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The Impact of the Cold War on the Representation of White Masculinity in Hollywood Film

William Michael Kirkland
THE IMPACT OF THE COLD WAR ON THE REPRESENTATION OF WHITE

MASCULINITY IN HOLLYWOOD FILM

By

WILLIAM MICHAEL KIRKLAND

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The members of the committee approve the dissertation of William Michael Kirkland defended on November 19, 2009.

Maricarmen Martinez
Professor Directing Dissertation

Maxine Jones
University Representative

Eugene Crook
Committee Member

Ernest Rehder
Committee Member

Approved:

John Kelsay, Director, Program in Interdisciplinary Humanities

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members.
For Katina,
whose love and support made
this achievement possible.

For my mother, Dianne Kirkland,
whose memory I will always cherish.
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation will focus on the representation of ideal, white masculinity in the films of the Cold War period and how those representations, as they appeared in the form of art, served either to flatter or criticize the times in which they were made. By the term representation, I use, in particular, Stuart Hall’s ideas on representation and the media. Hall contends that meaning is controlled by those who control the means of creation (in this case the Hollywood studios). And since the Cold War influenced society in such a powerful way, Hall’s ideas on how culture determines the interpretation of representation is most important. These representations, therefore, served political purposes, as they captured political messages or represented the political views of the producers and directors.

Of particular focus will be the western genre and the spy film genre. Notable film persona and characters include, of course, John Wayne, the representation of the ideal American, and James Bond, the representation of the ideal Englishman. However, the glorification of the military and an emphasis on traditional, patriotic themes in various war films must also be addressed. Furthermore, nearly every major event during the Cold War period was either directly or indirectly tied to Cold War tensions and was represented in the period’s films. This dissertation’s focus on the representation of ideal masculinity in the period’s films, then, will evolve along with the socio-historic events and, most especially, with the changing mindsets and values. For example, the Civil Rights Movement impacted the representation of black masculinity, a representation whose very existence challenged society much the same way the Civil Rights Movement itself did. Also, events such as the Vietnam War or the Watergate Scandal led to the advent of the cinematic anti-hero as well as representations of masculinity that also challenged the previous norm. These events, therefore, led to films that not only interrogated and challenged the ideal representation of the white, heterosexual male, but also harshly criticized Cold War policies. Finally, it is apparent that the United States government had a long-standing partnership with Hollywood film producers to export American culture through film, thus creating markets for American-made goods.
Through this partnership, the proxy cinematic ambassador for the United States became the representation of white masculinity.
INTRODUCTION

When historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” a paper delivered in 1893 at a conference of the American Historical Association, he faced “bored indifference normally shown a young instructor from a backwater college reading his first professional paper” (Billington 170). In this “frontier thesis,” inspired by the findings of the 1890 census and now among the most famous of American historical works, Turner theorized that the settling of the West shaped the American character – that of being tough, rugged, individualistic, and self-reliant. The thesis, nonetheless, contained flaws. Most notably, Turner failed to acknowledge the role Native Americans, African Americans, women, Mexican Americans, and Mormons also played in shaping the American spirit. This white male only approach to the study of history and to the application of American power would be especially evident in twentieth-century domestic and international affairs, as represented in twentieth-century American cinema. The lack of agency on the part of and the exclusion of minorities in Turner’s study are indicative not just of the nation’s historical narrative but also in much of the century’s movies.

William Appleman Williams, in History as a Way of Learning, states that the “ideas of Turner . . . supplied American empire builders with an overview and explanation of the world, and a reasonably specific program of action from 1893 to 1953” (138). Though it did not meet much fanfare to begin with, Turner’s thesis impacted many political leaders. For example, Theodore Roosevelt’s use of gunboat diplomacy in creating Panama in order to build the Panama Canal and Woodrow Wilson’s interventionist forays into the Dominican Republic and Mexico reflect, through action, the building of empire (150). Desmond King, in The Liberty of Strangers, explains how Manifest Destiny, the concept that God ordained the westward movement of Americans, provided “a political language to privilege the territorial expansion of nation building rooted in the interests of white Americans” (9). Building on Turner’s shortcomings, King cites ample evidence of this white dominated history. King discusses how immigration quotas, the Chinese Exclusion Act, “back to Africa” legislation, and government-sponsored segregation clearly defined, by favoring white immigrants while
simultaneously attempting to remove from the country persons of color, who was or who
was not an “American” (30). Whites, King stipulates, did not consider blacks (or any
other minority group) fellow citizens and “the enactment of [a] restrictive immigration
regime is one of the clearest expressions of who [constituted] members of the American
nation” (49). Woodrow Wilson, a U.S. president whose education (PhD in history from
Johns Hopkins University and former president of Princeton University) would have
seemingly placed him beyond the scope of racism and bigotry, stated emphatically that he
stood for “a national policy of exclusion . . . [and a] homogenous population [consisting
of] the Caucasian race” (53).

It seems, then, that during the Wilson presidency Turner “was an unseen
intellectual roomer in the White House” (Williams 147). Unfortunately, however, both
men’s narrowly defined concept of an “American” (Caucasian) did not exist in a vacuum.
In fact, that mindset prevailed. Wilson’s favorite movie, D.W. Griffith’s very popular
Birth of a Nation (1915), glorified the Ku Klux Klan as arbiters of peace and order. Birth
of a Nation’s focus on a KKK-stabilized society came during the upheaval of World War
I, subsequently followed by a Red Scare and a nativistic response that led to further
legalized restrictions of immigration and, therefore, cemented Turner’s and Wilson’s
vision of an America dominated by white Europeans.

When military conflict ended at the conclusion of World War I, diplomatic and
economic tensions between nations intensified. Europeans in particular feared a looming
power on the international stage, the United States. Although the nations of Europe
respected the United States, feelings of ambivalence and intimidation resulted from
America’s growing economic, political, and military clout. European countries, France
more so than any other, found solace in their own perceived sense of cultural superiority
(Kuisel 11-12). One medium of entertainment that not only transcended many cultural
and linguistic barriers but also dampened Europe’s sense of cultural superiority was
cinema. Whereas Germany, France, England, and Italy had dominated the world’s movie
screens up until the First World War, those European cinematic powers succumbed to
Hollywood’s dominance after the war, thereby giving American film narratives visibility,
prominence, and hegemony.
American moviemakers, in a quest for profit, enlisted the power and leverage of the U.S. government to ruthlessly pursue hegemonic positions over foreign competitors. While Hollywood concerned itself with dominating the global film industry, the U.S. government’s motivation in the matter stemmed from a belief that American movies would spur both a demand for American products and respect for the American way of life. Trapped between the culturally imperialistic ambitions of the United States and various European governments that resisted American cultural aggression were ordinary European citizens who selected cinematic entertainments that disparaged their own way of life. A systematic assessment of the American movie industry between the World Wars reveals that its international policies, developed in conjunction with the United States government, derived from both the industry’s desire to dominate the global film industry and the government’s desire to promote America’s culture and values abroad, thereby supplanting Europe’s cultural superiority.

The power of cinema as a tool of propaganda, cultural reproduction, and as a method of possibly improving the international opinion of the United States did not escape Woodrow Wilson. Near the conclusion of World War I, Wilson asked the major film producers in Hollywood to “urgently rush as many of their films as possible to France to give heart to the French people [and] to let them know the nature of their new ally” (Segrave 16). The producers of Hollywood, with economic motives in mind rather than patriotic ones, obliged. Hollywood, apparently impacted by the notion of American exceptionalism, persistently flooded foreign markets with films that disparaged or disrespected the nations in which the films were being screened! This arrogant or, at best, inconsiderate approach to cinema quickly turned the world against American movies, thereby threatening Hollywood’s access to those rather lucrative markets. Hollywood’s access to international markets was threatened and resulted in an eventual partnership between Hollywood and the U.S. government (Vasey 19).

In 1922, the United States Department of Commerce “had coined the slogan ‘trade follows the motion pictures,’ and its spokesmen were fond of repeating the somewhat arbitrary claim that for every foot of film exported, a dollar was earned for the United States in spin-off sales of other goods” (Vasey 42). Hollywood before 1922 consisted of several different production studios competing with each other for profits.
One event regarding Mexico, nonetheless, galvanized Hollywood, consequently making it possible for Hollywood to work as one united entity in its partnership with the Department of Commerce. In 1922, Mexico, livid with the way Hollywood negatively depicted its citizens in the American “western” film genre, banned all American films. Fearful that Mexico might set a precedent for the rest of the world, the major Hollywood producers formed an organization to combat such banishments (19). This organization, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), kept no secrets as to its purpose. Hollywood believed that “only with a stable, effective cartel could the U.S. majors hope to maintain and expand their worldwide domination” (Segrave 21). The cartel’s goal of using the diplomatic and political power of the United States to further its cinematic domination of the world’s movie screens was embodied in the selection of its first president, Will H. Hays.

Will H. Hays, a politically connected individual with no cinematic experience, served as the bridge between the political powers in Washington, D.C., and Hollywood’s movie industry. There was no doubt, even for him, that he was chosen for his political rather than cinematic talent. Hays, in his memoirs, states that he had no cinematic experience. “I have never been identified with any phase of motion pictures. I was an Indiana lawyer who had become Republican national chairman, then Postmaster General. Just that” (323). Hays, furthermore, was selected because he shared a common vision with both the motion picture industry and with the US State Department as it related to selling American culture (and goods) to the world (Trumpbour 17). Hays even stated that the only reason he accepted the position of president of the MPPDA was that he envisioned the “motion picture as a universal language” (Hays 507). A galvanized Hollywood, led by a politically connected MPPDA president and supported by a powerful government that was committed to securing for it a dominant position within the global film industry (63), was able to deal effectively with European resistance to American cinematic and cultural invasions.

