, one of the most voracious South Korean transnational conglomerates,



opens its international corporate web page with the following statement:

The term “global market place” is a misnomer. In fact, the world is composed of hundreds of local and regional markets, each with its own distinct demographics, infrastructure, culture, politics and customs. To “globalize” in this dynamic arena, companies must “localize” the way they do business... This means a great deal of autonomy in the way various... affiliates organize themselves... This means clearly understanding... customers’ individual cultures—their needs, work style and life paths—and responding with unique, personalized product options.

The statement that attests to the visceral understanding of postmodernity is juxtaposed to an enlightened modern self. Also to be found on the web page, is the “sports philosophy” as a moralizing trope of the head of the conglomerate, who is known as the most important national patron of amateur sports and whose public persona is constructed through the imagery of a great modern man in South Korea: “By playing golf we learn rules and etiquette. Through baseball, we can learn about the meaning of star players and the spirit of the catcher. Rugby will teach us how to struggle.” The strain to essentialize and sanitize national manhood through the performance of bourgeois ethics, represented by sports, intimates the desire to condition indigenous masculinity to capitalist impetus and at the same time the anxiety of a modernizing self that tries to dehistoricize the process of middle class construction embedded in class struggle. The establishment of the middle class itself has evolved around the containment and ghettoization of a petite-bourgeoisie and proletarian class largely through the illegalization and stigmatization of organized labor. In the South Korean context, the emulation of bourgeois values is a main strategy of labor control because Korean society lacks the previous industrial tradition as the basis of class consciousness, which facilitates the disenfranchisement of organized labor.

It is possible to speculate that as a formerly colonized nation stabilizes its material bases it may well co-opt its own history and reformat it according to bourgeois imperatives that fundamentally reorganize the identity hierarchy in a very similar way to that of the former colonizer, with modern manhood installed as a hegemonic identity reiterating colonial practices of sexism and racism within a quasi-colonial economy that demarcates class, gender, and race privileges. And I suggest that similar quasi-colonial relations can be found in the constitution of modern bourgeois male selfhood in the postmodern environment.

In The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White (1986) observe that the historical formation of the middle class imaginary reflects a slide between “the Other” as a censored identity outside the boundary of middle class social identity and the Other as “a boundary phenomenon of hybridization or inmixing, in which self and other become enmeshed in an inclusive, heterogeneous, dangerously unstable zone.”(p.193) I would further suggest that as ballast for middle class performative ethics, bourgeois male subjectivity inevitably seems to represent a constant negotiation between the appropriated and contained identities as a continuous process of synthesis and exclusion. The ‘imagined’ coherence of body politics connotes an ironic syncretism of the residual modern and a postmodern impetus. It seems that in maintaining a modern nation-state, the imagery of an enlightened modern man is appropriated as an embodiment of a foundational subjectivity that constitutes a disciplined labor force. Harvey (1990) observes that “labor of any kind requires a certain concentration, self-discipline, habituation to different instruments of production, and knowledge of the

potentialities of various raw materials for conversion into useful products.” (p.170)

In the postmodern context, thus, it seems meaningful to see a continuum between modernist desires and postmodern flexibility. Fredric Jameson (1998) points out that the “anti-institutional phase” of an avant-garde intellectualism is coterminous with the modernizing project of capital itself:

“[D]emythification [as avant-garde project] in the contemporary history has its own ‘ruse of history’ ...to sweep the globe clean for the manipulations of the great corporations: to prepare a purely fungible present in which space and psyches alike can be processed and remade at will with a ‘flexibility’ with which the creativity of the ideologues busy coining glowing new adjectives to describe the potentialities of ‘post-Fordism’ [as an economic description of postmodernity] can scarcely keep up.”(pp.56-57)

It may be induced that the transition from modernity to postmodernity can become another instance of synthesizing of contradictory and competing changes, through “standardization,” a process which normalizes and naturalizes the new stage as a teleological end.

Jameson (1998) observes on the paradox of modularity that:

[I]ntensified change is enabled by standardization itself, where prefabricated modules, everywhere from the media to a henceforth standardized private life...allow miraculous rebuildings to succeed each other at will... The module would then continue the new form of the object (the new result of reification) in an informational universe. (p.58)

In an arrested postmodern moment “modularity” signifies a highly formalistic appropriation of postmodern fluidity. Thus, the “purely fungible present” may be seen as the externalization of a modernist impetus, producing a paradoxical equivalence between “an unparalleled rate of change on all the levels of social life and unparalleled standardization of everything.”(Jameson, 1998, p.58)

In Star Wars: Episode I- The Phantom Menace (The Phantom Menace, George Lukas, [1999]), the hybridization of patriarchal capitalism's modernist principle and postmodern body politics showcases one such modernist impulse. Harvey (1990) suggests that:

There are many signs of continuity rather than rupture with the Fordist era. The massive government deficits in the United States...have been fundamental to whatever economic growth there has been in world capitalism...Arenas of conflict between the nation state and trans-national capital, however, opened up, undermining the easy accommodation between big capital and big government so typical of the Fordist era. The state is now in a much more problematic position. (p.170)

The Phantom Menace revisits the universe as a nostalgic simulacrum with political urgency. In the film, the narrativization of the modern state in postmodern terms textually resolves the anxiety that the purchase of bourgeois knowledge and sensibility, prevalent in the modern nation-state context, has diminished as it strives to maintain strenuous boundary politics that censor and assimilate various identity properties. The U.S. as the world's oldest modern nation, as Ann Douglas (1998) puts it, is in fact:

[T]he only Great Power founded and developed as a modern nation state by more than one race...as host to millions of immigrants from eastern Europe and the Third World... [the United States] has 'colonial subjects' and citizens with strong link to other national cultures within its own borders. (p.79)

It may well be said that "compound identities [as] one of the more viable justifications for the United States's much vaunted exceptional status"(Douglas, 1998, p.79) inevitably evoke the imagery of ironic multiple-selves crowding within a body.

The Phantom Menace is engaged in reestablishing a solipsistic white male identity that harkens back to the imageries of the enlightened modern self, distancing it from the pastiche bodies of the racialized others. A high modern desire to define racial

hierarchy based on colonial relations mobilizes postmodernity as an organizational trope that offers chaotic bodily signs as controlled commodities in global market place. For example, certain identities are sanctioned and preserved as constitutional elements of hegemonic identity, such as the white Anglo masculinity of central characters. The prerequisite for hegemonic masculinity of these characters is found in a genetic feature that is traceable through the blood composition. The “force,” a mythic source of universal order in the film, chooses/eugenically engineers those who would become a Jedi Knight. On the other hand, other identities retain conspicuous foreign-ness across time and space between Amerigo Vespucci’s virgin America and futuristic galactic simulacrum. Various foreign accents and physical features, for instance, are clearly mimicking traceable ethnicities that Vespucci of the world must have encountered in a colonial moment although these markers are made as part of ostensibly origin-less pastiche bodies. Conspicuously resembling repulsive foreign-ness that has been produced and circulated in Hollywood cultural production, such as servile and sly Asian-ness and Jewish-ness, the human substance behind their foreign-ness is dislodged from the lived biographies and made into abhorrent artifact.

A Lyotardian, uninhabitable space outside of the western metropolis, is not only populated by the former colonized that crossed the border into the modern space of the former colonizer’s cities. It is also occupied by the disenfranchised working class that move into racialized space, thus, inevitably sharing the bodily signs of colonial others that the marginalized space endows upon its inhabitants. I postulate that the bourgeois conscious/unconscious, whose whiteness has been largely constructed through

modernizing the colonizer's social boundary, may recognize its subjectivity rendered liminal within an ever-fluctuating postmodern space where the imperatives of transnational capital and the modern state redefine each other. As late capitalist conditions problematize even the material bases of the middle class, identity boundaries that have been traditionally policed by the modern state destabilize. Apoliticized citizens of the modern nation-state must experience disorienting anxiety while watching an 'underground self' with the face of the formerly colonized other, surfacing.

Predicated on this postmodern disorientation, The Phantom Menace transforms the material world into a postmodern pastiche. In the pastiche universe, a normative body draws its monistic power from dematerialized and depoliticized pastiche identities of indistinguishable others. In this arrangement, elements of alterity slipping through the boundaries of whiteness are subsumed onto other bodies. Among these other bodies in this film, there is lesser white feminine body as exemplified by Queen Amidala. Her extremely adorned body is interchangeable with an anonymous body: she can be disguised as any other woman as shown in the narrative. An exotic fetishizing of the body does not help strengthen whiteness underneath unknowable bodily signs she is wearing. Rather it expresses alterity predicated on anonymity and unknowability. For the most part of the film Queen Amidala is not far removed from other pastiche bodies, as she is pastiche herself despite the knowledge that the actress who plays the role is indeed white. While Anglo diction and appearance of the main male characters function to anchor their whiteness, without such anchoring device to signify stable whiteness, Queen Amidala is far removed from stable whiteness. That alterity is donned by a white feminine body in

this film suggests that the potency of alterity is textually contained, because a feminine body is already suspect in the hierarchy of hegemonic whiteness. That is, femininity is always already a fluid identity.

The historical process of modern identity construction becomes a postmodern negotiation in that the imagined coherence of the body masks the self as a jumble of competing identity properties. The white lumpen-proletarian, for example, is codified by racial connotations such as the incapability of commodity acquisition, unruliness, and excessive sensuousness, which it shares with racialized ethnic others. Racialized as such, they become lesser whites, embodying the lowliness of the white self. Yet, what is hidden as an underground identity is always already there and a normative bourgeois self as a synthesizing machine that incorporates or subjugates other identities to materialize itself must remain aware of its existence. After all, there must be a moment in which one first faces a beast and wrestles with it before finally containing it. Of that moment of facing a dialogic relation is inevitably borne a selfhood that needs the other as a condition of its self-recognition. On the Bakhtinian self and Hegelian subject, Jeffrey Nealon (1998) notes that:

In a [Bakhtinian] dialogic system, neither self nor other can live independently; though the self may be privileged, it can never be complete... once we realize with Bakhtin that 'I cannot perceive myself,' we then necessarily 'grasp how far removed the self is from privilege.' [and an Hegelian] appropriating subjectivity wants nothing to do with static self-perception: its 'privilege'...is nothing other than its unstable mobility, its perception of itself as open to possibility....In fact [in Phenomenology of Spirit] the Hegelian desiring subject comes to know by experience that its essence is...in a relational process that Hegel calls 'mediation': the 'becoming-other that has to be taken back,' the movement outside the self that must return to and enrich the self. (pp.44-45)

Here, it must be noted that dialogic dialectics involve a power struggle between

participating subjectivities. We must locate the site of the most acute contradiction that will prevent subjecthood from becoming a synthesizing machine by keeping it in tentative terms.

I suggest that class relations connote one of the most acute contradictions, as class is the most unstable identity property in the postmodern environment. Working class identity is made invisible in social discourse and is replaced by many disguises that conceal a classed self. An example of this phenomenon may be found in the hypermasculinity of pro-wrestling as a representation of working class virility (as I have discussed in Chapter 1). Meanwhile, Harvey observes how business has acted as a class: “business increasingly used its financial power and influence...during the 1970’s and 1980’s, to effectively capture the Republican Party as its class instrument and forge a coalition against all forms of government intervention.”(Harvey, 1996, p.339) It seems that in the vacuum of working class representation, the emulation of the bourgeois ethical system displaces any political articulation of class consciousness. This is the context in which othered subjectivity is put into danger of being reduced to a reified artifact in a hegemonic subject construction.

In the recent Fight Club (David Fincher, 1999), the protagonist/narrator, a young white corporate man, relegates his agency to Tyler Durden, a hero figure. Durden represents an authentic masculinity that can build a symbolic universe in which other men’s biographies may be reconstituted. In reality, however, Durden is the narrator’s alterized self that resides within a schizophrenic split-self. When this underground self/Durden surfaces, the narrator’s bourgeois consciousness sleepwalks. The class identity of



this underground self is revealed as Durden organizes a fascist underground movement of disenfranchised men. The quasi-politicization of men in the film is first exercised through the spontaneous gathering of a “fight club” where men ritualistically practice disfiguring and demolishing of the male body through violent fist fights. Textually coded as an expression of freedom to transgress the boundaries of the normative body, a disfigured male body signifies the possibility of an alterized body politics. The alterized body further hints at the origin of an impetus to alterize a male body. That is, once a white masculine body becomes dematerialized through disenfranchisement, it becomes deterritorialized from the familiar sites of racial/class privileges. The class identity of the working class white man, thus, continues to reconfigure itself in particular historical moments.

Here, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) remark on deterritorialization seems relevant: “ The most deterritorialized element causes the other element to cross a threshold enabling a conjunction of their respective deterritorializations, a shared acceleration.” (p.142) In the case of Fight Club, the battered white body signifies self-destruction as an element that crosses a threshold of a previous mode of identity reproduction. In the film, an organizational self-destruction/self dematerialization, “Project Mayhem”, is exercised through a militated fascist group that, as a unified collective self, engages the demolition of the private identity that is coterminous with the destruction of private property. That self-destruction is an ethical behavior, is first showcased when Durden argues with the narrator’s normative self that multiple selves must continue to cohabit in order to continue demolishing the metropolitan space, the

main goal of Project Mayhem. Durden condemns the metropolis as a bastion of private desires and consumption as a means of illusory satisfaction of those desires. Ethical self-destruction is once again showcased in a final duel- like confrontation when the narrator shoots his alterized self, Durden, and in reality blows off half of his own face.

The narrator's agency has been embodied by Durden, and this embodiment has mediated the bourgeois anxiety of the narrator that he is "not a beautiful and unique snowflake," but merely a copy of an unknown original. The act of negating his own embodied-ness by killing off the agent of the embodiment, simultaneously connotes a desire to negate the body to return to the disembodied metasubject, and an urge to retreat into a sanitized space where the Othered subject is finally contained. By denying this embodiment, the bourgeois self is also denying the politicizing agency that has been realized through the synergy between the normative and alterized subjecthood. Durden as an alterized subject has been appointed to intervene as a counter-hegemonic white male identity that takes over the agency to politicize the self. In this arrangement authentic masculinity is consigned to the fascist / underground self and bourgeois subjectivity vacates its own body and consciousness. However, it must be noted that while a bourgeois male self, as an enlightened modern subject, may temporarily disembody itself in its endeavor to achieve a coherent subjecthood, its underground self must remain always already bodiless. The underground self incarnates only as a fetishized artifact in the unconsciousness.

Dana Nelson (1998) suggests that bourgeois white male subjectivity is historically constructed on the basis of "altero-referentiality":

[W]hite manhood is the stance of the disciplined observer. Thus, the very altero-referentiality of white/national manhood—its rational, managerial directing of the gaze away from itself and toward its multiplying Other/supplements—makes it hard to pin down analytically. (p.26)

However, pinning down, or, the problematizing of white manhood begins to become a possibility in Nelson's own observation of the tension between the categories of "Sameness/ Difference," "Fraternity/Competition," "Equality/Inequality," and "Health/Disease" that are integrated within the white masculinity behaviorally and psychologically. (pp.16-17) This is because, according to Nelson, such integration is made possible through "[racially uniting] the white nation/male."(p.100) The concept of white manhood as a racialized category opens up class identity as a way to problematize white manhood. Nelson's concept of the "counterphobic consolidation of white manhood" shows a clear class implication in the building of white manhood:

If emergent ideologies of corporate liberalism allowed men to domesticate anxieties about democracy and individualism within capitalism in the terms of loving subjection, that reconceptualization entailed their more thoroughly internalizing unequal results of capitalism as their own failures. The advantage of whiteness for men, then,... was the disavowal and projection of internal fragmentation...—even while flexibly identifying with imagined aspects of Others, even while remaining relatively, or entirely invisible to itself as such. (p.100)

In this arrangement, the Othered configure as "counterphobic remedy to white men's experience of their own (in)equality...and this counterphobic consolidation of white manhood came multiply, through the 'claiming' of the cultural capital of whiteness by (emergently) working class men."(Nelson, 1998, p.100)

Fredric Jameson (1998) has observed:

[A] rhetoric of absolute change (or 'permanent revolution' in some...meretricious new sense) is, for the postmodern, no more satisfactory...than the language of

absolute identity and unchanging standardization cooked up by the great corporations, whose concept of innovation is best illustrated by... 'life style' corporate culture and psychic programming. The persistence of the Same through absolute Difference...discredits change, since henceforth the only conceivable radical change would consist in pitting an end to change itself. (p.60)

I suggest we understand this tension between 'the Same' and 'Difference' as coming from the contradictions a modern self faces in a postmodern environment as it seeks global rationalization to expand its material bases, thus, implying transitionality with "the utopian imagination" that implies a sense of narrative closure of "absolute identity". I further suggest reading normative white masculinity as a bourgeois ethical construction (the Same) that always produces antithetical sets of identities (Differences). For example, in the case of Fight Club, whiteness as the Same appropriates a fascist identity coded as a lumpen-proletarian identity that exemplifies a Difference.

In the following, I will examine how the body of Bruce Willis operates as a site of tenuous syncretism in which bourgeois performative identity (the Same) and working class bodily signs (Difference) contest with each other. Through this examination, I hope to illuminate how a continuum may be found between postmodern action heroes of the 1990's and cowboys of the 1950's as white male incarnations. An insight into the continuum of identity politics may help relativize the white masculinity that has been passing as a universal category and illuminate a high modern impetus to dematerialize and dehistoricize class identity.

### Toward A Historicization of White Masculine Representation: From Cowboys to Postmodern Heroes

Umberto Eco (1997) explains how Hebrew, once a holy language, was turned into

a symbol only to reconstitute itself into “a different and wholly disturbing, Other.”(p.105) According to Eco, with the rise of the modern science of linguistics, the myth of Hebrew as a perfect language lost “linguistic primacy” and “[w]hen the image of the Hebrew language and civilization was torn down, the myth of Aryan races rose up to take its place.”(p.105) I would like to note that this process of a myth being replaced with another involves a moment in which the boundary between metaphoric reality and material reality becomes blurred. The synthesis of mythical and material languages within a hegemonic language eventually creates a system of signification that reifies the Other while hegemonic identity is established as both metahistory and material organizational principle.

Dana Nelson (1998) observes that “[a]s ‘other’ bodies were investigated, inventoried, and invested with particularized materiality, scientific authority located the Observing Subject in... ‘an artificial space of evacuated materiality.’”(p.124) The universalizing of the “Observing [white] Subject” rendering it seemingly immaterial is a fundamentally modern project in which the colonizer’s subjectivity is rendered without bounds freely traversing modern space/present and ahistorical past/present conflation of the colonized. The appearance of “evacuated materiality” is a privilege only those whose identity is considered without the trappings of a particular identity can obtain. Therefore, the immateriality of a subject paradoxically evinces the material purchase that enables that subject to determine its own spatial and temporal form. Because immateriality is a hegemonic privilege, therefore, a class privilege, hegemonic class is envisioned as an intact white body while otherness is represented by pastiche bodies. The pastiche bodies

of the other represent an ironic disembodiment as hegemonic body politics replace the 'embedded-ness' of identity with a simulacrum.

I postulate that the body of Bruce Willis represents a syncretism of bourgeois ethical emulation and the working class hyper-body. By hyper-body I mean a body without materiality; in other words, a body only as an index that doesn't necessarily have a corresponding original. In syncretizing, the problematic properties in other identities such as race and class are replaced by copied images of middle class whiteness. In this light, Willis' body is a pastiche or a simulacrum of a fantastic hybrid.

Willis' star persona has carried connotations of unruly virility as identified with his class origin as the "cockiest kid from Carneys Point, New Jersey," the son of a welder, who worked as a security guard and bartender. (White, 1995, pp.63-70) His working class virility is further expounded by his rock star persona Bruno, a quasi-Italian personification that evokes the imagery of ethnic virility. The juxtaposition of New Jersey as a working class space and New York City in Willis' biographical accounts underscores the cohabitation of competing identities of a working class 'kid' and a Hollywood elite in Willis' star persona. The Bruno persona, as in The Return of Bruno (James Yukich, 1988), a mock documentary about a rock star's success story, has been updated recently through the TV cartoon "Bruno the Kid" (1996) in which Willis voice-acted as Bruno the Kid.

As if informed by the geographical proximity between the shipyards in Carneys Point, New Jersey and New York that imbues Willis' Hollywood elite status with working class kid invocations, Die Hard (John McTiernan, 1988), the first of Willis'

postmodern action adventures, anticipates the ongoing contestation between identity properties waged on his body. In this film Willis is a New York cop who feels out of place in a Los Angeles high rise that houses a transnational corporation and later becomes the site of an onslaught on American urban space by an unknown, yet long-lurking, enemy. Willis' working class status as a cop is qualified by the fact that his estranged wife is an executive of the transnational corporation, that is, Willis is personally connected to the elitist space of the luxury high rise, which seems to suggest the ambiguity of Willis' position in bourgeois space questioning "is he or is he not" legitimate part of the space.

The importance of Die Hard can be found in its function as a redemption project for Willis' masculinity. By the end of the film, Willis defeats condemned lesser white masculinity (embodied by foreign/European terrorists); forms a male bonding with redeemable black masculinity (a black cop Sgt. Powell is the only connection Willis has through radio communication with world outside the high rise as a battle field); and salvages his marriage by proving that he is capable of being a protector of the order and femininity. Thus, after the mayhem, Willis walks out with an appointment to be a white male authority. I believe that Die Hard suggests how Willis' masculinity is institutionalized as a proper male identification and established as a homogenized hegemonic male representation by proxy in Hollywood cultural production while anticipating the hard work Willis' masculinity must engage and endure.

However, the ambivalent position Willis holds in bourgeois space seems to persist as shown in Death Becomes Her (Robert Zemeckis, 1992). In this film a bourgeois

domestic space is contaminated by a monstrous femininity. Willis, an alcoholic former plastic surgeon, is designated to maintain the appearance of vitality on dead feminine bodies as he imitates the look of life on the corpses of rich women, and eventually his wife and a lover. The aging white feminine is increasingly represented as the monstrosity of the living dead as embodied by the mechanized feminine body, as parts of the disintegrating body are replaced by prosthetic limbs. The normative white masculinity of Willis is suspect because it is defeated by the toxic mortality of femininity, itself a simulacrum of hyperfemininity (consider the ‘sleeping beauty’ trope of the fetishized female corpse). Willis’ ambiguous normalcy is originated from the hybrid status of his masculinity and the defeat of his masculinity by the toxic femininity is informed by the transitional class identity of his star persona. The redemption of his masculinity is only eulogized in his funeral as a patriarch who adopted orphans from all around the world.

A virile working class masculinity as part of Willis’ persona, even while Willis performs bourgeois identity, anticipates the strenuous rehabilitation through bourgeois emulation or containment of a lower identity through the performing of a normative identity. In this light, I consider The Fifth Element (Luc Besson, 1997) to be a redemption project of Willis’ masculinity that strives to stabilize the syncretism of working class virility and bourgeois performative ethics. In this film, Willis’ rescuing of the universe is concomitant to the preserving of, and coupling with, a perfect white feminine as an affirmation of his hegemonic masculinity. The hegemonic whiteness of this couple is undergirded by a conspicuous otherness represented by chaotic bodily signs replicating identity hierarchy and disguised by indistinguishable signifiers. In this



pastiche universe, particularities of othered identities are deterritorialized. In other words, their historicity and locality become untraceable. Thus, they lose the possibilities of resistance through racial particularity. For example, a black body, whose resistant meaning is embedded in its particular historicity, loses its potency as a signifier of the oppressed when deconstructed only to be reassembled into a pastiche body of unlocatable origin.

Armageddon (Michael Bay, 1998) further normalizes Willis' masculinity through his masochistic suffering that must be endured to secure the heterosexual coupling as represented by the marriage ceremony of his daughter who incarnates a virgin entering a sacred family reproduction. The nostalgic invocation of a suffering man, perhaps drawing its mythological power from the imagery of the crucified Christ, is in line with the filmic narrativization of white masculine redemption in Westerns.

I postulate that postmodern heroes and cowboys represent a qualified white body relativized with class connotations and at the same time rendered ephemeral as a sort of metasubject that embodies transcendental white bourgeois identity. Here, another qualification in the hegemonic body politics becomes necessary: the middle class white male body is negotiated or qualitatively transformed through class particularity. Vivian Wagner (1995) elaborates this concept in terms of the bourgeois subject's attraction to and repulsion from fascism, or a tension between the "dirtiness" of a fascist/othered body and a "clean and proper body."(p.319)

It is possible to find a few sets of contradictions a bourgeois self encounters that seem to suggest a contestation between normalcy and alterity: the same and difference,

cleanliness and dirt, modernist impetus and postmodern resistance. That a bourgeois self confronts otherness as a threat to the boundary of a clean body is suggested by Anne McClintock's (1995) exemplification of soap as a fetishized commodity:

[T]he middle class Victorian fascination with clean, white bodies and clean, white clothing stemmed not only from the rampant profiteering of the imperial economy but also from the realms of ritual and fetish... Soap did not flourish when the imperial ebullience was at its peak. It emerged commercially during an era of impending crisis and social calamity, serving to preserve, through fetish ritual, the uncertain boundaries of class, gender and race identity in a social order felt to be threatened by the fetid effluvia of the slums, the belching smoke of industry, social agitation, economic upheaval, imperial competition and anticolonial resistance. (p.211)

A bourgeois self is dangerously close to the dirty, unsanitary, alterized identity that it mingles and transacts with within the social environment organized around market encounters. In Fight Club, Tyler Durden and his group finance Project Mayhem, a militant fascist sabotage scheme against bourgeois institutions, through the sale of luxury soap they manufacture from the discarded human fat salvaged from medical clinic garbage dumps. The ironic juxtaposition of a "dirty" fascist self and soap made from human residue signifies an underground self as the sewage of a clean/normal self, an integral part of organicism of a clean body, and mocks the bourgeois obsession with self-cleansing.

In The Sixth Sense (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999) Willis' hybridized body implodes and enters the sphere of "white death" (Negra, under review, p.4). I suggest that this implosion may be explained by the fact that middle class consciousness carries the urge to sanitize its lower self. In Willis' case, virility as an othered identity property transgresses the universal white body that must erase otherness as a dirty and unsanitary

identity. The transgression may be purged by death and rebirth. The trope of death and rebirth again draws on imageries of death and resurrection of Christ as a prototype of the white male masochist (Savran, 1998, pp.82-84). Willis suffers for imagined universal identity beyond any trappings of particular identity that may contaminate the pure white body with alterized identity properties such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. A masochistic Christ transcends any specific identity property and becomes universal and auto-referential, signifying an ideal white identity. And the same impetus behind the construction of Bruce Willis' postmodern heroes as a white man in a crucible can be located in the identity politics of James Stewart especially in his 1950's Westerns.

In Winchester '73 (Anthony Mann, 1950), the protagonist Lin McAdams (James Stewart) hunts down and kills his own brother who had stolen Lin's prized rifle, a Winchester '73. This apparent murder over a fetishized commodity is endowed with moral justification because the thief also shot and killed their father from behind. Therefore, the competition over the control and possession of the commodity is camouflaged as a moral struggle of biblical proportion. Acquisition of the desired commodity not only signifies the protagonist's escape from otherness (his lumpen-proletarian class status and moral ambiguity as a killer) but also functions as a punishment for the one who fails to obtain property, whose classed-ness is doubly condemned by his apparent inability to perform a moral act. Further examples of the conjunction of economic and moral redemption can be found in other Stewart/Mann projects. In Bend of the River (Anthony Mann, 1952) the protagonist Glynn McLyntock redeems his whiteness and masculinity through participating in the building of a new

Western settlement, thus, embodying upward mobility from a lumpen- proletariat (he was a raider across the state borderlines and carries a scar from hanging vividly visible around his neck) to a legitimate member of a production system.

As in the case of Willis' postmodern heroes, Stewart's cowboys, hybridizing working class desire and middle class allure, passes for as a normative middle class white man. The connectivity between the postmodern hero and the cowboy I examine here is, however, not without irony. If Stewart's cowboy incarnation draws its purchase largely from his unproblematic white middle class maleness, (Cohan, 1997, p. 32) Willis' postmodern hero is informed by his problematic middle class status. This ambivalence of Willis' body may paradoxically motivate working class identification, making the bourgeois emulation process that is undertaken on his body visible. Yet for a bourgeois spectator, this syncretism of classed virility and middle class normalcy may be a source of anxiety as a bourgeois self is alternately attracted to and repulsed by a deviant identity property. Furthermore, an othered identity that passes as a normative white masculinity must be policed. Thus, deviancy within the middle class body is purged by a ritual death performed on Willis' body in Death Becomes Her, Armageddon, and The Sixth Sense. In an era of deindustrialization as working class identity becomes increasingly volatile along with its volatile material purchase, a mythologized syncretic body replaces a corporeal body image of a working class self. And this is the context in which a syncretic body may keep resurrecting after a purgatorial sojourn in the sphere of white death once again renewing its cultural purchase as we see in the longevity of Willis' star persona.

Because the deployment of both the Stewart and Willis star personae can be well

understood in the paradigm of systemization and dialectic expansion of capitalist hegemony and its concomitant cultural projects, I suggest a further consideration of the political economy between the representational white masculinities of the Stewart/Mann Westerns and the postmodern action adventures of Bruce Willis. The representational practices of Westerns and postmodern action adventure films are contingent to the ongoing cultural project of “flexible accumulation,” a process that encompasses the transition from the industrial peak of the 1950’s to the deindustrialization of the 1990’s as a sort of self-reinvention in the capitalist regime of accumulation and its associated modes of social and political regulation.

A longing for demarcation may be a part of western modernist inclinations as Ann Douglas (1998) implies in her observation that “[m]anaging time or history by naming it has been largely a western and white obsession.”(p.71) A kind of mapping of the world that makes it legible to symbolic and material orders already in place, demarcation may also elide interrelations of historical phenomena. Postmodernity is one example of a phenomenon narrativized as distinct departures from the high modern desire. In this context, reconsidering the continuum, rather than demarcation, as a foundational concept in historicizing white masculinity seems pivotal especially in the endeavor to divest its monistic power as a transcendental category.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CASE OF COWBOYS

In “The X-Files” episode “Trevor” aired in April 1999, Wilson Pinker Rawls, (Pinker as he wishes to be called) an inmate in a Mississippi prison farm, survives a tornado in “the box.” He has been confined to this punishment chamber after nailing the hand of a fellow inmate to a board after the man ridiculed the potency of his masculinity. It is discovered that in surviving the tornado he has gained the power to alter the material composition of physical objects. His touch can pulverize any metal. He walks through walls and other massive structures. Pinker’s matter-altering power is a paradoxical weapon that simultaneously signifies an empowerment and a destabilization. The masterly control over materiality frees him from the allegorical/immaterial definition that confines him within an index of fixities assigned to white trash status in dominant discourse, as signified by the box. Yet, the same power transforms his own bodily compositions into a highly destabilized atomic state. Pinker believes it is god’s will that he survives the treacherous and violent assault of nature in the form of the tornado. And he is convinced that he is endowed with a power that enables him to transcend the established natural laws so that he may have “another chance,” and declares “ I want what’s mine,” specifically a son he never met. He goes on a murderous rampage to reclaim his property, a paternal right.

Eventually it is discovered that there is a snag in the material composition of his renewed body: his body cannot penetrate natural insulators such as rubber and glass. The omnipotence of the new material law his body commands is defeated and Pinker finally suffers a violent death in which his body is torn apart limb by limb. Pinker's status as a lumpen proletarian white man represents those within working class who have "not accepted industrial discipline" (Roediger, 1999, p.110) As a prison inmate who committed robbery, he does not hold a legitimate place in the value production system. Undisciplined to the capitalist regime of production, Pinker's masculinity is non-productive and non-functional. That his masculinity is suspect, is implied first by the ridiculing of his masculinity by a black inmate and secondly, his subjugation to the social rules of punishment such as imprisonment and the box. I postulate that his obsessive search for his son reflects the anxiety of a man who resides in illegal social and economic terms of being. That is, he cannot ensure the sustenance of his identity and livelihood without a legitimate relationship with the value production system, Pinker can be seen as always already dead; therefore, he must find a way to lessen the anxiety of extinction.

Pinker's already dubious materiality cannot be contained by dominant ethical and economic systems. His Prometheus-like resurrection, as he is literally unbound from the deadly confinement of the box, pushes his already unstable materiality even further beyond the possibilities of stable identity in normative terms. His altered state is negational rather than synthetic, and deconstructive rather than acquisitional; it stands for the power to disintegrate the original structures of the matters he encounters rather than acquiring and accumulating them. That Pinker's self-governance is achieved through

immaterialization attests to the fact that in reality he has no material governance. Because his transformation is from a bounded body to an atomic stage in which his whole body may dissemble and assemble its constitutive elements rendering it illegible, he remains antithetical to the governing laws of material and social equilibrium that seek to eliminate destabilizing contingencies of bodies and identities.

It seems meaningful to compare the masculinities of Pinker and Bruce Willis in terms of acquisition and divestment of identity and materiality. I believe the starting point of Willis' identity construction can be found in his foundational working class identity, which fundamentally differs from Pinker's lumpen proletarian identity in that industrial discipline provides a tenable foundation for working class materiality. In other words, the working class holds a negotiational position with the capitalist value production as the politics of labor and capital mutually inflect albeit on unequal terms the reproduction and transformation of each other. While Pinker's undisciplined proletarian identity disables his masculinity, the fact that Willis' masculinity originated from a disciplined working class identity signifies the process of acquisition in identity and material property.