This discussion of US cultural imperialism is important, for it is the idealized West and the violence it contained, taking shape in the form of the silver screen cowboy, that defined not only Americans but especially the American male. The cinema’s representation of idealized masculinity that connected Turner to the ideals of toughness,
ruggedness, and self-reliance also occurred in film genres other than the western. Yet it was the violence of the frontier that provided a foundation on which all of those representations existed. Joan Mellen, author of *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in American Film*, writes:

“This violence also expresses and releases the rage twentieth-century men [felt] over the diminution of masculinity that they [suffered] in their present-day lives, a masculinity that [seemed] to have flourished on the open plains. As cowboy, cavalry man, gangster, private eye, or cop, the male hero has been created on the model of the frontiersman” (11).

Ideal masculinity, represented in many film genres, is rooted in the frontier.

By the term representation, I use, in particular, Stuart Hall’s ideas on representation and the media. Hall contends that the meaning of an image is controlled by those who have power over the means of its creation. In this case, it is the Hollywood producer, director, or studios which control the meaning of an image through their control of the moviemaking process. Hall’s ideas, furthermore, on how a culture interprets the image being represented are also important. These representations, moreover, served political purposes, as they sent political messages or represented the political views of the producers and directors. Hall’s work on the power of the creation of meaning, then, is pertinent to this study.

The domination of Hollywood’s vision of masculine representation came as a result of several decades of European turmoil, and resulted in a wholesale loss of practical freedom for the rest of the global film industry. Due to economic concerns aggravated by the destruction caused by World War I, Europe was forced to choose between cultural and economic survival. This, in actuality, was an economic straightjacket which enslaved the entire continent not to a culturally superior America but to an economically powerful America which enjoyed the ability to focus on trade and commerce rather than the rebuilding of its infrastructure. The onset of the Great Depression only strengthened America’s film industry since it was cheaper for Europe to buy films than to produce them. The United States, having “a cinema market perhaps forty to fifty times” that of France (Trumnbour 228), was able to produce bigger, better, and more expensive films. Hollywood maintained this dominance throughout the thirties
with the gangster and western genres and into the forties with the war film genre, all of which, as previously stated, were grounded in the frontier.

This background on the importance of the frontier in American cultural history and how the United States government and Hollywood joined forces to translate the frontier’s violent aspects into masculine representations in the period leading up to World War II serves as an important preface in understanding the focus of this study, the impact of the Cold War on the representation of white masculinity in film. A tremendous economic, political, military, and ideological struggle, the Cold War’s dominant presence as a force was represented in various film genres, especially the western and the spy film. Notable characters include, of course, John Wayne, the ideal representation of the ideal American, and James Bond, the ideal representation of the ideal Englishman. However, the glorification of the military and an emphasis on traditional, patriotic themes in various war films must also be addressed. In effect, according to David L. Robb, author of *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies*, many films were partially financed or fully supported by the Pentagon itself. Also, the Pentagon and the branches of the military maintain entertainment (film, TV) liaison offices to assist in military-related media productions. Additionally, nearly every major event during the Cold War period was either directly or indirectly tied to Cold War tensions and was represented in the period’s films. For example, the Civil Rights movement impacted the representation of black masculinity, a representation whose very existence challenged society much the same way the Civil Rights movement itself did. Also, events such as the Vietnam War and the Watergate Scandal led to the advent of the cinematic anti-hero as well as representations of masculinity that also challenged the previous norm. These events, therefore, led to films that not only challenged the ideal representation of the white, heterosexual male, but also harshly criticized Cold War policies.

Several theories exist as to what caused the Cold War. The traditional (or consensus) theory, popular until the 1960s, states that the Cold War was the result of Soviet expansionism and the United States’ defensive response. This theory attempted to explain the conflict in terms of evil (the Soviet Union) versus good (the United States).
Revisionist historians blame aggressive American trade policies while post-revisionist historians blame both sides equally. It might be an understatement to say that mutual fear, misunderstanding, and ideology also contributed to this decades-long struggle.

The aforementioned relationship between Hollywood and the U.S. government makes cinema as an art form – as a representative of the times in which it was made – all the more important during the Cold War. Therefore, because the historic image of the cowboy has been the prototype for the ideal representation of masculinity, the western film genre will play a major role in this dissertation. Moreover, the connection between the various and changing representations of masculinity and how those representations serve to defend the economic interests of the United States is of utmost importance to this study. Although, then, there are political and ideological tensions in the Cold War, economic imperatives and conflicts will take center stage. Both the western and the representation of white masculinity as embodied by the cowboy serve as important metaphors for the Cold War, especially for the competing ideologies of the United States and the Soviet Union.

The first chapter of the study, “From High Noon to Midnight,” will begin with an overview of films in the immediate years following World War II. The focus of chapter one, though, will be on the representation of ideal masculinity in the western genre. Cowboy films provide many Cold War metaphors. The film High Noon (1952), for example, authored by blacklisted author Carl Foreman as a means of revenge against the McCarthy hearings, compares communism to a gang while the sheriff represents the United States. The townspeople refused to assist the sheriff, a warning against either appeasement (since the film was made during the Korean War) or against allowing a gang (the McCarthyites) to rule unchecked. Many years later, John Wayne’s response to Foreman’s film was Rio Bravo (1959), a near exact parody of High Noon – except that this time the townspeople help the sheriff, thus proving that Americans are fighters of communism rather than appeasers of it.

Many western films offer the same metaphor for the Cold War’s angst over communism, including Shane (1953) and The Alamo (1960). It also will be important to note the lack of agency of minority characters in these films, as the influential Turner consistently did in his works of history. These minorities are cinematically excluded
from Cold War representations and the previous information on Turner’s frontier thesis, the nativistic response following the First World War, and the political appropriation of the image of the cowboy becomes in this chapter of utmost importance.

Chapter one will continue with a discussion of the safe, profitable films related to World War II that ushered in the 1960s. In the face of the Bay of Pigs Invasion (April 1961), the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962), the assassination of President Kennedy (November 1963), and the escalation of the Vietnam War (1964-1965), the tone of the western genre, however, began to take a turn. Several films even mocked the cowboy, but none more so by the end of that decade than *Midnight Cowboy* (1969). The films *High Noon* and *Midnight Cowboy* serve as bookends in a period of the western genre and also serve as a play on words. *Midnight Cowboy* harshly criticizes America’s Cold War policies and critically interrogates the image of the cowboy as a representation of masculinity. This is even more important since the film was in part made in response to *The Green Berets* (1968), a film starring iconic figure John Wayne and financed by the Pentagon to gather support for an unpopular war in Vietnam. The “midnight cowboy,” played by Jon Voight, moves from west to east – the opposite of Turner’s thesis relating to the settling of the West. Voight’s character is homeless, sells himself to a homosexual teenager, befriends a thief, and conducts himself in a manner that would dishonor the values of the “frontier thesis.” This iconoclastic representation of white masculinity, of course, was in response to the events of the Cold War.

The second chapter, “Keeping the British End Up: Bond and the Phallus,” examines the creation of Ian Fleming, a former spy himself, who authored the James Bond novels on which the films are based. Full of phallic symbols, the Bond films represent England as cultured and snobbish at a time when the country was actually in decline. The representation of masculinity in these films exudes power, intelligence, and sexuality. The plots, furthermore, are shaped by the events of the time. For example, *Dr. No’s* (1962) plot centers on a missile crisis while *Goldfinger* (1964) references the “gathering threat” of China. These films also nod to the second wave of the feminist movement as well as to the Civil Rights Movement. In the early 1970s a genre emerged that targeted black moviegoers. Known as the blaxploitation genre, the films featured black casts, directors, and music by popular black musicians. To answer the popularity
of the blaxploitation genre, James Bond, recognizing the growing purchasing power of America’s blacks, travels to Harlem in *Live and Let Die* (1973).

The focus of chapter two, however, will be Bond as an ideal representation of white masculinity. Many times he is able to reposition female protagonists merely by having sex with them. In *Goldfinger*, Bond not only repositions Pussy Galore to the “good” side but also, as the film insinuates, turns her from lesbian to straight. As the representative of the British Cold War warrior, Bond’s movies and their acceptance in Europe encodes the West’s position of power as represented by sex appeal, fine taste in drink and food, by superior technology, and also by the “gaze,” as discussed by Laura Mulvey in her seminal article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” In this piece, Mulvey states that the male protagonist has power over the unsuspecting female through the “active power of the erotic look” (28). That power, therefore, is sexual regardless whether there is a physical touch or not.

Chapter 3, “Challenging the Ideal,” studies how the representation of ideal white masculinity changed as a result of the tremendous social tensions of the late 1960s, caused in part by the Vietnam War. Our focus will be the coming-of-age baby boom generation’s anti-war and anti-government sentiments as well as the impact of the Civil Rights Movement. These tensions are reflected in the era’s cinema. For some, the most famous example is that of Sidney Poitier, whose roles include that of the educated, cultured, and decent figure. Poitier’s many roles address racism, most notably in *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (1967), *A Patch of Blue* (1965), and *In the Heat of the Night* (1967). Though he is a celebrated actor, many film scholars criticize him, however, for playing “simple, one-dimensional roles” (Leab 230-231). The integrationist messages of Poitier’s films simply did not resonate with many blacks (Bogle 195), thus providing a cinematic space in which the blaxploitation genre could evolve. This genre focused on the reality of the black experience, including ghettos, drugs, oppression, and the frustration that stemmed from those elements. The blaxploitation genre, then, furthermore challenged the white ideal while also simultaneously highlighting government and police corruption.

Anti-government sentiment and, more specifically anti-repressive sentiment, will also be an important aspect of this chapter. Many films pit either the honest cop against a
corrupt system or outsiders attacking the system. *Bullitt* (1968) and *Dirty Harry* (1971) are honest officers working in a broken system. *Shaft* (1971), part of the blaxploitation genre, is also an honest officer who, though with questionable means, fights in and against a broken system. The plot of *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975) attacks not only corrupt officers but also makes a nod to the gay rights movement.

Soon after the apex of anti-Vietnam sentiment happened, the Watergate Scandal occurred. These two events are very important to the era’s films. *All the President’s Men* (1976) offers a new version of ideal, white masculinity, as the heroes are not in the image of Bond but rather two newspaper reporters. Of course, these two events are monumental in creating an era of anti-government, anti-military, and anti-conformity (norms, values, etc.) films. Examples that will be discussed include but are not limited to *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Rambo* (1982), *Platoon* (1986), and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987).

Chapter 4 is entitled “From Hype to Hypocrisy.” Ever since Woodrow Wilson, a president so very influenced by Frederick Jackson Turner, created the Committee of Public Information (which made special use of film) during World War I to gather support for the war effort, the United States government has been in the propaganda business. Many Cold War films were produced with the assistance of the Pentagon. Conversely, many directors and producers either refused Pentagon help/financing or were refused Pentagon assistance if the film was critical of the government (or military, CIA, etc.). Earlier discussions on certain films as well as the differing economic ideologies of the Cold War will be particularly relevant.

Whereas the previous chapters cover just portions of the Cold War, this chapter will discuss films that were made during the entire period. Particular commentary will focus on the government sponsorship of films. Since previous arguments include the government’s support and financing of these films as a way to promote American goods in foreign markets, it will be important to study the image (of masculinity) that these films promote. In effect, it will be interesting to study what the government itself wished the nation’s image to be.

The conclusion, of course, will tie the findings of the dissertation together and will also discuss certain films of the post-Cold War period. For example, with the demise
of the Soviet Union and with the subsequent rise of an industrialized and militarized
China, *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004), which depicts the corporation as the new
nemesis rather than communism, is a certain inclusion. The depiction of the cowboy’s
masculinity in *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) as a nod to the gay rights movement is also a
very important development as it compares to that of John Wayne or Gary Cooper. In
addition, the crisis of masculinity that developed in white males in the 1950s apparently
occurred again in the 1990s, as cinematically depicted in films such as *Falling Down*
(1993). Finally, a few films that deal with race relations and black masculinity need to be
included since the white ideal continued to be challenged.
CHAPTER 1
FROM HIGH NOON TO MIDNIGHT

A tremendous economic, political, military, and ideological struggle, the Cold War’s dominant presence as also a cultural force was represented in film, especially the western. Walter LaFeber, a retired Professor of History at Cornell University and a distinguished expert of United States Foreign Relations, argues in *America, Russia, and The Cold War, 1945 – 1966* that the roots of the Cold War trace back to the 1890s. This is, of course, the same decade in which Frederick Jackson Turner wrote of the end of the United States’ frontier in his essay “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” That frontier, obviously, referred to a North American frontier only, for the United States kept moving west – across the Pacific Ocean and into China. It was there, LaFeber states, that the United States and Russia, “sweeping eastward through Siberia, [first] confronted one another on the plains of China and Manchuria” (2). This clash of two up and coming powers did not initially portend the eventual struggle that ensued. Russia could not compete with the industrial might of the United States, so it rested on the strategy of creating buffers (3). Russia’s protectionist (non-aggressive) approach of creating these spheres of influence lasted roughly two decades, as discussed and agreed upon by another renowned expert on the Cold War, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (“Origins of the Cold War” 5). World War I, of course, shattered Russia’s isolationist hopes, bringing it into a coalition with the United States and the other Allied Powers.

Any expectation of the two nations becoming post-war partners ended with the Russian Revolution of 1917. The institutionalization of communism in Russia, thereafter establishing itself as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922, brought with it an ideological assertiveness. Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Russian communists, stated that “as long as capitalism and socialism exist, we cannot live in peace: in the end, one or the other will triumph – a funeral dirge will be sung either over the Soviet Republic or over world capitalism” (Schlesinger, “Origins of the Cold War” 18). The United States severed diplomatic ties, and did not restore relations with the Soviet Union until 1933 – and only then because a resurgent Germany, having just elected Adolph Hitler as its premier, posed a significant threat to all of its neighbors,
many of whom were American diplomatic and economic allies. As these tensions dragged on into the late 1930s, both countries tried to maintain neutrality up until the outset of World War II. In 1939, however, the USSR, consistent with its past policies, sought its security by signing with Germany the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, officially known as the “Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,” thereby securing a pledge from Germany not to attack. Ironically, the isolationist tendencies of both the United States and Russia ended due to surprise attack, for the Russians by Germany and for the United States by Japan. It would be a powerful lesson for both nations – that attempted isolationism and “sitting on the sidelines” during international conflicts did not provide security (LaFeber 6).

Though victorious in World War II, the alliance proved to be one of necessity more than one of friendship and mutual trust. In fact, the defeat of Germany and Japan severed those bonds of necessity, and allowed ideological and economic differences to materialize. The tensions that had already been present throughout the war came to the fore. Dual factions rallying around these two powers emerged, one on the side of democracy and capitalism and the other on the side of communism and socialism. According to Schlesinger, “each side believed with passion that future international stability depended on the success of its own conception of world order. Each side, in pursuing its own clearly indicated and deeply cherished principles, was only confirming the fear of the other that it was bent on aggression” (“Origins of the Cold War” 16). The irony in the beginnings of the Cold War is that both nations, having learned the harsh lesson of the futility of isolationism before World War II, overreacted in their continued search for stability after the war.

The Cold War thus began in a tense atmosphere of political and diplomatic maneuvering. On February 9, 1946, Russian Premier Joseph Stalin, echoing Lenin, delivered a speech in which he warned his nation of the dangers of capitalism, declaring that communists could never enjoy their much sought-after peace and security as long as capitalism existed. Less than a month later, the joint American-British response was delivered by (at this point) the former Prime Minister of England, Winston Churchill, while on a visit to the United States. Receiving an honorary degree from Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, Churchill spoke about an “Iron Curtain” that
had “descended” across Eastern Europe. The control that the Soviets had over Eastern
Europe should not have surprised President Truman or Churchill, himself an excellent
historian who knew of the Russian propensity to create buffers. Yet, this rhetoric from
both sides, LaFeber claims, amounted to “declarations of Cold War” (30). The rhetoric
led to real action, as Stalin within weeks of the “Iron Curtain” speech rejected
membership in both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Gaddis, We
Now Know 193), believing both to be “a lubrication system for global capitalism” (194).

Though in the earliest stages of the Cold War “there existed genuine confusion in
Washington as to both Soviet intentions and appropriate methods for dealing with them”
(Gaddis, Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States 181), by early 1946 a consensus
on how to deal with the Soviet Union began to develop. American diplomatic officials at
the State Department asked George Kennan, an official and Russian expert serving at the
embassy in Moscow, for an analysis. Kennan’s response is now known as the famous
“Long Telegram,” an 8,000 word communiqué that should have, since it essentially
described the Soviets as prudent, had a calming effect. However, Kennan followed the
“Long Telegram” nearly a year and a half later with an article published in Foreign
Affairs entitled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct.” This article, called by many “The Mr.
X Article” since initially the author remained anonymous, described the Soviets as
patient and stated, therefore, that “the main element of any United States policy toward
the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient, but firm, and vigilant containment
of Russian expansive tendencies” (Kennan 87). It is apparent that the published policy
came after its establishment, since in the months leading up to the article the United
States had announced both the Truman Plan (a commitment to “contain communism”)
and the Marshall Plan (a broad economic assistance program to Western European
countries).

From there rapidly followed a series of incidents which made the Cold War quite
hot. The year 1948 saw a communist coup succeed in Czechoslovakia. Then 1949
witnessed not only the victory of communist forces in China under the leadership of Mao
Zedong, but also the successful detonation of a Russian atomic bomb. The Soviets
blocked western access to Berlin from June 1948 to May 1949, resulting in the Berlin
Airlift, followed by Stalin’s creation of his equivalent of the Marshall Plan, the Comecon
Films which imbued a sense of nationalism and that served as a metaphor for the relationship between the United States and the world were the most popular and the most profitable (Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors* 2-3). According to an article published in *The New York Times* in 1943 – in the middle of World War II – the western was the least favorite type of film amongst the soldiers (Crowther X5). Yet Cold War tensions allowed for the western film genre to experience a revival. By the beginning of the Korean War, one third of the films produced in Hollywood were westerns (Schnee x83). This genre, with its inclusion of “good vs. evil,” violence, and (white) patriotism, “effectively [conjoined] history and myth to appeal powerfully to incipient nationalism in U.S. audiences” (Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors* 6). The ability of filmmakers to appeal to and abuse that nationalism in order to make a profit was clear during the Cold War. Moreover, the filmmakers included an element from Turner’s thesis (the tough, rugged individual – by definition a white male) and married him to the frontier. The result was a freedom-loving white male who fought for justice and a certain way of life. Westerns also provided a way to speak to the audience’s traditional values as well as an allegorical way to deal with an array of domestic and international problems (Hyams 76). Finally, the western is linked to Turner’s thesis in that white men are elevated while women and ethnic minorities are minimized. The Cold War and the representation of white masculinity are inextricably linked.

The period from 1952 – 1969, the time between the movies *High Noon* (1952) and *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), was preceded by the tumultuous beginnings of the Cold War. The two films serve as bookends for the genre – the first as one that epitomizes the canon and the second as its critic. *High Noon*, for example, glorifies the strong, moral white male. Sheriff Will Kane, played by Gary Cooper, stays to fight a gang when he could have left, even with the townspeople’s blessings, for his honeymoon. Though he recruits help, he is willing to fight alone. The film makes clear his sense of duty to stay and protect the citizens even though it begins at the end of his last day on the job. The irony of the movie is that Kane is willing to do all this for a group of people who won’t
help him in return. Many even encourage him to leave. *Midnight Cowboy*, on the other hand, mocks the values that the western genre upholds. Joe Buck, played by Jon Voight, is no western sheriff. He is a Texan who moves east to New York City, thus reversing the frontier settlement pattern. This, of course, combined with Joe’s ridiculous cowboy outfit, serves as a metaphor for the notion that the West as an arbiter of values is outdated and silly. Along that line, ostensibly, Joe’s goal is to become a gigolo. Yet, his failure in that endeavor leads to homelessness, bisexual encounters, and petty theft. Both films were released during wars and both were impacted by those wars. Though the period began with a vibrant film industry, the intervening Cold War years not only weakened Hollywood but also the western genre, thus the scathing critique it received in *Midnight Cowboy*. The representations of ideal (white) masculinity in the films of the era contain stark differences and the Cold War was the determining factor.