### A Territory Contested

Willis is reported to have gone on “ the biggest shopping spree for land and buildings in the history of Penns Grove, NJ., a down-at-the heel, blue-collar town”(Rist, 1996, p.119) neighboring his home town Carney's Point. According to the same article, as “ an investor who has come home to the town where [he] grew up,” Willis included in his hometown shopping an old bank building where his mother used to work. It is also reported that Willis embarked on a land buyout in the small Idaho town of Hailey. There



he is reported to have bought and gentrified with a million-dollar renovation a blue-collar bar into a venue for the vacationing rich and famous, and he began constructing an office building named after his grandfather. (Rist, 1996, p.121) As the article aptly puts it, “Some people collect pictures of the places they have lived in, Willis... collects the places themselves,” and his collection of the places signifies a fundamental re-inventing and restructuring of the topography of a place after one’s own self image. Willis’ assertion that he wishes to be treated “just as a kid from this town [Penns Grove]” (Rist, 1996, pp.119-121) where he is buying out properties, masks the strenuous territorialization that he undertakes as a way of stabilizing the Hollywood elite identity which was initially a foreign transplant on the working class kid identification.

The stacked imageries of Hollywood elite and working class kid seem to indicate a split identity maintained by the desire to retain a “kid” identity, which informs the unruliness of lower class masculinity. By foregrounding the kid identity, Willis avoids the fixed position of a grown man rendering it fluid while still exercising a grown man’s material purchase and the all synthesizing bourgeois aspirations that motivate the re-configuration of a declining working class town into a gentrified space. The possession of the personally-related old building signifies the construction of a memorial in honor of Willis’ own re-territorialization of the terrain he couldn’t claim as a working class kid.

The real life territorialization which serves as part of Willis’ public discourse seems commensurate to his filmic discourses. In films, Willis’ body keeps regenerating into different spheres. In the most recent example, Willis alternates death and life in The Sixth Sense (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999) and The Story of Us (Rob Reiner, 1999). If in

The Sixth Sense, Willis, as a middle class white man who is an ambivalent father figure and only a ghost of a husband, is materially defeated into the sphere of death, in his next release The Story of Us, it is resurrected in a highly trivialized middle class drama as a middle class patriarch whose personal salvation is achieved through the maintenance of marriage and family boundaries. I suggest that the ritual accumulation of actual places and the fluctuating materiality of Willis' textual body each impinge on the other's narrative. The material accumulation and textual resurrection seek to stabilize Willis' hybridized masculinity. Middle class identity and working class identity fissure on each other's borderlines.

If Willis' body represents white masculine regeneration through territorialization, in an effort to mend the fissures of class identities for a more unified embourgeoisement, Pinker's body represents the disintegration or negation of white corporeal masculinity. Pinker's lumpen proletarian masculinity thus becomes an antithesis to the bourgeois economy to synthesize different identities. Pinker's status as a fallen white man and his destabilized materiality represents the peril of disintegration, or the peril of disenfranchisement that an unruly body may suffer. I postulate that the fear of disintegration and dematerialization is behind not only Willis' identity syncretism but also the masculine discipline of the territorializing men of the West especially as narrativized in the Stewart/ Mann Westerns.

In his study of the racial aspects of whiteness, John Hartigan (1999) emphasizes how "places" plays distinctive roles in the construction of racial identity, thus, considering race "as a relentlessly local matter... [and] racial identities [as] constitutive

of place.”(p.14) In arguing that racial categories and conflicts are “textured by class distinctions”, Hartigan also states that “In the United States, interpretive repertoires for articulating a sense of place fundamentally involves class.”(p.15) According to Hartigan:

Racialness [in an urban ghetto where marginalized whites and blacks co-reside] is a function of indelible markings, poignant, irrevocable histories, and avoidable proximities...The operations of racial identity, the privileges and the disadvantages, are predicated on the spatialization of epidermal differences, which... informs and reproduces modes of social differentiation. (p.86)

If racial problematics are place-specific, then whiteness as a racial property may also be informed by a specific situated-ness in terms of social relations and space.

One such example may be found in David Roediger’s (1999) study of the construction of whiteness among urban Irish antiabolitionist rioters in the antebellum era. At a time when “downward social mobility was a constant fear, the persuasion of whiteness, especially for ‘poorer whites’ was that ‘one might lose everything but not whiteness’” (p.60) At the time, Irish immigrants were experiencing “ the anxieties and desires resulting from a loss of a relationships with nature...[as a result of] the wrenching move from the preindustrial countryside to full confrontation with industrial capitalism in an urban setting.”(Roediger, 1999, p.151) In this milieu, Irish whiteness was configured on the basis of racism:

[which] places Blacks within the category of the ‘biological’, defining them as sexual but also as without history and as natural, erotic, sensual and animal. Whiteness took shape against the corresponding counter-images, shunting anxieties and desires regarding the relationships to nature and to sexuality onto Blacks. (Roediger, 1999, pp.150-151)

Thus, racism as a demarcation scheme delegates problematic racial markers onto other bodies and institutionalizes identity politics along racial markers. Here, class markers

become murky as they can be delegated onto other bodies disguised as racially problematic, thus, freeing whiteness of racial connotations and leaving upward mobility as the utmost imperative for white men.

Here I would like to suggest an intertextual connectivity between Pinker and Stewart's cowboy incarnations in the paradigm of discipline toward embourgeoisement and its concomitant crucible that men must endure and prevail. Stewart's cowboys' crucible indicates an anxious anticipation of the failure in bourgeois disciplines. In 1950's America, the imagery of the West may have been a valuable venue of masculine discipline because in a remote non-place-specific space a man can be effectually displaced from his class identity. Therefore, the burden of class consciousness that may invalidate psychical embourgeoisement as the basis of industrial discipline, can be concealed. This point may become clear when we consider the fact that the syncretism of bourgeois ethics and working class maleness performed through the Stewart persona was in fact driven by the ideological impetus of labor control in the 1950's. Labor relations in this era were being reshaped by the increasing disempowerment of the political agency of organized labor through regulations centered on the interests of government and business management. The management-centered regulations were part of the on-going subordination of labor to the logic of capital management and increase in production that had been accelerated since World War II.

The working class white masculinity that was socialized and disciplined through labor's collective activism, was now reconstituted and reorganized as a performer of bourgeois ethics, and working class identity was increasingly masked underneath middle

class signification as represented by Stewart's normative bourgeois masculinity. And the possibility of a discourse-oriented approach to working class identity is replaced by the imperative of masculine discipline vis-a-vis bourgeois ethics and value production.

Michael Rogin (1987) describes an American pluralism held by large interest groups in which each claimed to be the conveyor of communal virtue, specifically property rights and an ethical system that underpin the system of commodity production and accumulation. This pluralist coexistence "stifled controversy" rather than allowing it to surface. It may be predicated that the surface equilibrium achieved through pluralism hides the fractures and contradictions that question any assumption of idyllic state as an ideal communal goal. As Rogin points out, "American pluralism...was characterized less by conflict than by fear of conflict; it divided government into bureaucratic complexes, each with hegemony in the relevant policy areas and each representing itself as a natural community."(p.174) This policy of pluralism as a prevention rather than remedy to conflict is apparent in the process in which labor relations in America have been ultimately defined by the imposition of a common goal of production and industrial growth on organized labor by capitalist imperatives. By translating capitalist expansion into an egalitarian means to reach a state of idyllic and communal harmony, the power elite has been able to ideologize an eschatological end of history through the end of contradictions in social and economic relations as a realistic and achievable goal of interest politics.

For example, during the industrialization after World War II, in reorganizing the agricultural structure around the interest of wealthy farmers, the concept of pluralistic

cohabitation between rich farmers, urban working class consumers, poor whites and blacks coincided with the way an unequal coexistence between classes was coerced by such labor regulations as the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. This act fundamentally disables the political agency of organized labor by narrowly reconstituting a collective activism into economism, thus, depoliticizing the labor movement:

The act made explicit the ambit of collective bargaining in the now firmly-established pluralist model of labor relations. Wages, hours, and working conditions were enthroned as legitimate objects of industrial government. Activities which obstructed the further development, expansion, and productivity of the corporate political economy, however, were to be avoided. (Tomlins, 1985, p.316)

The machinery that is placed to delimit the political boundary of organized labor as collective agency in the era of industrialization, is based on the capitalist imperative as dictated in a 1944 report of the Twentieth Century Fund's Committee on Labor:

[The report asserted that unions'] collective bargaining...should accept as a fundamental premise the necessity of "translating into action the economic philosophy that alone makes sense in an age of assembly lines and efficiency engineering," namely, "high continuous production, high profits in return for genuinely venturesome capital, high wages at steady jobs, together with an unceasing stress upon ever-lowered unit cost"... To produce and "produce and produce again"... was the only way to avoid "the decay of our capitalist system, and the decline of our political democracy." (Tomlins, 1985, p.318)

In this rhetoric, the thesis that organization of collective political power and the right of collective bargaining itself is "a desirable end itself" doesn't hold purchase. (Tomlins, 1985, p.318)

According to Christopher Tomlins (1985):

By the mid-1940's, the language of politics treated contemporary political battles in the same terms as the emerging international struggles of the Cold War. The choice in all policy debates was between 'the advocates of a planned economy and those who believe that progress can only be achieved through the freedom of

the individual and of economic activity.’ (p.277)

This kind of discourse informs the 1950’s imagination that social menace is that which is antithetical to idyll as an ideal social state that is assumed to represent the end of political and economical contradictions. This idyll, free of class contradiction, may have been a republican goal of American hegemonic politics that dictates: “The New Freedom, [in the Wilsonian Progressives’ approach] was freedom to be part of the machine [set in motion by the corporation between government and corporations to restore and conserve the progressive utilization of nature.]”(Rogin, 1987, p.183) At the bottom of this articulation of utilitarian nature resides the imagery of the West as a reservoir of wealth and upward social mobility as stated in 1851:

The degraded vassal of the rich... will find a home in the west and stimulated by the favor of the Government, the desire for independence, and the ties of family, the wilderness will be converted into smiling landscape, and wealth poured into the nation’s lap. (Rogin, 1987, p.182)

The 1950’s public ethos, which included such elements as the “ intolerance of diversity, conspiracy theories of alien and secret power, and attacks on established political institutions,” is the result of the “sentimental glorification of rural life [in place of political gratification]” that harks back to the imagery of the West tamed into a wealth-producing garden. After all, in the American imagination:

The West was ‘an opportunity for social development continually to begin over again, whenever society gave signs of breaking into classes...[in the West] the archetypal pastoral hero is [linked to] the ‘industrious frugal Farmers...of whom the Body of our Nations consists’...The hero of wilderness regeneration is the hunter and Indian fighter, who in time becomes the cowboy. (Rogin, 1987, p.181)

I posit that Stewart’s cowboy incarnations mark the transition/merge between the homestead-owning farmers as an “archetypal pastoral hero” and cowboys as a “ hero of

wilderness regeneration” in narrativizing the economies of working class identity in the second industrial revolution that faces a vigorous industrial discipline to assimilate to the new phase of production mode. However, cowboys in the Stewart/ Mann Westerns represent white men who have not quite achieved the status of farmer/homesteader as a cultivator of garden and civilization. These men are still immersed in a “wilderness struggle [as] the sources of self-denying, nationally-unifying civic virtue.” (Rogin, 1987, p.185) In the new Western frontier as the “social wilderness,” these cowboys prepare themselves for property ownership through moral struggles that lead to escape from a criminalized proletarian identity. With moral perseverance and material acquisition, men of the West as incarnated through Stewart’s cowboys become the source of bourgeois identification as a unifying point of national identity.

In the Stewart/ Mann Westerns Bend of the River (Anthony Mann, 1952) and The Far Country (Anthony Mann, 1954), the project of community building and the appropriate temperament and discipline of cowboys to participate in and protect the founded community are urgent concerns. In these Westerns, cowboys are posited as holding on identification with “producing classes in the middle,” while according to Roediger (1999), between 1800 and 1860, wage labor was gradually established as a dominant form of white labor:

[In this process] virtually all working whites were included in the ‘producing classes’ [and they shared] a strong suspicion of the powerless, not just of the powerful, and a fear that the top and bottom in society would unite against the ‘producing classes’ in the middle...All labor republicans existed in a society that offered the opportunity for white workers to measure their situations not only against the dream of a republic of small producers but also against the nightmare of chattel slavery.(p.44)



In the Westerns I mentioned above it is that fear that is narrativized through the conflicts between Stewart's cowboy on one side and monopolistic merchant capitalists and unruly outlaws on the other as the main source of threat to nascent communities of the West. These antagonists also represent forms of physical and psychological hindrance to the cowboy's desire to perform within and assimilate himself to the bourgeois ethical system particularly as it disciplines one's labor to the dominant mode of production. In the case of these Westerns, the dominant mode of production is represented by property ownership and expansion of community as a value production unit. In Bend of the River, Glyn McLyntock's main struggle is with a border raider, Emerson Cole, who bears a resemblance to McLyntock in a class identity as a man without property and a dubious moral capacity that McLyntock strives to negate by taking over the responsibility of guiding a band of settler wagons to the new homestead in Oregon. By doing so McLyntock overcomes the moral ambiguity represented by Emerson, a state of possible lawlessness McLyntock himself once resided in and might fall into again through just one lapse from his communal responsibilities. In The Far Country the main conflict centers upon Gannon, a merchant capitalist, who tries to drive small businesses and gold miners out of a far northern Canadian border town. Stewart's Jeff Webster is a cattle driver and gold miner and his 'possessive individualism' motivates him to refuse to relate himself to the town's people's predicament under the tyranny of monopolized capital as long as his own private property remains unscathed. By defeating Gannon, Webster contains the threat from above (monopolized capital) and prevents the destruction of the community comprised of enterprising free agents that seek their own small fortune in the form of

independent mining and small shops. In this process he morally cleanses himself of the characteristic that is antithetical to the community as a cohesive value-production unit.

Stewart's cowboys in the Stewart /Mann Westerns thus serve as a trope for working class identity reconfiguration in the era of the second industrial revolution of the 1950's. Lodged in the imagery of the archetypical "producing class in the middle" the property ownership of the working class was increasingly stabilized.

The following observation was made by Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, and Platt (1969):

In the course of the 1950's, statistics [made] available in most of the advanced societies of the West suggested that ...with the general increase in prosperity, a significant expansion was taking place in the number of individuals or families in receipt of middle-sized incomes...the new middle -income group was to be seen as largely the result of the relatively rapid economic advance of substantial numbers of manual workers and their family who had been able to secure incomes comparable to those of many white-collar employees and smaller independents. (pp.7-8)

It must be noted that this perspective of economic growth as evidenced by increasing property ownership, supposedly achieved by a large portion of working class was not without a destabilizing element:

Under the stimulus of a period of steadily rising living standards, expectations and aspirations could in fact race ahead, far beyond the rate at which material advance could conceivably continue. In such circumstances, therefore, a far more acute sense of deprivation and social injustice might be created...while the restricted horizons of the traditional working class maintained...as affluence makes possible the satisfaction of the more obvious personal domestic wants, urgent new wants may be expected to develop of a kind less readily met through increase in private income—for improved environmental conditions... in town...for better and more equal educational and work opportunities. (Goldthorpe et al., 1969, p.20)

However, while there are possibilities of this kind of instability, labor relations in the 1950's were reconfigured by legislation that domesticated labor to be subordinated to

capitalist imperatives. Another level of labor domestication can be found in the stable and predictable labor process established in the 1950's:

[T]he internal labor market [labor exchange such as transfer, promotion within the same shop floor, factory, or cooperation] is part of a system of bureaucratic control that "rationalized the enterprise's power by making its application more stable and predictable, and hence bureaucratic control evoked more stable and predictable behavior from workers; that is, bureaucratic control tended to legitimize the firm's exercise of power, and translate it into authority. (Burawoy, 1979, p.107)

Therefore, "Class position is not merely a matter of consumer power: the function and status of a group within the social division of labor must still be regarded as being of basic importance." (Goldthorpe et al., 1969, p.24) In this light, despite the compatibility of income and consumption, in the 1950's and onward, manual and white-collar workers remain very differentiated categories. I suggest one of the ways to locate "class position" can be found in a bourgeois insistence on how to narrativize class identity and consciousness.

Hartigan (1999) points out that "Citizens whose training in reading the significance of race come... to see race as a series of abstractions, whereby social forms are ready-made to contain whatever meanings arise." (p.7) In the same vein, a social identity, whether race or class, can lose its material contextuality in public discourse and become multiply allegorized. One such example may be found in Westerns as an allegorization of white masculinity. It seems that the primordial postmodern subjecthood that Norman Mailer has observed in the Beat generation intellectuals of the 1950's (as cited in Savran, 1998) accurately describes an ahistorical consciousness that understands material situations in terms of allegory:

This [fragmented, decentered, ephemeral subject] is intensively and exclusively presentist in his orientation. For him the only “truths” are the “isolated truths of what each observer feels at each instant of his existence. Unable to comprehend his relation to history or to the nation, the “perpetually ambivalent” hipster immerses himself in the moment, making and unmaking himself in each instant. Most tellingly, this “psychic outlaw” is incapable of recognizing the extent to which he is rendered a schizophrenic subject, oblivious to the “conservative power which controls him from without and within.”(p.49)

The Stewart/Mann Westerns serve as an example of the allegorization/dehistoricization of capitalist identity politics. The textually normalized white masculinity of James Stewart thus anticipates the way whiteness becomes an identity without class designation in dominant social discourse.

#### Economies of James Stewart’s Cowboys

Pinker’s body represents a postmodern alterization; that is, his body signifies an altered white male body that cannot be indexed by the modern definitions of viable working class white masculinity. Stewart’s cowboys, decontextualized from the hard kernels of material reality, especially class reality, seem to serve as precursors to the postmodern alterization of identity performed on Pinker. If Stewart’s cowboy was the rehabilitated lesser white, Pinker’s proletarian self lies outside of the redemption project. Pinker’s matter-altering power draws upon the analogy of natural man in the wilderness before the republican redemption that conditions masculinity to the disciplines of value producer. Although Pinker, like Willis, reorganizes places by altering the material composition of their contents, as a non-producer Pinker is always already dead. The places do not certify his material purchase. In contrast, Willis reconstitutes his personal history from that of a working class kid to that of a man who can reorganize his own biography, a man who re-territorializes the place that defined and still informs his class

identity. An uncanny connectivity between the three different masculinities of Stewart's cowboy, Willis and Pinker, is revealed through a postmodern dislocation first anticipated by the cowboy. A cowboy seeks to territorialize and stabilize his materiality. Yet, the very basis of his materiality—class reality—is textually denied from the term. Only virility is salvaged out of a proletarian body and used as part of the assembled identity. This practice of disassembling and reassembling identity properties predicts the postmodern pastiche self. Willis' capability to resurrect from a dematerialized status (as a dead psychologist in The Sixth Sense) seems to be undergirded by his ability to acquire places and their histories as private property.

Pinker's naturalized masculinity as "social wilderness" momentarily enables him to command natural elements to defeat the organizational rules that had already been institutionalized in the broader scheme of civilization. The Western Wilderness in the Stewart/Mann Westerns represents a territory to be de-naturalized and turned into a manufacturing sphere of value production. Nature is imagined based on the Tocquevillean idea of civilization that is brought about through "particular value-enhancing practices, specifically, practices of place that turn land and 'natural resources' into finished, exchangeable goods."(Shapiro, 1997, p.4) In this sense, modern nation-building as a territorialization of the wilderness is a project of biblical proportions.

According to Tocquevillean modernist ideas:

[The] "wilderness [is] a less divinely sanctioned epoch, a time during which people has not yet acquired a right to a territorial settlement. The eventual place of collective fulfillment or recognition is a land that, according to Tocqueville, has not yet been properly occupied."(Shapiro, 1997, p.6)

Michael Shapiro (1997) states that subsequently, the Tocquevillean ideas maintain their

epistemology in the form of a Neo-Tocquevilleanism that can be characterized by its “inattention to specific structures of space in favor of an emphasis on national territoriality.”(p.9) To this strain of thought, the Western Wilderness and urban ghettos represent the space of an “empty continent”(Shapiro, 1997, p.6) pre-empted of place-specific polities and socialities. Thus Tocqueville’s Indians who didn’t “properly occupy” the wilderness as demarcated lands are replaced by Neo-Tocquevillean Blacks who are equally de-territorialized in the “national territoriality” proper.

In the 1950’s, James Stewart’s cowboys showcased an identity construction necessary in territorializing a national space in which man’s work is organized and subordinated to the imperative to produce as a common goal of a capitalist society. The West becomes an ahistorical and allegorical space where an archetypal modern man may be born.

It seems that the institutionalization process of a syncretic masculinity in the Stewart/ Mann cowboys warrants examination of the ways in which Stewart’s benign masculinity was made secure. One such example can be found in coupling narratives in the 1940’s. For example, in The Shop Around the Corner (Ernst Lubitsch, 1940) Stewart as store clerk Alfred Kralik is insulted by a fellow clerk with whom he is in love who deems him “a little insignificant clerk.” After he is made the manager of the store and becomes a self-designated “father of the family” of employees he may successfully marry the woman. In this film, Stewart transparently exhibits a process in which his normative masculinity is stabilized. He not only performs a masculinity qualified for upward mobility but also avows loyalty to patriarchal privileges by urging his employees to show

their loyalty to the ailing shop owner by putting on the biggest Christmas sale in the store's history. Here, marriage is a final reward for the man with the right temperament to succeed. In Come Live With Me (Clarence Brown, 1941) Stewart is writer Bill Smith, a man at his wit's end having been unable to have his book published. As a means of tentatively supporting himself he enters a contractual marriage to a blue-blooded European refugee who enters the marriage to obtain a legal residency to avoid deportation back to war-torn Europe. This morally suspicious coupling, however, ends up as a domestication of foreign femininity in Smith's old homestead where the two perform the roles of romancing lovers. Come Live With Me can be seen as a redemption narrative of a woman with dubious identity since she doesn't belong to any normative national category. Stewart's masculinity turns out to be legitimate as his deep roots and commitment to traditional family ways are affirmed through the showcasing of his rural homestead as a normative domestic sphere in which the couple's performative courtship overrides their previous moral ambiguity. Similarly in You Gotta Stay Happy (H.C. Potter, 1948), Stewart's Marvin Payne, an owner of a small charter plane business, successfully domesticates an unruly heiress into marriage.

I suggest Stewart's hegemonic middle class identity in these narratives must inform the construction of cowboy masculinity in the Stewart/Mann Westerns as the normalcy of his middle class masculinity is established as part of his star persona that is "natural" and "goes without saying,"(Thompson, 1991, p.194) which is strengthened by the fact that Stewart's image as an educated man and wartime pilot is confounded with many of his filmic masculine narrativizations.

I also suggest that Stewart's "unmannered performances"(Thompson, 1991, p.194), portraying psychotic obsessions, in Stewart/ Mann Westerns are representative of an unruly virility compatible to cowboy maleness and identifiable with the property-less class that is undergoing domestication to middle class normalcy via the Stewart persona. The viewer witnesses the process in which low class virility is reconfigured into a disciplined hegemonic masculinity through ordeals that aim to moralize and redeem lesser white masculinity.

The utility of the Stewart star persona in constructing hegemonic whiteness is underscored in The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (John Ford, 1962). In this film, Stewart's Ransom Stoddard is juxtaposed to John Wayne's Tom Doniphon in many meaningful ways. The juxtaposition seems to evince the purchase Stewart's persona holds in the domestication and discipline of white masculinity in the Western venue. In this film, Stoddard is a lawyer who has gone west trusting the axiom "Young man, go west and seek fame, fortune and adventure." As if from an intrinsic understanding of Stoddard's drive, the cowboy Doniphon calls him a "pilgrim" throughout the film. Doniphon also personally tends the wounds Stoddard suffers from a flogging by the local outlaw Liberty Valance. Both men share the same goal of territorialization. Doniphon is building a homestead with marriage in mind. Stoddard strives to build a community based on law to which those who take the law in their hands, whether it's Valance or Doniphon, are fatally antithetical. Stoddard becomes a lawyer, teacher, and state congressional delegate for the community. The instinctive affinity between the two men is, however, of an ironic nature. Doniphon becomes a trope to ensure the high morality of



Stoddard. That is, by shooting Valance who haunts the community and hunts down Stoddard as a representative figure of the lawful civilization in the community, Doniphon's function becomes making sure that Stoddard's own hands are not soiled with blood. While Stoddard goes to Washington as a career politician, Doniphon dies without property and without ever finishing the construction of his homestead. Despite their affinity as men of the West toiling in the wilderness, Stoddard's and Doniphon's masculinities clearly occupy different terrain. Doniphon's masculine performativity harkens back to the West before national demarcation becomes a republican dream. His is the West where "man settles his own problems." Stoddard represents a disciplined republican masculinity that operates within national boundary building in lands and ethics. As much as it is closer to the anachronistic memory of the time in the wilderness before national demarcations, Doniphon's masculinity seems to be closer to formalistic performativity.

In Firecreek (Vincent McEveety, 1968) Stewart still engages in the masculine redemption project, yet in a far more formalized and performative manner. In this film, the town of Firecreek stands for a garden that turns out to be sterile. It is called a "cemetery of a town" by a gang of "hired killers" where "no one has to compete" for land ownership and people "bury" themselves instead of forging farther West in search of an abundant garden. This film hints at the Western as a formalized artifact first through the characterization of James Stewart as part time sheriff and full time hay farmer Johnny Cobb. In this film Stewart seems to perform the well-rehearsed ritual of a man whose redemptive masculinity depends on the struggle to protect a community. However, the

sense of irony found in the sterile garden of the West, a community that stopped progressing, substantially invalidates the economy of that struggle. His enemy Bob Larkin (played by Henry Fonda) is also endowed with a strong sense of irony in his self-conscious performance as the leader of traveling outlaws. He is warned by a townswoman that “It won’t be long before you will be running out of borders.” That duty is a well-rehearsed performance, is expressed by his self-conscious remark that “certain things are expected of me” according to the rules and customs carried on in the lives of an outlaw band in west regardless of his own private sense of ethics. Cobb, crawling on the ground with his legs and arms shot, refuses to give up the gun even after Larkin offers to leave town if Cobb stops shooting, seemingly out of the compassion he feels toward Cobb coming from the understanding that like Larkin himself Cobb is also expected to perform certain ethical acts. Larkin asks Cobb “ What are you proving?” Both men seem to understand the fact that the war they are waging is a performative affair as there is no material interest to be redeemed and no disorder that can be corrected by these men’s hard work.

An apparently self-aware Western performative masculinity is textually extended in The Cheyenne Social Club (Gene Kelley, 1970). In this film, aged cowhand Stewart no longer engages in strenuous masculine redemption. His status as man of property is achieved by becoming an owner of a whorehouse he inherited and which enabled him to leave the impoverished life of “cow folk”. This film carries a litany of Western conventions, such as gunfights and the mannerisms of cowboys as hired help but those tropes are completely alienated from the ethical imperatives that used to accompany them

in Western narratives. This is a sort of postmodern move toward copying the formalistic aspects of authoritative originals.

However, as demonstrated in the film Heat (Michael Mann, 1995), copying out of performativity can also carry ethical connotations when utilized to provoke the nostalgic imagery of masculine discipline and a homosociality that re-enforces conservative gender and class order, and reiterates hegemonic power relations. I suggest that such a project can be driven from an ideological impetus as conceptualized by Shapiro (1997):

[The moment of frontier encounter between Euro-Americans and Native Americans] was quite brief; relationships ceased being invented in the process of confrontation as fluidity [of relationships] gave way to hierarchy, as the engines of state power and the interests they vehiculated turned the frontier or place of invention and negotiation into a series of ‘regions,’ proprietary and juridical in structure and administrative rather than inventive in practice. Henceforth peoples, however different their interests, cultural practices and inclinations were to meet on a space marked out with subjectivities no longer contingent on the effects of the encounter.”(p.18)

The demarcation of space still remains a prerequisite in ensuring hegemonic interests especially as “frontier moments” continue in a globalized metropolis. And when a need to reconfigure spatial demarcation arises, the trope of masculine discipline still functions as the privileged property of hegemonic white masculine organization. I consider Heat in this context. In this film, both the “sheriff” (Al Pacino’s LAPD detective Vincent Hanna) and “outlaw”(Robert De Niro’s thief Neil McCauley) are represented as disciplined modern men. The tension between the modern man and the cowboy as a natural man of the wilderness as staple contradiction in community building Western narratives, is overcome through re-enforcing masculinity as a gender privilege. The affinity between Hanna and McCauley is made apparent by their voyeuristic gaze at and surveillance on

each other. Their masculine disciplines are the result of the synthesis of nature and industrial conditioning, a sort of conflation of rationalism and animalism. They are men who know the terrain instinctively and work it through elaborate planning and hard work. In Hanna's case the ability to methodically work the terrain is related to his ability to "search for signs of passing for the scent of prey." In McCauley's case, his ability to walk out on anything or anybody "30 seconds flat if you feel the heat around the corner" is the foundation of his discipline. The homosociality the two share as a privileged social relation is conveyed through mutual admiration and understanding that they do what they do best. This homosocial bond culminates when they hold each other's hands as McCauley lies dying having been fatally shot by Hanna. The film strives to demarcate a clandestine masculine space that is maintained by a sense of duty and performative ethics and is suspicious of a fixed set of moral codes. For example, the relationship between Hanna and McCauley is not to be measured by rules of strife between a morally pure hero and anti-hero as an anathema. Thus, "flexible inventions" of relations in frontier moments are designated as masculine privilege.

Here I suggest anticipating the postmodern incarnations of Bruce Willis. The deep structure of Willis' white masculinity draws on the masculine demarcation as practiced in Heat and further works toward spatial demarcation along class, gender, and race lines endeavoring to control contingency and differences of those identities. Willis' mode of demarcation as narrativized in his postmodern action adventure films gains its meaning as a way of white masculine territorialization through syncretic identity. If Willis' filmic masculine representations are concerned with the redemption of hegemonic male identity,

his real life practices are centered upon acquisition of elite power. The accumulation of land dwells on the imagery of almost feudal patriarchal privilege. This patriarchal imagery is routinely narrativized in his redemption tales such as Armageddon (Michael Bay, 1998) and The Fifth Element (Luc Besson, 1997) and remains a latent element across the body of his work. The property accumulation in identity and materials that Willis undertakes, helps institutionalize the syncretic identity of his public persona in cultural production. Diane Negra (1997) points out that one significant role of star discourses can be found in the fact that they instrumentalize the way audiences understand “locations in the world with which they hold no immediate experience.” (p.5) I suggest that Willis’ star persona helps navigate its audiences through the cultural locations of syncretism and masculine territorialization. However, without underpinning normalcy as an outgrowth of the star’s biographical accounts as in James Stewart’s case, Willis’ syncretism may anticipate the strenuous maintenance of normalcy and the containment of contradictions. Such clean textual resolution is not always possible and there will be a residue of contradictions left visible or insurmountable, as I will examine in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CASE OF POSTMODERN HEROES

In a postmodern resurrection of Nosferatu, Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula* (1992), one of the significant Modernist moments occurs when Nosferatu encounters modern man armed with scientific knowledge and the means to destroy the vampire's unassimilable ancient regime of being in the modern metropolis. Nosferatu has traveled across the ocean embedded in the decaying earth of an old continent to the metropolis, in whose modern soil, he will be disintegrated. In the modern metropolis, Nosferatu stands for the promiscuous exchange between normative and fantastic bodies. To the scientizing modern man, he is an enigma transformed into a medical subject. As a pathological object, he is documented in medical dossiers of blood disease that explain his origins, physiology and symptomatology. The process reflects the medical gaze of modern man and his attendant desire to mediate and conquer his own ancient history. It is as if the children of Kronos try to slay an archaic father who followed them into their realm with a casket full of ancient earth, the soil filled with the reminiscence of old death and sacrifices his children had made at his altar.

At the end of *Dracula*, Prince Vlad Dracula's defeated body is cleansed and christened into an unblemished body that corporeally resembles a modern bourgeois white body: Nosferatu's anomalous body is reconstructed to copy the image of it. This urge to clean up the soiled body seems to indicate that the modernist intercourse with any

pre-modern entity carries bodily desire to deconstruct and reorganize it into a familiar Christian body, thus, sanitizing any peculiar identity. The battle between modern man and the archaic and anarchistic body of the anti-modern as embodied by Nosferatu, often ideologically and morally defined, may be in fact the war over the contemporary body. In Dracula's case, it is the localized body embedded in its own territoriality. Even though Dracula may be situated in a metropolis he seeks to survive by grounding himself in his own earth, the only terrain in which he can undergo regenerating sleep/mock death. Thus, foreign-ness and death signify Nosferatu's particularity and uncleanness. That Coppola's Dracula alludes to modern desire seems to be evinced by the positionality in Hollywood that Coppola's own star persona as a "movie mogul" publicly constructs: Coppola has come to represent the cultural vanguard in a post-classical Hollywood that envisions and practices a new system of material accumulation, that is, a 'new' Hollywood system as a reinstitution of patriarchal capitalist privilege shared between great modern men in an 'old' Hollywood under new definition.