As a theoretical framework for studying the representation of white masculinity in the western, I will use Stuart Hall’s concept of representation. Hall defines representation as “an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture” (*Representation*, “The Work of Representation” 15). As it relates to film, it is important to understand how these Hollywood-produced images inform other images as well as the way we represent and judge the world. And as it relates to the western, that depiction came, in sync with Turner, in the form of the white male. Furthermore, as Hall explains in a lecture entitled “Representation and the Media,” meaning is not given until it is represented, which makes Hollywood studios extremely powerful given that they determine the meaning of the image through their control of the production of it. Culture in general and film in particular are also important aspects of determining the meaning of representation since it provides a framework for “the way we make sense . . . [of] the world” (“Representation and the Media”). The culture of the Cold War is critical, then, in how it impacted Hollywood’s use of the white male as a symbol, in light of the communist “enemy,” for democracy and capitalism in westerns. I am not arguing, of course, that the Cold War is not a historical fact, but if Hall is right we can study, since the western genre informed the meaning of the Cold War, the films that were made during that era.
Both American culture and the film industry were affected drastically by the beginnings of the Cold War. The Red Scare that developed led to a reinvigorated effort to expel communists not just from the government but also from the film industry. Conscious or not of it at the time, the investigating arm of the government, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), attempted to “hunt” Hollywood film producers, directors, and actors to keep them from producing meaning through their images that competed with their own values. Many were called to testify. Some cooperated while others refused. Ten figures, famously called “The Hollywood Ten,” were blacklisted for their failure to cooperate. Hollywood executives, instead of defending the constitutional rights of their friends and employees, endorsed the blacklisting of actors through the “Waldorf Statement,” a proclamation of support for Congress’ actions (Belton 241). It would be remiss to say, however, that all actors refused to cooperate with the HUAC. Some may have cooperated out of a need to remain employed while others, most notably John Wayne – the epitome of white masculinity during this period – enthusiastically took part.

One of those blacklisted was Carl Foreman, who wrote the screenplay for *High Noon*. In the film, the sheriff, Will Kane, and his new wife are leaving town for their honeymoon when word is received that a gang of outlaws will enter town on the noon train. Kane, despite having just married a peace-avowing Quaker, cannot run from trouble. Duty forbids it. Not a single person, including his friends and even his own deputies, help. Even his wife makes plans to leave. The image of Gary Cooper, the actor who stars as Will Kane and the image of white masculinity in the film standing all alone in the streets of Hadleyville, “has become a national symbol of commitment and courage” (Hyams 112). According to John Belton, author of *American Cinema/American Culture*, Foreman (since no one came to his rescue) represents Kane who is threatened by a gang – theHUAC – which is on its way to Hollywood (247).

Based on “The Tin Star,” a short story by John W. Cunningham that was first published in Collier’s Magazine in 1947 (Blake 3), *High Noon* depicts a “town full of weaklings” (Mellen 228) who force Kane to fight alone. The film eerily reflects reality, as Foreman was fired by the production company just three weeks into filming. In a later settlement, Foreman received $250,000, though his name is not in the film’s credits.
(Blake 8-9). Also important in the film is director Fred Zinnemann, an Austrian Jew, who, according to a documentary that accompanies the film, wanted a newsreel look and who, therefore, shot the film in black and white during a time in which most westerns were shot in color. Grey, gloomy skies dominate rather than picturesque landscapes (High Noon documentary).

As the film begins, Will Kane marries Amy, played by Grace Kelly. After he gets word of the impending arrival on the noon train of Frank Miller, an outlaw he previously arrested, he tells Amy that he “has never run from anybody before” – and that he must stay. Many urge him to leave. None agree to help. The judge who sentenced Miller leaves town. The coffin maker is interested in making money off the violence. The deputy, Harvey, will fight only if he gets to become sheriff afterward. Kane, then, goes on a search for help throughout most of the film. Some hide and others make excuses. The movie illustrates tension and Kane’s loneliness in real time by focusing on ticking clocks, which increase in size as the twelfth hour approaches. Kane, therefore, as a depiction of white masculinity, instructs the viewer “unequivocally that the real man is one who fights” (Mellen 229). Though nervous, Kane stays when he could have left.

An important scene in High Noon is when Kane enters the church to seek help. Foreman, who based Cooper’s character on his own experience with the HUAC committee, stated that the scene in the church was “a distillation of meetings [he] had with partners, associates, and lawyers” (Blake 7). If so, this does not speak well of his associates. At the time of Kane’s entry into the church, the congregation was singing “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Of all the hymns that could have been selected by Foreman, this song in the mouths of traitors and cowards is a powerful statement. Stanley Corkin, author of Cowboys as Cold Warriors: The Western and U.S. History, describes how the congregation “morphed” into a town meeting. Corkin represents Kane as a “moral figure” whose “vigilance [is] the answer to those who would subvert a correct social order” (147). Finally, Joan Mellen, in Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in American Film, mocks the congregation and all those who are metaphorically represented for demanding the right to speak up but not actually wanting to help Kane defend the town (229).
Stuart Hall’s statement in his lecture “Representation and the Media” that “absence signifies as much as what is present” certainly applies to High Noon. The absence of any ethnic male of agency connects High Noon to Turner’s vision of the frontier. The absence of a competing representation of masculinity only serves to highlight the white masculinity that Cooper presents, and which Hollywood re-presents. On the other hand, the representation of Helen Ramirez, the Mexican woman who owns the town’s hotel, serves as a juxtaposition of Amy. Helen, having been the mistress of Frank Miller, Will Kane, and Harvey, is depicted as “experienced” (Graham 245) while Amy’s Quakerism is depicted as “innocent” – a virgin archetype (247). However, it is Helen who tells Harvey that he is “not a man” and “never will be” since he is not helping Kane (who she does call a “man”). Later in the film Helen tells Amy, “If Kane was my man, I’d get a gun. I’d fight.” Foreman, then, rejects Turner’s all-white, all-male frontier by using Helen Ramirez to prod Amy Kane, who does, in the end, join in the fight. Amy does something no other male in Hadleyville does – she fights. After killing the gang, Will Kane throws his badge on the ground and leaves, with his wife, without saying a word. In the context of the beginning of the Cold War, High Noon serves as the first cinematic bookend by repudiating both McCarthyism and appeasement through the image of the white male. Shane, likewise, represents the virtue of freedom while also justifying the use of violence to uphold peace.

Like High Noon, Shane (1953) was released during the Korean War, a proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Shane, however, “is more than [just] a western; it is a perfectly fashioned reality play” (Hyams 115). The Starrett family and their neighbors are trying to make a life on the frontier when a group of cattle oligarchs, representatives of western capitalism who are hoping to gain control of the land by forcing the homesteaders to leave, begins intimidating the families. The Ryker gang destroys the families’ crops and even kills one of the settlers, a husband and a father named “Stonewall.” The gathering of people at Stonewall’s funeral represents the imperative of eliminating the very gang that is standing in the way of democracy (Calder 205). The families win their struggle against the tyranny of the few with the help of Shane, played by Alan Ladd, a loner whose expertise with his weapon, a phallic symbol, results in a victorious shootout against the gang. With the band defeated, the families are
able to settle the frontier and run their lives democratically, a strong message during the Cold War.

Originally published as “Rider from Nowhere” in Argosy Magazine in 1946 by Jack Schaefer, it was published in book form as *Shane* in 1949 (Blake 67-68). The release of the film version came during the Korean War, as previously stated. Kristen Hatch, author of a book chapter titled “Movies and the New Faces of Masculinity,” argues that the Cold War’s havoc, combined with the Red Scare and the entrance of women into the workforce, caused a “destabilization of masculinity” (46-47) during this era. Apparently this destabilization of masculinity had it prior roots in the man’s failure to provide for his family in the Great Depression, a period that David Lugowski refers to as the “feminization of society” (“Queering the New Deal” 3). The man, especially the married man, is an important aspect of *Shane*, since it is Joe Starrett, the emasculated patriarch of the family, who holds onto his land only with the help of the unmarried Shane. Again, marital status is important in this film, as one man’s masculinity is denigrated by the obligation to provide while Shane’s independence and toughness becomes the object of Mrs. Starrett’s desire. Hatch explains further that:

“In the popular imagination, it was marriage that bound a man to a corporate job; it was women’s desire for new things – a new television, a new house, a new car – that put him in debt and made him reliant on labor that undermined his masculine identity” (51).

These arguments are consistent with *High Noon*. Had Will Kane listened to the other married men or even to his own wife, he would have left town – and the Miller gang would have prevailed without a shot. The depicted weakness of married men in *Shane*, furthermore, is not reserved for Starrett alone. All the other married men in the film also balk at fighting the gang.

Shane arrives at the Starrett ranch as a stranger. According to George C. Stevens, Jr.’s commentary in the special features section of the film, Steven’s father, the director and producer of *Shane*, intended to portray the sense that Shane was “just passing through.” Soon after Shane’s arrival, the Ryker gang also arrives at the Starrett home. With Shane standing aloof, Joe threatens the gang in defense of his property at gunpoint. Matthew J. Costello, author of “I Didn’t Expect to Find Any Fences Around Here:
Cultural Ambiguity and Containment in *Shane,*’ describes Joe Starrett as a “physically powerful man [who is] the first to take a gun against the Rykers, yet [who] has subordinated his masculine power for the sake of the community” (266). Costello uses as an example of this subordinated masculinity the fact that Joe holds “town-hall” meetings with the neighbors rather than deal with Ryker violently (266). Shane, quickly assessing the danger that the homesteaders face, stays to help, working as a hand for the Starrett family.