Elsaesser (1998) evaluates Coppola's relationship with Europe as follows:

The very classicism we now associate with Hollywood and its golden age, its canonical directors and masterpieces, were mostly named and defined not in the USA but by the *nouvelle vague*. . . Yet by the 1980's, it was Coppola who rendered an inverse service to a younger generation in Europe. [As implied in the European imports by his production company Zoetrope, such as film maker Werner Herzog and films like *Hitler: A Film From Germany* (Syberberg, 1977), the restored version of *Napoleon* (Abel Gance, 1927)] Aguirre [from Aguirre: The Wrath of God of 1972 directed by Herzog], Hitler, Napoleon—European overreachers, failed world conquerors, [are] studied with nonchalant but hardly casual interest by an American movie mogul [Coppola], building up media power that seemed poised to take on the world, yet sufficiently European to be also fatally in love with this ambition's failure; elements of a mythology perhaps too potent to resist. (p.195)

In this light, the way Coppola chose to incarnate Dracula implies an important aspect of his modern desire. Dracula is part of an old mythology laden with the desire to conquer death, which is also an unobtainable object for a dead premodern man. Coppola disallows death to become a fetish object in this film by re-baptizing Dracula's abnormal body into an unblemished white body signifying its salvation. Although Dracula's body is finally disintegrated through beheading, it remains as a Christened white body instead of turning into natural elements such as rats, bats, and wolves which the vampire body often metamorphoses into. The vampire's metamorphosis into bestiality implies an extremely exotic identity, the strangeness of which can find referent only in forms without trace of human-ness. If in re-baptizing Dracula's abnormal body Coppola envisions the colonization of the abnormal premodern body and the refinement of it into a Christian body, then the desire behind such a project is ultimately to advance the power to acquire and exhibit the extraordinary unmodern object thus finally reconstructing the unmodern through a modern organizing principle.

The mode of cultural production as represented by Coppola then may aim to materialize the desire to domesticate premodern disorder, embodied by the forms of extraordinary identity (an ethnic European identity in this case as Dracula is from the far reaches of Eastern Europe, namely, Transylvania) into emblems of modern triumph, or monuments that eulogize modern man's conquest of the sign and production systems reconfiguring the modes of cultural commodity production and consumption. Capital may take an ephemeral and immaterial form but its management is undertaken by a modern Prospero-out-of-exile, such as Coppola himself, who understands and



materializes the structure and nature of the aerial movement of capital.

If territoriality is a concern directly related to the survival of the un-modern body, as exemplified by Nosferatus' earth, then deterritorializing it is the key in forcing it to succumb to modern order. The deterritorialized body is fantasized in the system of myth production as part of a hegemonic symbolic universe. In contrast to the fantastic body of the Other, "the [normative] body cites a constant reminder of what the Other is not and could never be: white, bourgeois, and masculine." (Han and Ling, 1998, p.58) I would like to redefine this bodily dynamism into an intercourse between hegemonic modern man and other male bodies by borrowing the concept of Orientalizing as a representational practice that exemplifies the othering mechanism. In their summary of Said's concept of Orientalism, Han and Ling (1998) point out:

Orientalism... involves a projection of the Other as fantasized by the West... The Other is the Western Self's negation... 'The Orient was Orientalized... not only because it was discovered to be Oriental... but also because it could be—that is, submitted to being—made Oriental.' (p.58)

In the process of modernization, an identity hierarchy is established through unequal power relations between the hegemonic and other and this process entails the formation of the "nation-state as patriarchal plantation relations configured by race, gender, class" (Han and Ling, 1998, p.60) in which various power disparities are constructed and institutionalized. With relation to the masculine West, not only feminine Asia but also the white woman and the lower class white man represent sexualized objectification in hegemonic discourses of power.

I suggest relocating this power relation between hegemony and othered subjecthood within the sphere of masculine territorialization in the western techno-

metropolis, in which Bruce Willis is often situated in his postmodern action adventure films. For example, in The Fifth Element (Luc Besson, 1997) the microcosm is a sort of “techno-pia,” where the ideology of political utopia is replaced by the gadgets and wonders of a technological play ground, closely resembling computer games and their on-screen heroes and anti-heroes in liquid forms of identity and body. Interestingly “technopia” is the term coined and widely used in ad campaigns by the Samsung Conglomerate of South Korea as it launched global high tech ventures in the 1980’s. The era of phenomenal technological growth in South Korea ironically coincided with the repressive regime of military dictatorship. Notably the 1980’s began with a massacre by the military of a presumed 2,500 resistant citizens participating in a nation-wide anti-military dictatorship movement in a major southern city in South Korea, in the region which historically suffered disproportionately greater political and economical disenfranchisement.

Technological advancement in depoliticized space may signal “technological deterritorialization” (Dennis, 1995, p.15) in two ways. First, it involves the disaccumulation of working and middle class people whose position in the new accumulative system of late capitalism becomes volatile as technological impetus restructures professional hierarchy in accordance with the objectives of immediate profit production. For example, the 1990’s have witnessed tremendous growth in the technological out-sourcing sector organized in forms of entrepreneurial small and mid size high tech companies as transnational corporations are increasingly unloading the burden of labor management and transferring it to the subcontracting service providers.

This kind of change in the labor environment marginalizes those who are not viable for re-training to fit into a new industry structure and is extremely hostile to organized labor. Second, it involves the immaterialization and universalization of space or the dissemination of the idea that space is an allegory, therefore space is displaced into hyper-space. For example, in The Fifth Element, space is devoid of geographic particularities that produce the time- and place- specific local identities inevitably embedded in particular historicities. In hyper-space, particular identities are dismembered and disjointed into artifacts that signal only an exotic peculiarity that may be donned on or off a hyperbody that has discarded the material definitions of class, gender, race and sexuality. The question of “ is it or is it not feminine, masculine, oriental, occidental, homosexual, androgynous...?” continues as fluid bodies parade across the nonmaterial techno-space.

However, it must be noted that in the capitalist ideology, “there is the twofold movement of decoding or deterritorializing flows on the one hand, and their violent and artificial reterritorialization on the other. The more the capitalist machine deterritorializes... the more its ancillary apparatuses ...do their utmost to reterritorialize.”(Dennis, 1995, p.15) Therefore, the ideological containment within the capitalist system intrinsically carries contradictory impetuses. One can be found in runaway signs that deny border construction and the finalization of meanings. The other is an urge for material fixation to delineate a persistent power allocation that privileges certain identities over others, and involves violent oppression via social apparatus, such as institutionalized racism and sexism, as a means of masculine reterritorialization.

An allegorical manifestation of such power relations can be found in the encounter between enlightened modern man and Nosferatu, in which bourgeois masculinity reproduces hegemonic identity politics by moralizing and further rehabilitating the fantastic body of the other. At the conclusion of Coppola's Dracula, Dracula's Christ-like death and Mina's Virgin Mary-like posture indicate a sort of Pieta-like sacred death. Although moments later Mina beheads him and drives a sword through his heart, all this bodily destruction is only to ensure transcendence beyond the confinement of a fixed body. This across-the-border configuration of body and identity seems to open up the hybridization or intertextual exchanges within and between subjecthood in that intertextuality is "any text...constructed as a mosaic of quotations; Any text is the absorption and transformation of another." (Dennis, 1995, p.8)

Intertextual exchange may heavily dictate discourses of identity but it does not necessarily bring about the material transformation in subjecthood and its environment. For example, Bruce Willis' buying out of territory doesn't always induce organic reconfiguration of place. Rather, many places he purchases may simply remain as museums or monuments of his material purchase, a kind of taxonomization of places frozen in arbitrarily assigned meanings that Willis' star persona constructs and circulates in public discourse. In this sense, the place works as a casket full of soil that sustains territoriality while new meanings are given to the place by bourgeois fantasy realized or rather aggrandized by Hollywood elite's material power. Therefore, for Willis, places hybridize the multiple meanings necessary to maintain territoriality: regenerative soil, the middle class fantasy of material accumulation, and power to acquire places and transplant

meanings onto them. And yet, the sustenance of territoriality is also warped by working class masculinity as an underpinning identity. This indicates a pastiche identity, a fixed element of which is hard to isolate. I suggest that the hybridity commonly located in postcolonial discourse is very much at home in the western metropolis close to the heart of hegemonic power.

“Patriarchal plantation relations,” then, as an organizing principle of hegemonic power seems to carry a tension between the closed-ness of normative masculinity (as fantastically achieved in Dracula’s death, in other words represented only as simulacra) and the openness of hybridized masculinity. Willis’ hybridized masculinity is open to not only class identities but also to an alternative sojourning between life and death. I further suggest that, as in any well-rehearsed ritual, ritualized signification practices are also open to self-conscious reflexivity. In this light, I suggest we may see the contradiction inherent in Willis’ star persona. The first instance of contradiction I find in the textual denial of his capability to sire hybridized offspring as shown in films such as Twelve Monkeys (Terry Gilliam, 1995), The Jackal (Michael Caton-Jones, 1997) and The Siege (Edward Zwick, 1998). In these films Willis is closely related to “techno-masculinity”(Han and Ling, 1998, p.61) yet he works without the possibility of reproduction as cowboys work the asexualized wasteland. The potency of Willis’ masculinity is highly utilized yet is killed off or arrested as his work is done. The connection between Willis and men at work in the film Heat (Michael Mann, 1995) can be found in a sort of sterile techno-masculinity. The re-enforcement of sexual politics in Heat treats the domestic sphere as antithetical space and ghettoizes femininity. In doing

so, patriarchal power remains hard at work yet non-productive as inhabitancy of the feminine in the masculine sphere is abhorred and denied.

The perils of hybridity are twofold for Willis. First, there is the peril of a liminality between life and death as in The Sixth Sense (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999). Second, his rehabilitated masculinity is turned into a formalistic artifact and put in competition with the ‘foreign’ agency of black, Irish and feminine identities as I will show through examination of The Jackal and The Siege. His postmodern hero status is thus loaded with inherent explosive contradictions intimating the hybridized identity’s fatal proximity to forms of otherness. I suggest that the unstable origin of hybridized masculinity can be located in class identity, which constructs a system of identity hierarchy across national/ethnic borders based on the material power disparity of the capitalist world system. Eastern hegemony in its effort to counter-emasculate the West cites the immoral and destructive influence that racialized underclasses have on western societies. For example, “Some Japanese politicians refer to American workers as ‘lazy’ and ‘unreliable.’ Lee Kuan Yew [Singapore’s most influential statesman] characterizes the West as drug infested, racially divided, and spiritually deprived.”(Han and Ling, 1998, p.74) Hegemonic masculinities positioned in the center of the capitalist world system may emasculate the working class male utilizing a racial discourse circulated as part of working class identification to provide a bulwark for normative masculinity beyond national borders. In this context, whiteness as the marker of hegemonic identity becomes a fetishized property that one may claim based on one’s acquired whiteness in the capitalist identity hierarchy. The whiteness of the working class is made even more

unstable as a non-white power elite claims quasi-whiteness as the marker of material power in the globalized capitalist system while questioning the capability of working class male to perform capitalist ethics.

In the following section, I will examine how hegemonic white masculinity is suspended from Willis' anti-heroes despite the strenuous embourgeoisement that have been undertaken within his star discourse.

### Bruce Willis: Man at Work

Observing the engendering of the public ethos on war during international conflicts between the U.S. and its foreign "enemies", Elaine Scarry (1985) states:

[When] the system of national self-belief is without any compelling source of substantiation other than the material fact of, and intensity of feeling in, the bodies of the believers (patriots) themselves then war feelings are occasioned. That is, it is when a country has become to its population a fiction that war begins. (p.131)

Here, I would like to focus on the ethos of struggle with the enemy-other that is intimately connected with "war feelings," which stand at the heart of the action/adventure narratives. The concept of other as foreign object and further as imagined enemy that provokes war feelings masks the context in which the self develops a sense of crisis that originates from volatile material conditions and demands security and protection. In other words, war feelings mirror the recognition of the unstable self in material relations. Dennis (1995) points out:

Although U.S. economic productivity has increased seventy five percent since 1970, this gain was realized with a five percent net reduction in labor force... This growth in output has been the combined result of belated responses, such as wage and work-rule concessions on the part of unions... organizational restructuring; the entrance of Japanese firms and heteroglot capital into the U.S. real estate, financial and labor markets and the productive application of electronic and

digital technologies....And there are no signs that the inverse relationship between material productivity and employment will soon abate.(p.4)

This is the context in which the self has been engendered as a bearer of financial, social, and cultural risk without political or economic leverage to actually resolve the crisis. The self is put to hard work only to signify the imaginary or allegorical overcoming of social risks.

In this context, I would like to examine the Bruce Willis films that narrativize his utility as a worker. The categorization of these films may be rather arbitrarily but they can be reasonably differentiated first into those in which a Willis rehabilitation project is being undertaken. In The Fifth Element, for example, his hegemonic masculinity not only sexualizes women but also feminizes racially ambiguous bodies. This project is fundamentally concerned with distinguishing the modern masculine self from other. Secondly, there are films in which the main textual concern is Willis' function in reconstituting the metropolis as an orderly and moral space. These are the main topic of discussion in this chapter for in these texts the Willis persona participates in a spatial demarcation based on unequal power relations between subjecthoods and carries out sexual politics along gender and race lines not as a sanctified and redeemed hero but as an anti-hero. I suggest that this irony may originate from the fact that Willis' own transparent hybridity denies the efficacy of such attempts to close off identity discourse and ultimately renders this a deeply paradoxical process. While modern desires expressed through the interest politics of transnational capital may be invisible and even naturalized as an inevitable/logical element of capitalist expansion, the postmodern negotiation with the sphere of sign production and consumption cannot easily be made invisible. Identity



construction as part of postmodern negotiation is carried out in the public arena as shown in the case of Willis' star persona. As star discourse encourages transparent reading of the star's body and persona, the cultural meaning produced on that body and persona are open to view. However, this is not to deny or negate the strength and implication of the modern impetus in identity construction. On the contrary, the persistence of ideologized identity building as part of cultural discourse as I examined in James Stewart's case warrants careful attention to the potency of hegemonic interest politics.

The topography of place implies "how certain, specific and powerful 'ways of seeing' are actively imposed and incorporated in the landscape through contested material production processes."(Mitchell, 1993, p.45). The material production of space can be "driven by a process of exclusion, by the desire to create one and only one meaning in the landscape, even if that meaning is always contested."(Mitchell, 1993, p.45). In cinematic spatial construction, Bruce Willis' star persona functions as a sort of instrument in a "removal project" in that his integral identity is maintained by removing problematic identity properties, whether working class virility or femininity, from his self and the place where he is situated. A closer examination, however, reveals that on the level of representation two things happen in star discourse. First, the star persona is oriented to make a "metaphorical leap" (Imre, 1999, p.408) from material conditions and defining fixities that have been stacked through the historicity and political relations specific to the era in which the star persona is narrativized. That is, the body of the star can be situated outside of the materiality that has defined the material delineation of the body and "[operate] at a 'human' level free of everyday politics."(Imre, 1999, p.408) In

other words, the body becomes an allegory. Second, allegorical identity thus constituted works to produce the fixed meaning of place. The landscape of the place, whether in the universe, margin of the city, the future or present, is reorganized to serve the necessary modern demarcation. Space full of foreign threats (The Siege and The Jackal) and lunatics (Twelve Monkeys) becomes a site of masculine contestation. In the cases of The Jackal and The Siege, peculiar function of the Willis hybrid is that it helps establish the place as a dire locus of masculine struggle but is not an object of rehabilitation and thus rather mediates the installment of other identities as forms of legitimate agency. To Hegel, in the spiritual world, “actuality and pure consciousness” are made to face each other:

the existence of this world, as also the actuality of self-consciousness, depends on the process through which self-consciousness divests itself of its personality, by doing so creates its world and treats it as something alien and external, of which it must take possession.”(Kristeva, 1991, p.144)

Thus, the world in the modern mind becomes a locus of dynamism in which “the individual becomes universal at the same time as universal substance increases in actuality.”(Kristeva, 1991, p.144) The transcendental move occurring repeatedly in cultural representations of subjectivities can be seen in light of “ a metaphorical leap from the conflictual state of [one’s] flesh towards what all human beings...have in common.”(Imre, 1999, p.407)

Thus, the contestation that Bruce Willis engages in the modern metropolis can be identified as the struggle to establish the self as a monistic universal being overcoming the estrangement that occurred in the process of constructing the world after the image of the modern self. Universal subjectivity can be established only through the domination of

material power to re-organize the world in its image as rational, universal, virtuous, and white. On the other hand, as a fantastic identity from the untamed part of Europe, Nosferatu's is the desire of the Othered without materiality to keep particularity of identity. Nosferatu's desire to re-territorialize the metropolis on his own terms is contested first by the desire to establish the modern metropolis as a center of scientific and ideological discourse, in which not only science but also the mystery of the unnatural may be named, explicated and colonized. In this contestation, the metropolis and its scientizing modern man represent the progressivism that seeks to regulate unruly elements of society. In an American context, progressivist control seeks to participate in the making of a new man, "a new personality as it were, geared toward the productive requirement of a just political and economic system. In this respect Progressivism was a quintessentially modernist movement seeking total control over all forms of production and reproduction."(Mitchell, 1993, p.47) While transnational capital expands, this ideal of progressivism is the pith of an ethical system that not only is narrativized in cultural spheres but also sustains the nation state's interest politics.

In postmodern action adventure films, the recovery of security at various levels and in various types of communities is an urgent moral task that the masculine self must undertake. Dennis (1995) observes:

The self becomes the primary site for continuous self- surveillance and self- construction [in capitalist society]. The notion of the Self as human capital is part of the project that globally reinscribes social reality in terms of market logics...As a bicapitalized "good," the self circulates as a mobile commodity. Deeming the Self as the site of self-enterprise also suggests that one is constantly observed in self-reconstruction, self-maintenance and self-preservation [as self is regarded as a capital investment].(p.5)

Bruce Willis as an embodiment of working class virility can be understood in this framework of the continuous training of the self to be viable within the hegemonic system of production. The ethical texture that his masculinity carries thus signifies the moral urgency of our time. One of the ethical imperatives of his star persona can be located in a dedication to communal well being. In his postmodern action adventures, such as Armageddon (Michael Bay, 1998), The Fifth Element, and Twelve Monkeys, Willis' masculinity is put to work in recovering a refuge government from exile. In these films, the communal threat comes from mysterious yet natural sources such as asteroids, or an unnamable evil force residing in the universe, or germs that are triggered as lethal weapons by a mad scientist whose motivation is never really explained. In other words, these threats are preempted of politicized human agency and made mystifying. The motivation behind the Willis' universal working self is the persistent imperative of a proto-modern notion of individualized selfhood. In this notion, "individuality becomes stable only by giving up the self for the universal...Lacking such an accomplishment, there is only a 'pretense of individuality,' individuality is 'mere presumptive existence.'"(Kristeva, 1991, p.144) Then the monistic notion of the universalizing self is inherently deemed ambiguous shadowed by the impossibility of the universalization of the self.

It seems that Willis' role as a universal hero fit to wage war against a universal enemy in response to the urgency of communal recovery is similarly ironized by particularities within his star persona that may pull the Willis persona toward an uncanny fluidity. I would like to examine this point a bit further in two films: The Siege and The

Jackal, a film which carried the very telling tagline, “ How do you stop an assassin [the Jackal played by Willis] who has no identity?” (no biographical fact, not even nationality or name, is known about the Jackal). The Siege was released in the same year as Armageddon, a rehabilitation project that aims to assimilate the ambiguous middle class identity of the Willis persona into a hegemonic masculine identity. As in Armageddon, The Siege narrativizes war against foreign/alien catalyst for disaster that assaults the metropolis (an asteroid attack and Arab terrorism respectively). What warrants a close examination here is Willis’ positionality in these films. In Armageddon, Willis’ Harry Stamper incarnates an archetypical postmodern hero who signifies purified white masculinity and is also a communally elected representative of moralization through the ultimate bodily crucible, purification by sacrificial death.

In The Siege, Willis’ General Devereaux performs patriotism yet his ethical impetus is questioned and ultimately negated by a group of ostensibly non-normative subjects, such as Denzel Washington’s FBI agent Anthony Hubbard, and Annette Bening’s CIA agent Sharon Bridger. Willis executes the siege of the metropolis, New York City, which is turned into a battleground and a concentration camp where Arab males legally or illegally residing in the city are interned while the military and intelligence organizations wage war against the bombardment of Arab terrorist attacks that is changing the topography of the city under siege into an un-inhabitable space.

The textual concern here is, however, not simply boundary anxiety within a metropolitan space. In the film, masculinities are contested in terms of their efficacy in winning the war which turns out to be dependent on the capability of reading urban

topography and deploying necessary human resources and allies. While Willis' General Devereaux reads the threat in the context of siege, Washington's Hubbard sees it as a bounded anomaly that can be managed through dedicated professionalism. It is in this context that Willis' Devereaux cannot locate the source of threat while Washington gains access to it through alliance with an unruly woman Sharon (who has gone native by dangerously intimate liaisons with figures of Arab militant masculinity) and a Lebanese expatriate/FBI agent (who at one point compares himself to a "sand nigger" confessing the ontological intimacy he shares with Washington).

In this film it seems that Willis has been divested of his usual masculine virtue and rendered a stark index of performative masculinity at war. The Willis masculine virtue sanctioned in rehabilitation narratives seems to have been endowed upon Washington as a man who rationally understands the nature of war, which is eventually waged against Willis' anti-hero who seizes and privatizes power through clandestine workings inside the heart of the hegemonic organization. More interestingly, Sharon seems to represent an ambiguous positionality in relation to hegemonic moral decorum, which is often identified with Willis' virility and serves as a starting point for the Willis rehabilitation process.

That Sharon's white femininity is ambiguous is implied by her status as an enterprising power elite in an international intelligence war. Her body is never really coded as an object of the male gaze except during the moment of her violent and unsanitary death which is spectacularized through gushing blood soiling her white face and shirt. Even in the portrayal of her liaison with her Arab lover Samir, it is Samir's

naked feminized body that is sexualized while Sharon, as a guarantor of his sojourn in the States, is mostly clad and positioned above looking down on Samir who sits under her feet sobbing and recounting his agony as a banished man without legitimate place in his own homeland. Her gender ambiguity is however finally replaced by more feminine codes through a leitmotif of transgression and punishment. Sharon is found to be responsible for terrorist outbreaks as a result of her failed operation in the Middle East. And she is found to be a deceived lover and defeated warrior who has unknowingly coveted and protected a terrorist, Samir, who has been behind the terrorist onslaught all along and who fatally shoots Sharon. Although the film punishes Sharon for her racialized sexual transgression, it also allows her an utterance that offers Washington a moralizing axiom for his hard work in waging the war: “Remember that the most committed wins.”

The transgression and punishment utilized in this film to ultimately re-feminize Sharon is in fact part of the masculine peril that Willis’ hard working body inevitably encounters (although masked through triumphant narrative in his action adventures). In this sense Willis’ masculinity is doubly jeopardized in The Siege. He is first a man who cannot rationally understand and resolve the crisis. The job is delegated to Washington. Second, his feminine double, Sharon, carries the chronic ambiguity of Willis’ own masculinity. “The siege” here thus stands for a double meaning. One is the siege by foreign threats and the other by the enemy within embodied by Willis, who transforms the social crisis into a private war to assert his own privatized sense of ethics, specifically that of militant patriotism. The modern metropolis is thus rent within and without. The

toxic identities within the jeopardized metropolis turn out to be a militant patriarch and an unruly white woman gone native in intimate contact with an ethnic other. The morality thus contested is vindicated as order is restored by Washington assigned with hegemonic authority to examine and resolve the crisis, which is confiscated from Willis.

That in The Siege Willis' performative masculinity is juxtaposed to the othered identities of black and female that vie for legitimacy, seems to imply that the strenuous moralization of his masculinity may have been turned into formalistic practice, the performativity of which can become the fetish property of pastiche identity. For example, once isolated from Willis' masculinity, hegemonic morality is endowed upon the assimilating other and reattached onto Willis as a form of masculine performance from which moral redemption is discarded. This may in turn question the validity of his representative masculine subjectivity as an efficient risk-taking self. In the volatile and ambivalent relationship he maintains with other identities, Willis embodies both fluid and fixed identity. This ambivalence seems to suggest that the pinning down of Willis' identity is not economically viable because such fixation may privilege his masculinity as a complacent recipient of hegemonic sanction. The hybridized identity of Willis must remain an ongoing project, rather than a fixed representation of a static ethical system. The identity that may have been strategically fixed in forms and meanings should be resubmitted to discursive circulation, as once made static identity cannot evolve to be universal. To be universal is to change the system of exclusion/assimilation in accordance with the imperative social project. The bourgeois identity acquired by the Willis persona and made an increasingly staple property of his identity is not an organical outgrowth as



in the case of James Stewart whose biographical “facts,” along with filmic narrativization, undergird his normative identity as a narrative “based on a true story.” Willis may buy out his hometowns and build a memorial, yet the sites are merely the exhibition rooms of taxonomized objects not an organic entity that may grow and expand, and constantly prompts the tourist to wonder if the exhibit is in fact more authentic than the actual person after whom the exhibited images are cast.

The possessive anti-hero individualism that Willis expressed in The Siege is further strengthened in The Jackal. The highly formalized dedication to communality that General Devereaux ritualistically performs in The Siege is completely absent in the Jackal/Willis masculinity here. In The Jackal, Willis is a professional killer hired by a Russian crime boss to assassinate the American First Lady and his possessive individualism renders him amoral, apolitical and solely engrossed in seeking individual profit utilizing proficiency in technology as a means of private warfare. His criminalized masculinity is once again surrounded by the figure of a black FBI agent, here Agent Preston (Sidney Poitier), as well as a Russian female intelligent officer working with the FBI, Major Valentina Koslova, and Irish political prisoner and IRA shooter Declan Mulqueen (Richard Gere). In this film once again the staple properties of hegemonic masculinity Willis has performed are dispersed among these subjects tinged with ethnic and racial particularities notwithstanding their draftee status in a hegemonic project of policing order against the toxic possessive individualism of the fallen white man, the Jackal.

An example of this uncanny deployment of performative masculine identity in the

Willis action adventures from Die Hard (John McTiernan, 1988) to Armageddon, is showcased in the syncretic feminine/masculine characterization of Koslova. She says “good guys don’t hide” when the FBI offers her a protected settlement in an anonymous location to avoid revenge from the Russian mobs after she has saved Preston’s life. Her femininity is temporarily recovered when she is assigned to the rank of women to be “protected” by Declan along with Declan’s old girlfriend Isabella and the First Lady, both of them Jackal targets. However, unlike the two other women ultimately protected by Declan, Koslova suffers a prolonged and agonizing death after being shot by the Jackal, a spectacularized death similar to Sharon’s in The Siege, as if her embodiment of hegemonic masculinity constitutes a transgression dangerous enough to be contained only by death at the hand of the man from whom that property was transferred.

The character of Declan seems to suggest an intriguing example of laundered white masculinity. The fact that a native Irish shooter is the only man who perceives the Jackal’s true face behind its many disguises and is, therefore, in a morally urgent project to recover order and protect femininity under siege seems to signify two things. First, ethnic white masculinity can be legitimated and assimilated into hegemonic identity through a sort of laundering process. Second, Irish identity may stand as an example of an exotic yet safe whiteness colored with just a palatable amount of ethnic flavor that will not alter the fundamental texture of the universality of whiteness and can, therefore, be naturalized as part of performative masculinity. In other words, Irishness is a salvageable ethnic whiteness that can be safely assimilated while hegemonic identity politics police, isolate and differentiate the toxic masculinities of fallen or lesser whites in rearticulating

the ways to demarcate othered identities.

Thus, Willis' masculinity is circulated in the forms of postmodern hero and anti-hero simultaneously. Simply surveying the Willis filmography in 1997-1999, as I have attempted above, seems to suggest Willis' alternative performances of supportively hegemonic and antithetical masculinities.

In this light The Sixth Sense seems to epitomize the postmodern negotiation unfolded in the sphere of masculine identity and represent various levels of confoundment and syncretism of identity properties. In this film Willis' Dr. Malcolm Crowe is an upper middle class psychologist but his representative work is in interrogating and guiding the psychical formation of working class boys. His death is discovered through blemished white body not by a self-recognition implying his incapability of recognizing his own validity or invalidity. His incapability of knowing is also manifested by his own uncertainty about whether his work with the boys has been valid, which plagues him throughout the narrative. I postulate that the epistemological privilege of enlightened modern man is divested of Willis syncretic bourgeois masculinity rendering him incapable of understanding his own condition. This incapability is quite ironic as throughout the narrative Willis/Dr. Crowe's main struggle is to gain an understanding of the psychical dimensions of working class boys. Willis' wounded and dead body also signifies the precarious walk between fixity and fluidity of identity. That is, to embody a hegemonic white masculinity Willis must rely on the fixed identity of middle classed-ness and exclude the undesirable identity. The Willis star persona is inevitably burdened with the undesirable identity because star discourse

always includes fractions of material identity circulated in “based on real life” style narratives through artifacts such as biographical fragments, accounts, photos and publicity items. Yet, to achieve a universal identity, that is, in order to accomplish the “giving up of the self for the universal,” identity cannot be confined within fixed properties. In this sense, Willis’ death in this film simultaneously signifies the implosion of contradictions—of fixity and fluidity and of working class confinement and middle class aspiration—the Willis body must carry, and a transcendental opting out of contradictory materiality and an unbearable ambivalence.

In the demarcation project in which unequal material and political power is redefined and reinforced by the imperatives of patriarchal capitalism, masculinities are commodified, the cultural purchase of which is determined by the immediate goals of social reorganization. As with any object within hegemonic identity politics, masculinities cannot be freed from a fetish status that is deployed in on-going metamorphosis of capital itself. Men are deployed to viscerally, and vicariously live up to the image of self that capitalist impetus tries to convey. It is a bitter irony that even those masculinities that have undergone the normalization and moralization process cannot escape from spectacularization as their clandestine construction is bared to be fetishized. And then, hybridized identity is deconstructed beyond recognition as exemplified by Willis as a man with no identity in The Jackal. Thus, turning into a tenuous locus of masculinity, Willis epitomizes a postmodern pastiche. The paradox is that he also represents a universal white body in the hegemonic deployment of a sign system in which other bodies are made foreign and become pastiches without historicity.

### Bruce Willis and Liminal Body

In this section I will further examine the liminality of Willis' identity through examination of Twelve Monkeys. It seems to be proper to do so because this film is constructed and draws narrative strength from the jeopardy of Willis' dead white guy who is not quite dead which informs and is informed by the liminality of hybridized identity that seems to haunt Willis masculine representations.

In this futuristic sci-fi, Willis plays James Cole, a convict imprisoned in a panopticon of fugitive government that has vacated the surface of the earth to avoid a viral outbreak that made the surface environment completely hostile to human habitation. Cole is drafted to be sent back to the past and the surface of the earth to locate the pure form of the now mutated virus so that the way to conquer it may be found and humans can return to the surface. In the 1990's mental asylum where he lands, Cole is treated as a schizophrenic because of the knowledge of the future he has brought with him. Willis' body is drugged, beaten, wounded, and shot. His ravaged body indicates that the neat delineation of the white male body is lost on his ambivalent identity as a man that dwells in two different time and space organizations, signifying an extremely ephemeral status. However, as his sojourn in the past is prolonged he decides to remain in the past as a better sphere to inhabit than the future in an attempt to fix his fleeting status in a definite term. At the end of the film, at the airport on his way to the refuge island where he can live the past as utopian exile, he is shot and killed by the police who have hunted him down as criminally insane. Cole's death is witnessed by Cole himself as a young boy who was traveling through the airport at the moment, which explains the uncanny feeling of

living in two temporal and spatial spheres Cole has experienced even in his sleep in the panopticon.

I believe the importance of this film is that it suggests the impossibility of normative identity as incarnated and performed through practice in bourgeois ethics. The film seems to summarize a prototype of Willis' hybridization project undertaken in postmodern action adventure films yet foregrounding the shadowing presence of death as a symbol of Willis' liminal masculinity that weighs heavily on Willis' hard working body that serves to recover an orderly and moral universe by helping reinstate hegemonic governance. Simultaneously dead and alive, and sojourning in the future and the past at the same time and with that extraordinary liminality he is still put to hard work salvaging the world. But that Willis witnesses his own death in Twelve Monkeys through his alternate body from the past, seems to indicate an emergence of self-awareness.

Thus the question arises: Is hybridized masculinity as a representational trope reaching a point of exhaustion? It seems that films such as The Jackal and The Siege opt to legitimize masculinities that carry visible signs of particular identity such as Irishness, blackness, and femininity and even privilege them to enter a masculine bonding. Meanwhile Willis who still carries the bodily signs of normative whiteness as a formalistic artifact becomes an object of cleansing and punishment as his morality is condemned. This may be a textual manifestation that a masculinity that reaches a self-consciousness of its own fetishized syncretic body may be found more antithetical to hegemonic social management than particular identities on their way to naturalization as muted exotics. The self-consciousness of the formal white body is hinted at in a scene in

The Jackal. For example, the Jackal seems to be aware of the sensuousness of his own body with his hair dyed blonde and in a white bathrobe slid down so that half of his body will be exposed almost mimicking a stereotypical homoerotic posture. In the film, there is an exchange of a kiss between the Jackal and a gay man whom the Jackal picks up while scouting a place to hide out. Although the Jackal brutally murders the gay man afterwards, this brief liaison/homosexual role-playing with a gay man seems to allude that the Jackal's is an asexual virility commodified as a utilitarian property used to get a job done. This kind of virility is outside of bourgeois ethical discourse and masculine sanctification and is estranged from the context of the Willis rehabilitation project. The Willis' masculinity thus can be perceived as a strange fetish object void of moral imperative.