The actions and dialogue of Joe’s wife and son, Marian and Joey, highlight the representation of the ideal, white masculinity that Shane portrays. Marian wears drab clothes at the outset of the film but becomes more feminine and “made up” as the movie proceeds, indicating a desire that her husband didn’t previously produce. There is a clear sexual tension between her and the stranger. Some of the scenes are shot from her vantage point – looking out a window as both her husband and Shane work – with only Shane shirtless. One such scene is where Joe and Shane are furiously chopping the remains of a once large tree trunk. They are attempting to push the stump out of the ground. “As Shane and Joe push on it, the music swells and finally the tree gives and Ladd [the shirtless Shane] is pictured rolling over onto the top of the stump, as if were a woman he has conquered” (Bell-Metereau 95). Perhaps more important is the viewpoint of “Little Joey,” who wants to know from his father if he can shoot as good or fight as good as Shane. Joe doubts his ability in front of his own son, which might explain why Joey seeks to be taught how to shoot and how to draw a gun from Shane. Joey at one point even exclaims, “I love [Shane] almost as much as I love Pa.” Throughout the film, the title character fights the gang, either verbally or even in a barroom brawl, and provides some needed confidence for the homesteaders. His presence and skill (masculinity) spur Ryker to find a gunslinger of his own, Jack Wilson.

Though Shane is cast often in a positive light, and though the two gunslingers, Shane and Wilson, make an easier comparison, no two men in the film are more alike, however, than Ryker and Shane (Costello 268). For that matter, Costello makes valid points in the article previously mentioned. Costello points out that, while the Starretts and their neighbors have been granted a homestead by the government, Ryker has a government contract to provide beef to Indian reservations (264). Ryker, in other words,
has rights as well. Costello also praises Ryker for not just his individualism but also his entrepreneurial fortitude, which is described as the “pioneering spirit of American culture” (267). Furthermore, Ryker attempts to make peace with Joe Starrett as the head of the homesteaders, and even offers them and Shane jobs (264). So, even though Ryker was there first and fought the Indians, his reasonable attempt to end the fighting was rebuffed. As a pioneer who arrived early, who fought the Indians, and who remains there with government sanction, it is hard to disqualify Ryker’s argument that the land is his. Because it is obvious that Ryker would have defeated the homesteaders without help, it is clear that Shane’s presence pushed Ryker to violence. Furthermore, Ryker and Shane are the respective leaders of the two groups that disturb society, the first as the leader of a gang that disrupts the community and the second as one who “creates dysfunction within the nuclear family and thus [also] portrayed as a threat to the community” (Coyne 263). Ryker and Shane are, therefore, much like the two superpowers of the Cold War. The violence that they resort to not only defines the film but also causes angst, as the United States and the Soviet Union do on a global basis, for the community.

Once rebuffed, Ryker orders Wilson to bait one of the homesteaders, Stonewall Torrey, into drawing his gun. Wilson then shoots him. Determining that all the homesteaders will meet the same fate, Joe decides to go to town to fight the group, but Shane doesn’t allow it. Showing what perhaps is his true nature, Shane hits Joe in the head with the butt of his gun, knocking him out, and forcing Joey to see for the first time that Shane is not completely honorable. Shane takes Joe’s place in the fated fight with the gang. Little Joey has followed Shane to town and watches the shootout. Shane kills most of them, even Wilson. Costello, in equating Ryker’s violence with Shane’s, points out that “by killing Ryker, Shane has killed himself within the community” (269). With the gang gone due to his violent action, Shane sends Joey home and rides away. With a final nod to Shane’s masculine desirability, Joey screams “Come back . . . mother wants you. I know she does!”

Turner’s frontier individualism and toughness are strong themes of *Shane*. Whether as an “extraordinary individual” who saves a group who couldn’t save themselves (Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors* 148) or as the leader of a violent gang (Costello 265), *Shane’s* representation of masculinity is idealized as white. Michael
Coyne, author of *The Crowded Prairie*, describes Shane as the “perfect distillation of chivalric myth – the emissary of light and goodness” (75). And as emissary of “light and goodness,” Shane during the Cold War metaphorically serves as an ambassador for the United States and represents, through his white masculinity, democracy as juxtaposed to Ryker’s authoritarianism (76).

The immediate years following the release of *High Noon* and *Shane* are very important. As the Korean War, as a part of the larger Cold War, shaped the tenor of both political and popular culture, so did events in the war’s aftermath. For example, many American prisoners of war preferred to remain in “communist Asia” after the war (Eckstein, “Main Critical Issues” 10), thus adding to the Red Scare. The status quo ending of the war at a cost of over thirty-six thousand lives caused many to question the value of half-hearted war strategies. In fact, many hailed General Douglas MacArthur for his unmitigated desire to use the atomic bomb. Truman’s failure to use American strength to its atomic utmost, though through a historical lens now seems sensible, led to accusations of weakness. MacArthur, fired for publicly criticizing the President, was given a hero’s parade and an audience before a joint session of Congress. Also occurring after the Korean War was a resurgent Civil Rights movement. The landmark decision in the *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case of 1954 was followed by the victorious Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-1956. The tensions of the Cold War, the perceived failure of the Korean War, and the advances for America’s blacks resulted in a crisis of masculinity for white males in the late 1950s. In fact, “the failure of the United States to achieve a clear victory in Korea brought more hand-wringing about the questionable performance of American soldiers in this war” (Cuordileone 81). The “crisis of masculinity,” which will be discussed in detail later, founds its equivalent in a perceived “softness.” These themes are addressed and attacked in John Wayne’s *The Searchers* (1956).

How *The Searchers* combines messages of all-out combat related to the Korean War and the element of racism that is related to the Civil Rights movement will become apparent in the ensuing discussion. The script for the film was written soon after the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision and was filmed in the period between the *Brown* decision and the Montgomery Bus Boycott (Eckstein, “Main Critical Issues” 8). The
director, John Ford, adapted the film’s plot from a true story. That is the story of Cynthia Ann Parker, kidnapped in 1836 in Texas by Comanche Indians. Only nine years old at the time, Cynthia grew up, adopted the ways of the Indians, and married the chief, Peta Nacona. When Cynthia was found nearly thirty years later by the Texas Rangers during a raid, she refused to rejoin her white family (Blake 203-205). By that time, Cynthia had had three children with Peta Nacona, one of which was the famed Comanche warrior Quanah Parker (Soliz 79). Forced to return to white society, Cynthia Parker starved herself to death (79).

The opening shot of *The Searchers* begins with Ethan Edwards’ (John Wayne) return from the Civil War. Set in 1868, Ethan’s whereabouts in the three years between the war and his return to his brother Aaron’s ranch is not altogether clear, though it is hinted that he may have been in Mexico. Much like Shane, Ethan arrives as a loner and creates sexual tension with the film’s main female character, Aaron’s wife Martha. It is revealed through glances and Martha’s stroking of Ethan’s jacket that they were once probably intimate. In fact, Ethan picks up a teenage Debbie like a little child, giving the first hint that Debbie might actually be his and Martha’s child rather than his niece. Michael Blake, author of *Code of Honor*, discusses another scene where only Martha initially watches Ethan ride away to look for some stolen cattle:

“As she watches him disappear, Martha is joined by Debbie (dressed similar to her mother) and she draws the girl close to her. This shot, a familiar motif in the western in which the woman watches the man ride off, implies a connubial bond between Ethan and Martha. The inclusion of Debbie at her side, and mirroring her clothing, also strengthens the familial bond theory” (206).

While away, a Comanche raid results in the killing of the entire family except two girls, Lucy and Debbie. They were kidnapped, much like Cynthia Parker.

John Wayne’s character Ethan spends the rest of the movie chasing the Comanche who have kidnapped the two girls. The representation of Wayne’s masculinity is not tied to love or concern but to a visceral hatred of the Indians. He is especially concerned with finding Debbie before she can become old enough to have sex with the Indians. “The legendary toughness of the masculine Wayne hero is fully exposed as maniacal, replete
with the rot of racial hatred. The nature of the frontier ‘masculinity,’ repressed, celibate, and brutalized, is revealed (Mellen 227). In “What is a Western?: Politics and Self-Knowledge in John Ford’s The Searchers,” Robert Pippin writes that “there is a direct confrontation with the fact that the origin of the territorial U.S. rested on a virulent racism and genocidal war against aboriginal peoples” (227). Mellen’s quote on Ethan being “maniacal” in his intent on destroying the Comanche connects the character to the Cold War’s Douglas MacArthur’s unmitigated desire to destroy the North Koreans with an atomic bomb. Stanley Corkin agrees with this assessment, describing both MacArthur’s and Ethan’s quest as an “extraordinary individual’s obsession and megalomania” (Cowboys as Cold Warriors 149). Pippin also argues that Ethan’s virulent racism, as a nod to the ongoing Civil Rights movement, represents, along with my argument of the representation of white masculinity, the segregation of the races (237).

Though Pippin explores Ethan’s racism, other works that discuss this topic actually frame the film as an attack on white racism. Again, Ethan’s representation of white masculinity is depicted as “maniacal” in his hunt for the Comanche. Though the connection is not explicitly made to the Korean War, MacArthur was as maniacal in his advocacy for the use of the atomic bomb against another group of “brown-skinned” people. As a racist, Ethan is accompanied on the search by Martin, who is 1/8th Cherokee and the constant recipient of Ethan’s verbal abuse. Placing Martin in a moral light, Barry Keith Grant, author of “Movies and the Crack of Doom,” argues that Martin partners with Ethan “not to save Debbie from the Comanche but from Ethan, who intends to kill her because he believes that miscegenation will pollute Debbie beyond redemption” (165).

Early in the search, Ethan is joined by some Texas Rangers, headed by Captain Clayton. After Ethan shoots a dead Indian’s eyes out, Captain Clayton, also a preacher, asks “Why did you do that?” Ethan responds to the Ranger-by-day-preacher-by-night, “By what you preach . . . nothing. But by what the Comanche believe, now he can't enter the spirit land” (The Searchers). According to Michael Blake in Code of Honor, “Ethan is not only mocking Sam’s religious beliefs but also those of white civilization. He is saying that if society truly followed the words of the Bible, they would never take up arms against others” (212). This apparent attack on WASPish America, standing for both peace and atomic bombs, was echoed by Stanley Corkin, who succinctly connects the
lone individual’s representation of white masculinity in *High Noon* and *Shane* to the issue of racism in *The Searchers*:

“The Searchers develops a rather complicated concept of nation. Ethan Edwards occupies the same position in the narrative as Kane and Shane do in theirs – that of the outsider who can safeguard the fates of those who define the social core – but Ford makes him other than heroic. We have no doubt that the ‘Indians’ pose a threat to the white settlers, much as in Ford’s view Communists posed a threat to the citizens of the United States, but the film raises the question of whether in Ethan’s hate for his adversaries he has become their moral equivalent” (*Cowboys as Cold Warriors* 155).

On a mission at first to “save” Debbie from the Comanche Indians, Ethan later in the film discovers that she has become, mirroring Cynthia Parker, the chief’s wife.

The chief of the Comanche, Scar, is played by Henry Brandon, a welkin-eyed white man. According to commentary in the special features section that accompanies the DVD by Peter Bogdanovich, who interviewed both John Ford and John Wayne regarding the making of this film, casting a white man in the part of an Indian chief was just “part of the times.” However, there is more to it. Scar’s role is based on Quanah Parker, the real-life son of Cynthia Parker and Peta Nacona (Soliz 79). Further criticizing white racism, John Ford represents Scar’s initial violence against Aaron and Martha’s family as revenge for the murder of his two sons (74). Also, when Debbie is finally found by Ethan and Martin, she, like Quanah’s real-life mother, refuses to leave – a statement that she values Indian society over white society. Debbie’s acceptance of Scar as her husband infuriates the racist Ethan. In having sex with Debbie, who is dressed by this point like Martha, “Scar is fulfilling Ethan’s own fantasies” (Eckstein, “Main Critical Issues” 16). The issue of sex with people of another race comes back to haunt Ethan, however. Pretending to be a trader, Ethan taunts Scar by insinuating that his good command of the English language came by having sex with white women. Ethan sarcastically says, “You speak good American; someone teach ya?” Scar, represented as “civil and smart” (Soliz 89), brusquely responds, “You speak good Comanch; someone teach you?” (qtd. in Soliz 89). Scar, of course, is more than insinuating that Ethan has only simply just socialized with Comanche women.

26
Though Scar at the end of the film is killed and scalped, Ethan does not emerge as a hero. Deciding at the last minute not to kill Debbie and picking her up as a little child as he did at the beginning of the film, Ethan’s violence and racism exclude him from becoming a full member of the community. Again speaking to the Civil Rights Movement and the fears surrounding desegregation and miscegenation, John Ford allows the part-Cherokee Martin to marry his love interest, a white girl named Laurie, as a metaphor for Martin entering the community (Henderson 70). Ethan, however, is left standing on the front porch looking in to the family’s celebration of the marriage of Martin and Laurie. Arthur Eckstein argues that Ethan, shot from the inside of the house through a doorway, is being rebuked due to his racism (“Incest and Miscegenation” 199). Ethan’s representation of white masculinity is manifested in violence and, like Shane, could not return to the family, or, as Michael Blake puts it, “to civilization” (216).

The common theme for the films High Noon, Shane, and The Searchers is the need for security, an important message amid the angst of the Cold War. The western genre, which was “deeply embedded in a vision of U.S. history” (Corkin, Cowboys as Cold Warriors 3), allowed these films to serve as metaphors for the Cold War. By 1956, the year in which The Searchers was released, Cold War tensions had heightened after a period of relative lull that had followed the Korean War. Both the Suez crisis and the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution, resulting in the re-establishment of a Communist regime there, played out in the latter part of that year. Added concern and fear of inferiority also developed over Russian advances in missile technology and their launch of Sputnik the next year, resulting in U-2 spy flights over Russian airspace (Gaddis, Russia, The Soviet Union, and The United States 239). The reality, as Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis writes in We Now Know, was that the Soviet Union had nowhere the nuclear strength that we assumed. In fact, Nikita Khrushchev’s bluster and harsh rhetoric, though even further heightening Cold War tension, was an attempt to make up for a very real nuclear disadvantage (Gaddis, We Now Know 222). As a capstone to the 1950s, Cuban Revolutionary leader Fidel Castro ousted the American puppet, Fulgencio Batista, instituting what would become a Communist government only 90 miles off the coast of Florida, and another Communist movement, establishing itself as the Viet Cong in North Vietnam, formed late that year.
Along with these films, the condition of men – and their masculinity – reflected the turmoil of the Cold War in the years 1956 – 1959 as well. For example, Louis Lyndon wrote an article in 1956 in *Woman’s Home Companion* magazine entitled “The Paradox of the American Male.” Discussing how men had to move from violence and war to family and home, Lyndon writes, “There are certain deep and perfectly normal masculine drives that were ‘permitted’ during a war as they are not permitted in a suburban back yard” (qtd. in Cohan 34). K.A. Cuordileone, author of *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, agrees, stating that in the 1950s there was “a sense that the male self was so malleable and unstable in mass society that men were increasingly prone to relinquish masculinity altogether” (15). Cuordileone also discusses the fact that many believed during this era that homosexuality was a “flight from masculinity” (147), caused by external forces such as unemployment, affluence, and the competition of women (148). Perhaps the most relevant work was that of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., whose article “The Crisis of American Masculinity,” published in 1958, posed the question, “What has unmanned the American man?” (*The Politics of Hope* 240). Because the following statements are important in understanding the condition of masculinity during this era, I will provide some quotations at length. Examining the culture of the time, Schlesinger summarizes the contemporary mindsets of some:

“Women seem an expanding, aggressive force, seizing new domains like a conquering army, while men, more and more on the defensive, are hardly able to hold their own and gratefully accept assignments from their new rulers” (238).

Also, according to Schlesinger, the frontier “gave women the added value of scarcity,” resulting in their place of honor and further resulting in men being “psychologically disarmed” to the point of subjugation (240). Schlesinger, though claiming to write how others felt, half-heartedly agreed (241) with the following statement:

“Today they (women) hold the key positions of personal power in our society and use this power relentlessly to consolidate their mastery. As mothers, they undermine masculinity through the use of love as a technique of reward and punishment. As teachers, they prepare male children for their role of submission in an increasingly feminine world.
As wives, they complete the word of subjugation. Their strategy of conquest is deliberately to emasculate men” (240).

Though this brief summary on the condition of masculinity is relevant, it is Schlesinger’s final point that connects the Cold War to the representation of white masculinity in the films *High Noon*, *Shane*, and *The Searchers*. The key to a man retrieving his sense of masculinity, he states, is the ability “to visualize himself as an individual apart from the group” (244). The main figures in these films, using the western as its vehicle of representation, all co-opted the value of individualism that dates back to and forms the crux of Turner’s “frontier thesis.”

John Wayne, debatably the icon of the western as well as the ideal representation of the tough, rugged male, was well aware of the previously discussed Cold War events’ impact on the state of masculinity. “Arguably, in 1960 John Wayne, in light of the launching of *Sputnik*, the Berlin Crisis, and the looming crisis in Southeast Asia, saw his film *The Alamo* as a direct intervention in the national culture” (Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors* 166). Wayne, who produced, directed, starred in, and took out personal loans to finance a film that he saw as an allegory for the Cold War, believed the United States needed to rescue the world from despotism much like it supposedly saved Texas from Mexico’s dictatorship in 1848. He believed that the same issues were at stake (166). Corkin explains further:

“Wayne’s Texas becomes much like the Hungary of the fifties or Vietnam in the fifties and sixties in the imagination of U.S. conservatives – nations made up of freedom-loving people, much like Americans, who need to be rescued from despotism in order to benefit from free markets and Christianity” (196).

Wayne, not surprisingly, failed to ask the Hungarians or the Vietnamese for their opinions and desires much like the Americans failed to ask for Mexico’s input in 1848. *The Alamo*, finally, as Wayne’s defense of masculinity during increasingly tense Cold War years, depicts “unmitigated white racial superiority” (200).

*The Alamo* is full of contradictions, and does not represent history either completely or accurately. Even though the film salutes “brave Americans defending freedom” (Coyne 105), “little mention is ever made that these Texans were also deeply
racist, embraced and endorsed and practiced slavery, granted franchise only to land-
owing white males, and systematically dispossessed Mexican-Americans of legally held
lands after independence was won” (Anderson 157). It is clear that Wayne had political
motivations in his representation of white masculinity in The Alamo. For example, as an
icon of the genre, one would think that he would appreciate High Noon, yet this is not the
case. He hated the film, stating “The most un-American thing I have ever seen in my
whole life. I’ll never regret having helped Foreman out of the country” (Hyams 125-
126). Americans as represented by the townspeople, Wayne believed, would never
refuse an honorable fight (126). Wayne’s political response to High Noon at a time of
crisis in American masculinity came in both Rio Bravo (1959) and The Alamo (1960).
The Alamo, which Wayne viewed as the “quintessential American story” since it
depicted, once again in line with Turner, individuals fighting for freedom (Corkin,
Cowboys as Cold Warriors 185), merits a more detailed discussion.

The representation of white masculinity in The Alamo is pertinent mostly due to
Wayne’s many roles in the finished product. According to a documentary that
accompanies the film, he personally selected most of the cast, which means that having
only one black character – the meek slave Jethro – by default highlighted, as Stuart Hall
would agree, the remaining and intended (white) characters of Sam Houston, Jim Bowie,
William Travis, and, of course, Wayne’s Davey Crockett. Because the plot of the film is
well-known and rather simple, more discussion should involve Wayne’s use of The
Alamo as a vehicle for conservative messages through the image of the white, masculine
male. His positions as producer, director, and star enabled him to send the messages of
his choosing, of course.