As seen in the self-conscious formalization of Western artifacts in the later Westerns of James Stewart, then, it may be possible to begin to see in other male narratives the self-awareness of many competing identities on a male body that may be even translated into no identity at all. Bruce Willis' stardom thus far has contained paradoxical elements of anti-hero that destabilizes bourgeois ethical assimilation. While Willis' star persona is still lodged in the imageries of the man at hard work performing moral impetus, the ironic impossibility of ethical containment, as implied by his narrativization of possessive anti-hero individualism, seeps through his performative masculinity.

## CHAPTER V

### DRESSING UP, DRESSING DOWN: HEROES IN DRAG

In an attempt to explain a dialectical process in which an excess of identities is reconceptualized into identity as lack by a Hegelian universal self, Jeffrey Nealon (1998) states:

[When the subjective differences of identity markers are understood] as a postmodern celebratory excess of identities rather than a nostalgic, modernist lament for the lack of common identity...I [open-ended and excessive] cannot simply conflate myself with the other, but I am nevertheless bound to an intersubjective realm where we each negotiate our ever shifting social identity. (p.5)

That “intersubjective realm” is a symbolic universe that is construed of specific historical materiality such as modes of production and commodity exchange, concomitant social relations and any other experiences of which our perception of the world is made.

Therefore, it inevitably tends to impose a specific, fixed rather than fleeting, world view that we continuously draw on to make sense of our surroundings and ourselves. The practicability of attaining a universal self remains dubious as one can neither really harness the environment that underpins a certain symbolic universe nor finally spell out the synthetic product of all the perceivable contradictions, hence the production of “an identity that lacks wholeness or complete control over its circumstances, so it must continually reinvent itself to cope with changing circumstances.”(Nealon, 1998, p.6).

Being aware of the gap between the conceptual possibility of an ideal universal self and one’s own very much conditioned identity as merely an elusive semblance of the ideal



self, one may be continuously haunted by the illusive image of an all-encompassing self and only end up seeing oneself as a freakish imperfection. Any identity that bears the trace of specificity may be deemed to signify an imperfection. The markers and properties of such identity that are deemed to be specific, binding, and imperfect can be isolated or even torn off from within the ideal boundary of a universal self to be subsumed under the 'other' category. To declare the self to be a universal identity, one strives to systematize the ethical contents of how-to-be's, in other words, to establish what the indexical contents of an ethical identity are. But then this isolated property or its performability in turn reassures the particularity of that property reminding the performing self of the impossibility of transforming particular body and subjectivity into abstraction as the specific property will hark back to the specific body and its material ascription.

The tragically imperfect self may fear and loathe the freakish identity as a distorted reflection of the self that intimates the submerged, oppressed, other part of its organic body; in the case of masculine construction, this reflection is that of a strange male body as a marker of particular social space it occupies.

I would like to consider how this estrangement of the male body may occur in the context of the transformations occurring in the social environment. Feelings of strangeness will be invoked by the realization that the conditions and contents of one's everyday life are in fact substantially distanced from what has been ideologized and narrativized through cultural narratives as the normative form of living. For example, the suburbia of the 1950's, its visual images lodged in objects such as the pearl strands of

Mrs. Cleaver, was geographically and culturally constructed to convey middle class identity and to institutionalize the system of signification that renders middle classed-ness as an abstraction. That is, the category of suburban middle class becomes an idea that does not necessarily call for referents as the actual material components of middle classed-ness are made inconsequential as middle classed-ness is represented by signs rather than the structural ascription that the actual historical materiality of suburbia and the middle class inevitably impose on class identity. However, regardless of the degree of abstraction that occurs in conceptualizing middle class identity, materiality continues to transform and redefine that identity. For example, in the 1990's, the reality of the American suburbia disrupts the abstractive ideas on suburbia. Then that discrepancy between an institutionalized concept (an abstract description of suburbia) and the lived life experienced in actual suburbia, the sight of which is dramatically different from the established signs and the persuasion they represent, may provoke a sense of estrangement.

In surveying the measure of “social health” in America, the authors of The Social Health of the Nation: How America is Really Doing (1999) introduce criteria for assessing the social problems that the ideological and geographical construction of suburbia has supposedly resolved; some of them are poverty among persons aged 18-24, poverty line, child abuse, child poverty, wages, affordable housing, and unemployment. In these categories many indexes indicate a drastic declination in the social well-being of Americans as America as a high modern nation, the dominant identification of which was established during the 1950's, experiences transition in capital and industrial

reconfiguration through the recessions of 70's and late-capitalist conditions of 90's. As a symptom of social 'ill health' as manifested in the 1990's, we may consider the declination of suburbia. According to The Social Health of the Nation, the "worst case needs, households of 'very-low-income' renters who receive no federal housing assistance and either pay more than half of their income for housing and/or live in severely substandard housing," can now be frequently found in the suburbs (one out of three "worst case need household" was located in the suburbs between 1991-1995).

(Miringoff, 1999, p.139) The same report also finds:

From the end of World War II to 1973, average weekly earnings...increased virtually every year, but from 1973 to the present, they have either declined or stagnated...In constant dollars, average weekly earnings went from...\$315 in 1973...to \$256 in 1996...average weekly earnings failed to improve significantly even during the recoveries of the 1980's and mid-1990's...In 1973, average hourly earnings, in constant dollars, were \$8.55; by 1996, they had fallen to \$7.43. (p.99)

Also the proportion of workers with low-earnings as defined by the Census Bureau, \$14,640 annually, increased from 12.1 percent in 1979 to 15.3 percent in 1996, largely as a result of the expansion of the low-paying service sector. ( Miringoff, 1999, p.100)

Dilapidated suburbia and the declining earnings among workers together then deconstruct the ideologized middle class life style that has been offered as a token of upward mobility. As material basis is disintegrated and the signs of middle classed-ness become increasingly unlocatable within one's own lived life, a middle class identity may become estranged from the middle class self as an abstract and ideologized selfhood and even replaced by the image of an atavistic self with the residue of middle class bodily signs, imperfect and blemished.

Postulating that masculinity and its ethical contents may remain a mirror of an imperfect self-image, in this chapter I will examine some of the ways in which a hegemonic masculine subjectivity arrives at an estranged self hood, whether as an ironic result of the deployment of identity politics or through the discovery of an anathematical self within the self. This subjecthood reminisces non-hegemonic identity as part of the masculine construction that the normalization narratives in which it is placed tries to finally erase. And this subjecthood may represent an identity that either obliquely or transparently, regardless still perversely, questions or renders ambiguous the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity and its construction. This occurs in relation to femininity, as I will briefly examine mainly through the films of Doris Day. These films seem to offer a close look into the context in which a man may put on drag as he negotiates hegemonic masculine ascription. Secondly, a transgressive self appears when looking at the mirror image of the Other self within a self especially as man tries to relativize his masculinity using the perspective of compulsory masculine ethics that seems to remain an illusive goal.

#### The Economy of Male Masquerade

In Pillow Talk (Michael Gordon, 1959), Doris Day's Jan Morrow is "a careful career girl who believes in 'singleness'" and Rock Hudson's Brad Allen is "a carefree bachelor who believes in 'togetherness.'" (Fuchs, 1997, p.227) As they engage gender contestation within the paradigm of the heterosexual romance, (which inevitably produces the domestication of both independent career woman and playboy), Day and Hudson demonstrate two different processes of entering into domesticity. In Day's case

the most conspicuous aspect is de-radicalization as Tessa Perkins (1991) describes:

[T]he characters [Day] is playing generally start off as an independent, rebellious woman who is fighting to keep her autonomy. By the end of the film the Day character has lost the fight, or ‘come to realize’ that she was wrong to be fighting it, and she happily gives up her independence, and becomes more like the ‘sunny, girl next door,’ star image we associate with Doris Day. In short the characters Day plays are de-radicalized as they move through the film towards the Day star image. (p.249)

On the other hand, Hudson is introduced to Day’s anxious virgin as a man in disguise. In Pillow Talk Hudson’s Brad is a womanizer who serenades numerous women over the party line that Day shares with him and often listens in on. As he realizes that she perceives him to embody the threat of “unlicensed sexuality,” (Nadel, 1995, p.136) he must impersonate Rex, a wholesome marriageable ‘gentleman,’ to persuade Jan into a coupling.

Alan Nadel (1995) describes the relation of the characters as that between a “playboy” and a woman “whose sexual license is still delimited by the cult of domesticity.” (p.136) According to Nadel, the signification of Hudson’s playboy identification lies in the fact that in the 1950’s the fantasy of upward mobility for the middle class man whose consumer power was rapidly increasing was channeled through such cultural product as Playboy magazine and the ostensibly progressive and affluent life-style it promoted from the time of its inception in 1953. (pp.129-133) In this light, the playboy identification can be seen as part of a negotiational strategy of hegemonic cultural politics in domesticating the middle class male that provides a legitimate albeit controversial narrative outlet that may contain the possibility of unruly sexual and social desires that the domesticated middle class male may still harbor.

I suggest that male sexual license of the 1950's then may represent a mode of masculine reterritorialization to establish hegemonic middle class maleness in a cold war era social space in which normative masculinity had to be reconfigured within a middle class ethical value system conducive to securing high modern social organization.

According to David Savran (1998):

In conceptualizing...the (unmistakably middle –class) nuclear family as a self contained unit, Cold War domesticity aimed at enforcing submission to a wide variety of social and cultural norms...what is perhaps most important about the normative masculinity of the 1950's is that it represents a retreat from the more independent- and entrepreneurial-minded masculinities that preceded it.”(p.47)

As an ‘organizational man’ in Fordist factories, the ‘labor power’ and ‘emotional profile’ of a middle class male was surveilled and continually modified. This subjugational social relation in which a middle class male is placed signifies his psychical deterritorialization. The self image of the middle class man that evolves around the enlightenment, scientization and producerly values of the early modern era simply becomes an idea without referent as his designated social status delimits his economic agency as that of consumer and laborer in Fordist value production system.

There are indeed distinctions to be made in particular class designations between those who occupy middle or lower management positions, nominally white collar workers, and the blue collar workers who receive the order of production on the shop floor yet are enjoying economic benefits comparable to that of white collar workers. It seems that well into the 1960's there exists a scientizing effort to designate the catalogued particularities of the blue collar as a working class representation.

For example, in their edited volume Blue-Collar World: Studies of the American

Worker (1964), Shostak and Gomberg catalogue familial, social, and psychological profiles of the working class in an effort to rationalize how the working class psyche and community are mapped and organized in chapters such as “Marital Strain in the Blue Collar Family.” In this chapter, the writer argues that the origin of marital strain in this class can be found in the fact that both spouses are unsure of their social status and normative roles while their consumer power becomes compatible to that of white collar workers. Thus, though having become economically compatible with the white collar class, blue collar families experience a kind of psychological anomie coming from various uncertainties of the social role they experience. For instance, there is an uncertainty about the future because they are aware that they are at the margin of production orders. While an inability to continue to tailor their labor to fit the demands of the production system through education and retraining will result in the confiscation of economic privilege, they are neither conditioned nor motivated to continue education voluntarily mostly because of their upbringing in a lower class environment. In other words, they retain passive attitudes toward upward mobility as they are rather disoriented in the modern occupational hierarchy and shifting landscape of class identity for even though they themselves moved upward from their poorer parents’ far lower class they lack the motivation and aptitude to move beyond what they have already accomplished and possess. Middle class values and behavior norms are thus used to profile the working class in terms of their putative lack of middle class aspirations rather than to examine how this class may be distinguished in class consciousness and class-specific politicality (pp.92-109).

The point is that by the beginning of the 1950's time middle class identity properties seem to have been widely disseminated as a value to measure normative social actions regardless of actual political and economic differences between classes. The middle class masculinity that Hudson embodies thus is concerned with the broad-based gender interests of the era understood to be general male concerns. (Nadel [1995] points out that in Pillow Talk, Hudson character's middle or lower-middle class origins are hinted at by his "debt to work rather than inherited wealth." [p.137]) The playboy license is, therefore, vicariously allowed to contemporary men, homogenized by proxy, through narrativization of "heterosexual romance as a site of both conflict and conformity." (Fuchs, 1997, p.224) In this arrangement, heterosexual coupling is a means to validate male agency since it involves gender contestation and the ultimate submission of femininity to the sexual license that masculinity brings into the coupling. In Pillow Talk, the textual concern is if Jan will realize that her own latent desire is to ultimately find her own "pillow talking boy."

It is possible to locate a number of pleasures of male identification with Hudson's role in the text. First, there is the pleasure of confronting and domesticating a virgin. Second, the pleasure of double role-play in which a male subject may play heterosexuality through Hudson's assigned hegemonic maleness. Once in heterosexual mask, the male subject may 'play' a hegemonic male agency as a sexual licensee. This role play once again opens up two different roles: playboy and wholesome monogamist as showcased in Hudson's alternation between Brad the playboy and Rex the monogamist. Then, there is the pleasure of conformity. As long as male sexual license is



informed by the sexual politics that privilege male agency in the gender relations undergirding heterosexual middle class family building, gender contestation always ends up conforming to male interests within the identity hierarchy. For example, in Pillow Talk when Brad's masquerades are discovered, it is Jan who has to work out her humiliation to be eligible for sexual license to enter a legitimate coupling to which she will happily succumb. Since Brad's role-play does not constitute transgression and it is rather a utilization of male properties, Brad still gets the right kind of girl.

The disguised man entering into a relationship with Doris Day seems to be quite a well worn trope as shown in Pillow Talk, Lover Come Back (Delbert Mann, 1961) with Rock Hudson, Teacher's Pet (George Seaton, 1958) with Clark Gable and Midnight Lace (David Miller, 1960) with Rex Harrison to name several examples. First I will examine why Hudson's characters must enter into gender contestation with Day's All-American Girl on terms of disguise by taking into consideration the extratextual knowledge on Hudson that invites the viewer to consider the economy of double disguise. Steven Cohan (1997) observes that fifties audiences may have missed "those many ongoing allusions to Hudson himself as a gay man posing as a straight lover"(p.302) in Pillow Talk, therefore, the audiences did not quite grasp the double meaning in jokes such as in the sequence in which Brad exclaims "I am going to have a baby!" and the doctor and nurse take it quite seriously that Brad may represent "a new kind of [medical] frontier." Cohan, however, continues that "that does not necessarily mean that the subversion of heterosexual masculinity in Pillow Talk was not intentional, not perceived, and not pointed directly at the authenticity of the star's persona and the masculinity he exemplified for the fan

discourse.”(p.302) While Cohan does not cite the actual popular press accounts that convey that Hudson’s homosexuality may be in circulation within the 50’s fandom, he speculates that

Given the wide-spread assumptions that the studio, Willson [Hudson’s agent], and Hudson wanted to conceal his homosexuality at all costs, it’s revealing of the sexual tensions that his star persona could not completely reconcile that the comedies he made after Pillow Talk all build upon this film’s masquerade plot in one form or another. (p.297)

In Pillow Talk and Lover Come Back, Hudson wears masks that represent two antagonistic male properties: one mask is linked to the unruly sexuality that resists monogamous middle class family relations and the other is linked to the sensitivity and devotion of a man in love who seems to be an ideal partner in building a middle class family. Both masculinities Hudson embodies can be understood as performative masculine representations. Barbara Klinger (1994) observes how the disjuncture between Hudson’s homosexuality and the heterosexuality of his screen roles actually helps the viewer recognize sexual conventions that Hollywood strives to promote and protect as “artificial impositions on conduct” in the public consumption of Hudson’s melodramas and romantic comedies:

Such artifice...makes fun of “the whole cosmology of restrictive sex roles and sexual identifications which our society uses to oppress its women and repress its men... When viewed from this perspective, romance in Hudson’s Sirk melodramas or Day comedies [operates as] a kind of role playing demanded by a system that obliterates contradictions in sexual identity... In this way Hudson’s romantic narratives are injected with heightened artifice around roles, undermining the compulsory heterosexuality that forms the core of the Hollywood film. (p.128)

If the mask is a necessary prop for masculine performance, the fact that Day is lied to and left ignorant of that mask warrants a little more examination. In Lullaby of Broadway

(David Butler, 1951), a film that functions as a sort of comedy of errors, Day's Melinda Howard remains the only one for the most of the narrative that is blind to the fact that everyone and everything is not what they claim or seem to be. Melinda does not know that her mother is actually an alcoholic cabaret singer not a Broadway star as she has been led to believe. She also does not see that the kindness of millionaire and Broadway producer Hubbell can be read as a covetous act as she only sees him as a father figure. The film finally privileges Melinda's way of seeing over alternative readings other characters of the film inject hence the happy ending in which things turn out in line with her innocent point of view. For instance, Hubbell proves after all a kind old man despite the innuendoes others were aware of, therefore, Melinda's virtue is vindicated. The fact that Hubbell is played by S.Z. Sakall who often played innocuous father figures with the Eastern European accent of a recent immigrant and whose demeanor is always made comedic and asexual opposite young blonde women, toning down the possibility of sexuality with them, is an indication that Melinda's innocent belief in his benevolent intentions will be proven to be correct after all.

However, the fact that she is the only one kept from 'knowing' segregates her in an isolated space constructed around her innocent sexuality and demarcated in the middle of complex social relations, the knowledge of which is disallowed to her, therefore, denying her agency to interact or negotiate. It is possible to see that a woman segregated in a space in which meanings are arbitrarily interjected by those who know what she does not know, is actually in a kind of laboratory that tests to see if she has the right temperament to be the right kind of woman for legitimate coupling and social relations.

In the case of Lullaby of Broadway the social relation that factors most is that with masculinity. Day proves herself to be eligible for licensed sexuality. In Lullaby of Broadway she does so by showing her innocence about the unlicensed sexuality that abounds around her. If she cannot prove her eligibility she will be left in the segregation of improper femininity made unable to enter normative relationships with masculinity. As implied by Hudson's case, male drag signifies masculinity as a negotiational property with self-reflexivity as a symbolic power inserted in the negotiational process of masculine performance. However, onto the feminine space, such as Melinda's isolated space, disguised men seem to impose a hegemonic masculinity that determines the degree of knowledge to be allowed and disallowed to woman.

### Men in Drag

As I have discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, the 1950's in America was an era in which expectations of economic growth and prosperity were established, and social relations were organized in accordance with the production mode that would perpetuate such expectations. Bourgeois ethics and psychical make-up were ideologized in this environment. Also as I discussed in Chapter 2, American high modernity thereafter still informs the cultural imagination while the postmodern capitalist order re-configures the spatial organization, in negotiation with chaotic foreign elements, into one that is messy but reproductive of pre-existing power-relations and their inherent inequality among the participants of the systematized power allocation. White masculinity as a signifier of class identity, which is an important power demarcation scheme even in postmodern space, has manifested its flexible reconfigurations through the implementation of modern

impetus. This is the frame in which the practice of disguising a particular masculinity as something that it is not can be examined.

If during the 1950's man may hide his bodily lines as ambivalent borderlines under a gray flannel suit or even mask his uncertain social designation through modes of middle class heterosexual performativity in line with the model provided by Rock Hudson, the man of the postmodern era simply has to find better suited drag to disguise himself in as postmodern pastiche becomes available as a means of cultural practice in an indexation that now encompasses far more possibilities of self-signification. In this light I will survey Tim Burton's Beetlejuice (1988), Batman (1989), Edward Scissorhands (1990), and Batman Returns (1992). I suggest noting a coherent signification practice in these Burton films based on the assumption that a director's body of work may represent a way to express history-specific concerns and ideas in a negotiational and ambivalent manner as those works represent a kind of agreed-upon middle ground between capital, cultural practitioners, artists and consumers involved in filmmaking and consumption as one gigantic negotiation between subjectivities, material powers and social leverages. However pastiche-like the final vision of a film may be, it certainly will flash fragments of different desires, some warped through negotiations, some intact, some hidden and some surfacing.

My reason for choosing the Burton films mentioned have to do first with the fact that the masculine incarnations in these films are in line with the economy of male masquerade. That is, men put on drag to activate multiple meanings their masculinity may convey. Male characters in the Burtons films manifest multiple ways of reading their

bodily signs. In Batman's case, his body changes appearances through drag, the Batman uniform. In the Penguin and Joker's case, the freakishly deformed body fundamentally qualifies their identity to the degree to which identity properties such as gender, sexuality, and race that may be applied to distinguish various human identity become obsolete while their human-ness is never completely abandoned in the narrative. In disguise, these characters represent the multiple spheres they simultaneously occupy. In Batman, Batman's putative hero status is constantly disrupted by the undercurrent image of a troubled man who witnessed his parents' murder. In these films, thus, drag and disguise are deployed to prevent finalizing the meaning of identities as I will examine in this section.

I would also like to note that these Burton films were made in the Reagan-Bush era of "techno-muscular" constructions of hegemonic masculinity, the embodiment of which can be found in such stars as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone.

Susan Jeffords (1989) points out this aspect:

Rambo: First Blood, Part II offers both the spectacle of technology and its "pure" link to the body, revealing not only the extent to which technology is the deferred body, but also how the body, mediated by technologization, can become its own deferral, its own spectacle...[however] deferring the body as technology in war reinforces...the assertion that 'in a heterosexual and patriarchal society, the male body cannot be marked explicitly as the erotic object of another male look. (pp.11-13)

That is, according to Jeffords, by representing Rambo's body as performance, the film discourse displaces erotic desires Rambo's body may connote to sadomasochism as a necessary component in male performance at war.

It was also during this Reagan-Bush era in which a sort of epiphany of Bruce

Willis' masculinity through films like Die Hard (John McTiernan, 1988) occurred. It seems that the Willis masculinity as represented in Die Hard already hints at the negotiational aspect of postmodern hero status as I elaborated in Chapter 4, although Willis's advent is clearly placed within the hegemonic discourse that keeps reproducing bellicose feeling against enemies in forms of the communist block and eventually the Third World identities of Arabs and South American warlords.

However, while the bodies of Schwarzenegger and Stallone become virtually indistinguishable from the highly technological weaponry they wield as the source of their ability to win back the lost war as in the Rambo series or welded together with the body itself as in the Terminator series, in Die Hard Willis does not enter the war with the high tech weaponry that has made Rambo invincible in the Vietnamese jungles. Rather he makes do with whatever tools he can find. His body is considerably shrunken compared to those of Stallone and Schwarzenegger. This kind of variation from the prototypical techno-muscular body may have anticipated Willis' move into more ambiguous terrain in which he may signify various even contradictory identities from film to film appearing for example as an anti-hero of The Siege (Edward Zwick, 1998) and then a sacrificial hero of The Sixth Sense (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999). The importance of Burton's masculine incarnates can be found in the fact that while Willis' body has evolved around reproducing the normative borderlines of the hegemonic masculine body in a way widening the dimensions of its representation, those of Burton's (anti) heroes deconstruct the negotiational body lines as established by Willis' star persona.

Burton's Beetlejuice, Edward and Batman were produced around the time the

American war ethos was literalized and reinforced in the wars in Panama and the Persian Gulf. In this era the muscular bodies of action heroes replace the wounded little men who came home from Vietnam as warriors who could finally win the war (Boose, 1993, pp.75-76), thus, finalizing forms of hegemonic masculinity. Then, the masculine representations of Burton's characters laden with multiple meanings fundamentally blur the boundary of the hegemonic self as embodied in hero narratives. First, they imply the liquidity of masculine definition. For example, Batman's suit exaggerates muscularity, in a seeming mimicry of the Stallone/Schwarzenegger body, and the rows of the exact same suits hanging in Batman's closet like costumes makes mockery of the muscular body; in this case the hypermasculinity of the Batman drag treating the very characteristic, that is muscularity, that renders hypermasculinity readable to be something to don or doff as necessary. Second, such practice also informs the masculine bodily property as an exchangeable commodity. To sum it up, the Batman suit suggests that the premier masculine bodily sign is drag. Then, there is another meaning that makes suspect masculinity as a meaningful identity that can be acquired by men who aspire to assimilate into a hegemonic decorum of behavior. Lynda Boose (1993) points out:

[During the Reagan-Bush era,] as the masculine icon has undergone...literal inflation [as embodied by the bodies of Stallone, Schwarzenegger, and Chuck Norris], the representation of maleness and the narrative in which it is imagined...has become progressively less adult as a projection and more and more the cartoon image of a little boy's fantasy of manhood. (p.74)

Here, I suggest we see Burton's male as a juvenile who still harbors the problematic father in its construction. For example, Batman and Edward both witnessed the death of their father/creator. Beetlejuice is origin-less. In Batman Returns, this problematic father



is copied in *The Penguin*, Batman's archenemy, whose father is played by Paul Reubens making a cameo appearance. In the Penguin's case, it seems proper to read that a juvenile father, Pee Wee, produces a monster that is also juvenile in nature. In this film, the Penguin rhetoricizes his identity in the allegories of a monstrous Moses who floats down a sewage stream in a basket and King Herod's killing of the first-born sons, the imagery of which seems to be rooted in an anxiety of abandonment from a legitimate social place or the death/invalidation that may befall an invalid son/boy by mythical external force. Penguin and Batman then are both surviving sons who emerge from the peril of near-extinguishment (Batman as a boy was threatened to be killed by young Joker who just shot his parents to death) as freaks.

The strange self that cannot possibly become part of the everyday performativity of masculine ethics becomes a self-conscious freak such as Batman and his surrogate Robin in the forms of Joker, Penguin, and Catwoman. Edward Scissorhands is another example of eternal juvenileness as an anomaly of the body that does not grow/change, and the imagery of it intimates the Other side of the self of a monstrous man-child and distorts the 'self-mythology' of a Reaganite militant muscular body.

In *Batman Returns* it is easy to see that the image of the Penguin is anchored on that of the archetypal imagery of freaks. As "corporeally unclassified," according to Elizabeth Grosz (1996), "the freak is an ambiguous being whose existence imperils categories and oppositions dominant in social life."(p.57) The Penguin literally floated down to a bestial existence underground yet he recognizes his "basic humanity" and desires to "ascend" and "find the human name." It is meaningful to note that throughout

the film, the Penguin and Batman exchange mutual recognition of the ontological resemblance between them. At one point Penguin declares to Batman “Don’t you see we are the same, split right down the center?” The implication that a mask is a signifier of a freakish self is repeated in the film. For example, if Penguin is a freak hybrid between a beast/non-human and human yet wearing both markers in a visible fashion, Batman wears the bat drag to hide the chasm between the properties of a freak and a mandated normative maleness within his identity, as Penguin derides, “You [Batman] are jealous [of me the Penguin] because I am a genuine freak and you have to wear a mask.” The Batman faces his own freakish face bared and mirrored in the Penguin.

Allusion to the resemblance between heroic Batman and his antagonists are also reified in Batman, where the Joker and Batman are constantly paralleled in the narrative and visual representations. For example, upon entering Vicki Vale’s place, Batman and Joker (who are both courting Vicki) mimic each other by uttering the same line that the place has “lots of space.” The scene in which Batman carries Vicki up the stairs to his bedroom is mimicked again in the action of Joker carrying her up the stairs of a church and here Vicki’s shoe falls down the stairs in exact imitation of the previous scene with Batman. Both Batman and Joker are concerned with defacement: if Joker is devoted to the disfigurement of (white) faces as indicated by his own pasty white make-up and the defacement of his mistress and enemy as an exhibition of his power, Batman masks/defaces the white visage. Thus positioned as an imitation or repetition of one another it becomes difficult to distinguish one property from another, normative or monstrous, between the ambiguous masculinities of the hero and anti-hero. At the opening of the

film, Batman is described as carrying out a “bat attack,” and references are made to the fact that he “can’t be killed,” “drinks blood,” and takes a “supernatural form.” This difficulty in discerning the fixed identity of Batman is also hinted at by the film’s opening shot which turns and weaves along lines and curves that do not seem to amount to a distinguishable shape or form in resemblance to the incoherent disunity of the Lacanian infantile world, which actually turns out to be a bat insignia, and implies that Batman is an object yet to be understood. The unknowability of Batman’s identity is reiterated as anomaly by Vicki Vale: “You are not exactly normal, are you?”

Edward Scissorhands further bends and distorts any knowable bodily boundaries. Neither fully human nor completely mechanized, he is clad in S/M style black leather. This image of the leather clad body is repeated in Batman Returns’ Catwoman, where the process of her sewing the cat suit is plainly displayed, thus, making visible the process in which one actually constructs and puts on drag to make a transition in identity. Edward Scissorhands’ exaggeratingly white pasty face can be seen not as an identity marker but rather as part of costuming his unknowable body; however, in suburbia where he is brought to live among middle class families this is clearly perceived to be a visage of whiteness and remedying the blemish from his face and making it look natural is a grave concern for Peg Boggs, the suburban housewife who brings Edward to suburbia.

If Edward Scissorhands embodies the androgynously flat-bodied romanticized freak among us who is eventually indoctrinated into heterosexual desires by the women around him, Beetlejuice showcases what may happen when a freakish body is placed beyond the freak narrative based on the normal/abnormal dualism exhibited

simultaneously on one body. The most disturbing aspect of Beetlejuice may be found in the fact that the freakishness of his identity is farther removed from readable bodily indexes: his body metamorphoses into monstrous forms that are not legible through known identity distinctions. Even the fact that he is a dead guy becomes highly unstable as he freely asserts his matter-altering power and agency into the realm of the alive to the degree that he frequently 're-models' the domestic space into a surreal sphere, as he deems necessary.

Grosz (1996) observes that in public discourse on freaks there exists intolerance about sexual indeterminacy. In other words, public discourse reconstructs the imagery of a freakish body into a split body allowing only dual signs such as male/ female and disallowing other signs that endanger the dualism of a freakish body. Only medical discourse acknowledges that a freak subject cannot be easily split in the middle into two distinguishable parts. (p.61) While Burton's other freaks are drawing on the freak identity that is "split right down the center," as the Penguin puts it, Beetlejuice seems almost seamless in that his incoherent freak identity does not dwell on the split self but rather on many unidentifiable identity properties. Therefore, Beetlejuice embodies in extremity the possibility of deconstructing fetish identity properties to the degree that any identification is no longer possible.

It is possible to postulate that in cultural representations the monistic white body ideologized in enlightened modern consciousness can be far removed from its hegemonically ascribed boundaries. However, it must be noted that the ideal of the universalizing modern self is not only a mandate but also a temptation for a subjectivity

that must negotiate its place within the politics of interests and pathways of power allocation in everyday life. A body becomes conceptualized as a synthesizing machine that flexibly accumulates its properties. It may become a site of monstrous cohabitation of halves, a body that signifies the prolonged negotiation between signs of foreign-ness and the uniqueness of the white body in an effort to expand the sphere in which it may still monopolize the representation of universality. It may become a hybrid that embodies disturbingly strange signs yet still keeps a residue of hegemonic power as showcased in the Beetlejuice character.

While Beetlejuice is a monstrous spectacle himself, he still manages to render femininity, as represented by Lydia on the verge of sexual inchoation, as an object of desire, or an object over which domesticity and unruly sexuality contest. In the film Beetlejuice, Lydia's dysfunctional upper middle class parents are replaced by dead surrogate parents. These surrogate parents and Beetlejuice vie for the control of Lydia's body by transporting her body into a fantastic realm between life and death, reality and the fantastic. Beetlejuice's fantastically surreal wedding ceremony (signifying the sexualization of virgin Lydia) is upstaged by the dead parents who finally win the power to put her body in trance (arresting virgin Lydia in the pre-sexual/asexual realm). In trance, Lydia's body floats in liminal space between unconsciousness and death, and dances with the apparitions of a team of dead football players as back-up dancers in the background. By rendering both main agencies contesting over Lydia's body to be equally monstrous hybrids that are dead yet still retaining material power to metamorphose their own bodily forms and interact with the lives of the living, the film seems to convey the

suspicion that domestic containment may become as perverse a subversion as the “unlicensed” sexualization attempted by Beetlejuice in which the boundaries of normative orders are ironically destabilized. However, by placing a female body in an ecstatic trance mediated by other agency, in this case the domestic order of the dead surrogate father, the film still confirms the identity hierarchy that subjects the female body to a liminal space between agencies and between spheres of normalcy and anomaly.

The various strategies of reconfiguring the normative body are imperative in hegemonic cultural production and in the course of reinforcing the newly configured bodies, seemingly liquid boundary politics may be a serendipitous outcome. As I have attempted in my examination of the filmic embodiment of alterized white male identity, in considering liquid boundary politics, it is imperative to delineate the deep structure that reproduces the hegemonic hierarchy of material and political power surreptitiously hiding behind chaotic and fleeting bodily signs, along with the symbolic power that in turn strengthens hegemonic identity politics.

In this thesis, I have tried to locate mass-mediated venues in which crisis and consensus of the contemporary society are narrativized. To do so, it was necessary to establish a working paradigm through which seemingly random phenomena were relativized and thus their relation to contemporary ideological concern scrutinized. The media texts of my analysis, which encompass various forms and categories, such as Bruce Willis’ stardom and “The X-Files” episodes, were selected to demonstrate a meaningful way of reading dynamic connectivity between cultural practices and artifacts. Through historical analysis of that connectivity, I have tried to exemplify a way to

(re)configure the discourse of white masculinity. In an effort to put white masculinity in a critical distance I have tried to locate evidences, such as syncretic identity and men in drag, that attest to the fact that hegemonic categorization can be deconstructed and made a strange object, which may be an initial step toward challenging hegemonic cultural politics.

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