The opening script, thus setting the stage for Wayne’s political comparison of
Mexico as a modern-day Soviet Union, declares that Mexico is under the “tyrannical
rule” (The Alamo) of President Santa Anna (Khrushchev). Davey Crockett (Wayne)
further asserts that the fight is over tyranny, being manifested in their lack of rights in the
Mexican courts and their inability to trade with the North. These rights are so important
that the white Americans remain to fight even though Santa Anna’s march north toward
them with a staggering numerical supremacy means their certain death. Wayne,
however, makes this, as a political analogy of the dangers of communism, apply much
wider than to the local community (an American city), the Republic of Texas (a state), or even to the nation (the United States) – the fight also seems to be for the Mexican people themselves (the Russian people). He accomplishes this through the words of Jim Bowie, who, having a Mexican wife, describes the Mexican people as “courageous” and “dignified.” For whatever reason, nevertheless, that courage and dignity had not developed into democracy and freedom for the Mexican people. Corkin explains this lack of political evolution by stating that . . .

“[racism] is at the heart of this film’s highly paternalistic view of foreign relations, that is, necessary and potentially valuable associations between Americans and their darker, less developed neighbors. The Alamo offers no apology for the dominance of the gringos. They are in charge because they have seen the ideological light. But that ideological light seems very much a matter of their whiteness” (Cowboys as Cold Warriors 189).

The point is that The Alamo is an allegory so that communists could be shown the ideological light by the United States. It is also important that this is a community of fighters who stay to fight to an assured death. Wayne’s dislike of the depiction of Americans in High Noon made certain that everyone, when asked to fight against Santa Ann’s (communism’s) tyranny, stayed even when they had the chance to leave.

By being so fascinated with the politics of the day to the point of investing much of his personal fortune making The Alamo, John Wayne had no idea that the film, which painted the United States as enlightened, would also point forward to “America’s ideological commitment, as a redeemer nation, to the Vietnam Conflict” (Coyne 105-106). And no one had any idea how the events of the early 1960s would shape not just the rest of Cold War diplomatic relations but also the western genre itself. The period after the release of The Alamo involved not only the inauguration of a new President, John F. Kennedy, but that new president’s chaotic first year of office. President Kennedy enjoyed no honeymoon period, as he presided over the botched Bay of Pigs invasion in April and witnessed the beginning of the construction of the Berlin Wall in August. By October, the Soviets had detonated the most powerful nuclear weapon ever, which was nicknamed the “Tsar Bomba,” and was estimated to have been 3000 times more powerful than the device dropped on Hiroshima (LaFeber 225). The advances of the Soviet Union
in this arena had enabled them to acquire a nuclear arsenal capable of hitting both Europe and the United States (Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States* 247).

The representation of white masculinity in early 1960s film came in part as a result of a conservatism that continued to envelope the film industry. Stephen Prince, author of *Visions of Empire*, contends that a legacy of the McCarthy period for Hollywood was the tendency to avoid controversial subjects (120). This meant, cinematically speaking, a return to World War II or other military-related films and the safety that those films meant in terms of both patriotism and revenue. Some of the most profitable films from 1960-1962 were *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), *The Longest Day* (1962), *How the West was Won* (1962), and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) (Belton 285). Prince fails to recognize, however, that 1962, in the very midst of the Cold War, was a watershed year for the western and its representation of white masculinity.

Much of Hollywood was attempting to maintain a “wholesome” and “patriotic” image of its industry with the production of military-related films. By 1962, however, the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, the building of the Berlin Wall, and the Cuban Missile Crisis had escalated Cold war tensions to unprecedented levels. The western as a genre responded to this by becoming more ironic and self-critical. Three films in particular, all released in 1962, follow this model. *Ride the High Country* depicts aging cowboys who race camels rather than horses. *Lonely are the Brave* includes automobiles and toilets, anachronisms which mock the cowboy, or the “West” even existing in 1962 (Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors* 208, 214). But more important to this study is *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), a film which attacks the very foundation on which the myths and traditions of the West is built.

*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* begins with the return of Ranse Stoddard, played by James Stewart, and his wife, Hallie, to Shinbone to attend the funeral of their friend, Tom Doniphon, played by John Wayne. Upon arrival, Stoddard, now a famous United States Senator, is questioned by a newspaper reporter as to why he would attend the funeral of an unknown person. The film then goes into a prolonged flashback as a means of explaining Stoddard’s and Doniphon’s friendship. Since this flashback is told from Stoddard’s perspective, the story begins with his long ago arrival as a young lawyer. That entrance nearly meant his death, as the vagrant Liberty Valance beat him and threw
down his law books, sneering “I’ll teach you law – western law!” (*Liberty Valance*). Valance is a man of the frontier and, therefore, a man of violence. On the other hand, knowing law only in a classroom, “all [Stoddard] has are words and what good are they in a world of deeds? The frontier covets action” (Anderson 60-61). Severely injured, Stoddard is found by Doniphon and the latter takes the new arrival to town to recuperate.

The juxtaposition of the representation of Stoddard’s masculinity to Valance’s is stark. After his recovery, Stoddard shows his appreciation to his caretakers by helping cook, wash dishes, and waiting on tables, which indicates to Mark Anderson, author of *Cowboy Imperialism and Hollywood Film*, that he is “fully emasculated” (61). He is more interested in teaching Hallie, who helped nurse him back to health, to read. He even refuses to buy or carry a gun to defend himself, instead resting on the law in hopes of imprisoning his enemy. Valance, conversely, continues to kill and harass the town without fear of the very law that Stoddard trusts. He even publicly mocks Stoddard for his “femininity.” Valance’s motivation, as a pawn for the powerful cattle ranchers, is to intimidate the people into electing him as a delegate to the state convention so that cattle interests are served.

There is in this film, moreover, a third representation of masculinity – that of John Wayne’s. Tom Doniphon understands the necessity of violence on the frontier and encourages Stoddard to get a gun, telling him that “out here a man settles his own problems” (*Liberty Valance*). Doniphon is also every bit Liberty Valance’s match. Yet, he is not a vagabond or a killer. In fact, he is vying for Hallie’s love, building an extra room on his house for her, and just waiting for the best time to tell her. It is even Tom himself who calls to order the rambunctious meeting that will elect the two delegates to the territorial convention, though he hands the gavel over to Stoddard and eventually turns down his own nomination. Joan Mellen, in *Big Bad Wolves*, aptly describes the three forms of competing white masculinity in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Liberty Valance is “the outlaw, unrestrained and brutish” (258). Ranse Stoddard is “the lawyer, who lives by intellect and reason and law” (258). Tom Doniphon is “Valance’s match . . . but he doesn’t get credit” (259). It is very ironic that Stoddard’s character, represented as a weakling, was played by someone who won the Distinguished Cross during World War II while Doniphon’s avoided the war altogether (Kirkwood 38).
The attack on the western genre and on the frontier mythology comes at the end of the film when the three masculinities converge at a shootout, although only two of the figures are seen on film at first. Finally agreeing to accept Valance’s challenge to a duel, Stoddard kills him, thereby becoming “the man who shot Liberty Valance.” Having won election to the previously mentioned territorial convention, his hero status propels that gathering to nominate him to the national convention, where statehood will be decided. Stoddard, though, does not want to capitalize on his shooting of Valance. This is when Tom informs him that it was actually he, hiding from a distance, who really shot and killed Liberty Valance. Another flashback scene confirms this as true. Nonetheless, everyone believed it was Stoddard – even Hallie, who has fallen in love with her “hero.”

When Stoddard’s prolonged flashback that began the film has ended, he has admitted to the newspaperman that his eventual election as Governor and Senator, his service as an ambassador, and the possibility that he will be the next Vice President of the United States were all built on a lie. The reporter’s boss destroys the notes, refusing to correct the myth, stating “This is the West. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.”

Turner’s frontier as a place of individualism and honor had, by 1962, become represented in film, especially in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, as a place of distorted reality. Corkin marks 1962 as the “end of the full flowering of the western” (*Cowboys as Cold Warriors* 2). Coyne declares that 1962 meant the equivalent for the western what 1890 meant for the frontier – its closing (106). Even John Ford, the prominent director of *Liberty Valance*, knew it. Ford filmed this motion picture “largely . . . indoors as his last major statement on white America’s frontier civilization” (107).

The standing, then, of the representation of white masculinity in the western genre came into question as well.

Though cowboy films came under attack, the mythological power of the frontier was still politically expedient. President Kennedy, by coining the phrase “New Frontier,” used the symbolism of the frontier as a call to arms during tense Cold War years. K.A. Cuordileone, in *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, offers this assessment:

“The New Frontier was more than a metaphor for potential avenues of American exploration and conquest. It promised to reinvigorate the nation
with the spirit of courage, adventure, daring, and self-sacrifice that its would-be leader personified. Its resonance and power. . . lay in a new vision of masculinity, nourished by the postwar crisis of self. . . and come to life in the figure of John F. Kennedy” (168-169).

Cuordileone’s use of Kennedy as the embodiment of a new masculinity apparently refers only to rhetoric and not a physical image, for Kennedy himself, presented with a new Stetson hat by the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce on the last day of his life, declined to wear it and, therefore, “refused to play cowboy” (Coyne 1).

American involvement in Vietnam escalated after the assassination of Kennedy. Texan Lyndon B. Johnson easily gathered Congressional support for a dramatic troop increase after the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, in which two American vessels were attacked by the North Vietnamese. Mark Anderson argues, however, that involvement in Vietnam was irresistible since it was “all frontier: full of savages, amok with pagans, glistening with economic opportunity, [and] portending strategic importance” (Cowboy Imperialism and Hollywood Film 42). Anderson, possibly unbeknownst to him, is echoing the very prediction of Frederick Jackson Turner himself. Writing in 1896, Turner published an article entitled “The Problem of the West” in Monthly Review in which he forecasts America’s continued expansion and intervention:

“That these energies of expansion will no longer operate would be a rash prediction; and the demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon the seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries, are indications that the movement will continue” (qtd. in Faragher 74).

The problem that Hollywood faced during Vietnam that it hadn’t faced before was a growing anti-war sentiment. Hollywood’s representation of white masculinity after 1962 and into the complicated Vietnam War faced an impasse from which it struggled to recover.

John Wayne, the ultimate hero and potentially ideal representation of white masculinity in the western, did not sit idly by and watch the genre face decline. Turning to the theme of the United States as a “redeemer nation” as he had in The Alamo, Wayne, with the help of the Pentagon, starred in the only major film about the Vietnam War that
was actually made during the war itself. *The Green Berets* (1968), though not a traditional western, can be included in this discussion since Vietnam is an extension of the frontier concept – and since many conventions of the frontier were used. Anderson describes the western as “morphing into a caterpillar and [taking] wing as something [different]” (*Cowboy Imperialism and Hollywood Film* 91), which in this case was a war film. The film was released in one of the most tumultuous years in recent American history. That one year witnessed massive Vietnam War protests, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy, a chaotic Democratic Convention, and a sitting President, Lyndon Johnson, who refused to run for reelection due to his bungling of the war.

Despite the war’s unpopularity, Wayne refused to budge from the formula of white masculinity that had been so pivotal to his career. He combined ultra-patriotism, contempt for the media, and a sense of Manifest Destiny in *The Green Berets*. Wayne was portrayed as “Captain America, a hero undivided in his loyalties and emotions, and indestructible in his encounters with the enemy (Anderegg, “Hollywood and Vietnam” 19). The film, following Wayne’s belief that Americans opposed the war because they were led by the propaganda of a cynical and unpatriotic press (Belton 252), included a skeptical journalist. This is very ironic, considering Wayne’s role in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, since it is the media in that film which hides truth and promulgates the legend of the frontier. In *The Green Berets*, he used the media (film) as a tool of propaganda. Thus, film as media is now a tool for the very propaganda that happened.

Like *The Alamo*, *The Green Berets* has a simple plot. Obviously, the focus was gathering popular support for an unpopular war. The film opens at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with Wayne, playing the role of Colonel Mike Kirby, delivering a presentation on the Vietnam War. He offers proof of Russian involvement in the form of confiscated weapons. His speech is nationalistic and emotional. The reporter, George Beckworth, is unmoved and skeptical. Harkening back to the townspeople who refused to help the sheriff in *High Noon*, Beckworth represents the “doves,” both in the media and the citizenry, of the late 1960s. After travelling to South Vietnam with the Green Berets and witnessing the “good deeds” and honorable service of the American soldiers and, conversely, the atrocities committed by the Vietnamese, Beckworth comes to support the
war. Beckworth, then, becomes like the reporter in *Liberty Valance* in his support nurturing a legend, however false it might be.

*The Green Berets*, like so many of Wayne’s films, juxtaposed his representation of white masculinity to the relegated roles of women and minorities. Furthermore, Wayne’s paternalistic concern for a Vietnamese orphan, supposedly proof of American “goodness,” is joined with women as being objects of desire and Viet Cong officers as being objects of a hunt (Berg 54). Consistent with the comparison of Vietnam to the frontier, the American base of operations in this film was nicknamed “Dodge City,” cowboy hats were worn, and the Vietnamese “whooped” like Native Americans during a battle (Cawley 74-75). All Wayne did was create a western in Vietnam. Furthermore, the Americans, or rather white American soldiers, were the “good” guys while the Vietnamese were the “bad” guys. The political meaning of *The Green Berets*, whose propaganda will be discussed further in Chapter 4, would not go unanswered.

John Wayne was accustomed to being in the driver’s seat in the western genre. He had the support of Hollywood, American moviegoers, and the government. His perch atop the film industry allowed him to voice his political inclinations, as was the case in *The Alamo* and *The Green Berets*. The Cold War by 1968, however, had created a whole new mindset in much of the United States. Wayne’s attempts to glorify a government and a military whose support was on the wane (pun intended) would no longer meet instant approval. Though *The Green Berets* was commercially successful, critics lampooned it. Writing in 1968, Roger Ebert’s review of the film opened with the following statement:

“The Green Berets simply will not do as a film about the war in Vietnam. It is offensive not only to those who oppose American policy but even to those who support it. At this moment in our history, locked in the longest and one of the most controversial wars we have ever fought, what we certainly do not need is a movie depicting Vietnam in terms of cowboys and Indians. That is cruel and dishonest and unworthy of the thousands who have died there” (http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19680626/REVIEW S/806260301/1023).
Explaining Ebert’s contempt for the use of the frontier in a Vietnam War film, Anderson states that it was almost as if Hollywood, “intuiting America’s mood, suddenly awoke and thought, well, you know, these damn cowboy-killing-Indian movies are just plain stupid, maybe even offensive” (Cowboy Imperialism and Hollywood Film 91). The western’s simplistic depiction of complex Cold War tensions was no longer sufficient. The nuclear arms race, the rise of China as a world power, and a boiling anti-war movement caused the 1960’s to end in a societal explosion. In 1969, the simplicity of the western’s representation of ideal masculinity faced a serious cinematic assault.

A scathing attack on white masculinity and a mockery of the western as a tool for nationalistic propaganda came in 1969 with Midnight Cowboy. “Midnight Cowboy . . . is not in any obvious way part of the Western genre proper, [but] its interrogation of the myth of the frontier takes a rather different form” (Floyd 106) than any of the films previously discussed. Its importance in this discussion lies in its challenge to both the frontier mythology as well as to white, heterosexual masculinity. Wayne is a special target of the criticism. In the last scene of The Searchers as he is denied entry into the community, Wayne holds his right elbow with his left hand, supposedly a tribute to his mentor. On Midnight Cowboy’s promotional posters, Jon Voight, who plays Joe Buck, does the same thing. The play on images – and the film itself, going back to Hall – is indicative of the cultural turmoil surrounding very tense Cold War years. This movie represents white masculinity as a farce, tying in elements of homosexuality. The fact that it is the first X-rated film to win the Oscar for the year’s Best Picture is the nail in the coffin of the western’s capability to seriously represent masculinity unabated. Indicative of the times, the same night Wayne won the Oscar for Best Actor for his role in True Grit. Kevin Floyd, author of “Closing the (Heterosexual Frontier): Midnight Cowboy as National Allegory,” addresses these awards as indicative of the waning influence of the cowboy as a representative of white masculinity:

“The Academy’s presentation of statuettes to Wayne and to Midnight Cowboy on the same evening might appear in retrospect as a gesture that, simultaneously and paradoxically, endorses and honors the idealized, masculine, imperial narrative Wayne represented, and lays that narrative symbolically, sentimentally to rest” (101).
Since Wayne’s award that night was considered by many to be a sentimental one (100), based on his entire career rather than on the quality of one performance, *Midnight Cowboy’s* role in symbolically and finally closing a cinematic frontier that began in 1962 cannot be understated.

Frederick Jackson Turner’s professional focus on the importance of the West had profound effects. He was famous for stating in his “frontier thesis” that it was “to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics – that coarseness of strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness” (Anderson, *Cowboy Imperialism and Hollywood Film* 61). This is in addition to the previously discussed aspects of individualism and toughness. Although that theory had shaped nearly a century of popular culture in the form of novels and cinema, the Cold War discredited it. By 1969, the “traits upon which masculinity [had] historically been based (aggression, competition, ego, dominance) [were] named . . . a source of immense mischief in the world” (Cuordileone 237-238). *Midnight Cowboy,* then, further illustrated the crisis of masculinity that had begun to develop in the 1950s.

*Midnight Cowboy’s* Joe Buck is a simple-minded young man from rural Texas who quits his job at a diner to move to New York City. Nearly everything in the opening scenes of the film derides both Turner and Wayne. Joe lives in a hotel rather than on the frontier’s ranch. He has no cattle, but does have luggage with the black and white spots of a dairy cow. Leaving the hotel with his luggage on the way to quit his job, he passes by a movie theatre. “Still dangling from the marquee are most but not all of the letters that once invited spectators to see a Western that is clearly no longer playing – J HN AYNE THE A AMO – and that now suggest, intertextually, the anachrony of Wayne’s jingoism” (Floyd 109). Furthermore, Joe is dressed in a ridiculous cowboy outfit – the kind that children wear, tassels and all. Mellen, in *Big Bad Wolves,* states that “only a male insecure in his masculinity would need to deck himself out in the manner of the Old West, a packaged formula historically assumed by males in doubt of their male identity” (289). Joe Buck seems confused, indeed, as he takes a bus to New York City, itself a mockery of the frontiersmen who rode wagons westward.

While Turner hailed the effects of the West on the American character, the heading of Joe Buck to New York City portends the effects on his masculinity. As a
symptom of his frail sense of male identity, Joe hopes to become rich by hiring himself out as a male prostitute to the city’s wealthy women by enticing them with the image of a cowboy. “But Joe quickly discovers, to his dismay, the cowboy image’s largely exclusive appeal to gay men: for Joe, the city is a disorienting – and homosexualizing – environment” (Floyd 102). A man that he meets, Ratso Rizzo, played by Dustin Hoffman, confirms this by stating “No rich lady with any class at all buys that cowboy crap anymore.” As Floyd points out, Joe “defensively sputters: ‘John Wayne! You’re gonna tell me he’s a fag?!’” (111). The analysis of the state of the cowboy’s masculinity came from a homeless, petty thief like Ratso. Yet, Ratso’s judgment eventually rings true, as Joe nearly starves from lack of work. He does eventually have sex with who he figures to be a rich woman, but instead of paying him she takes his money! Broke, dejected and homeless, Joe is forced to hire himself out to a very young, homosexual male. After engaging in oral sex in a movie theater, the young man admits he has no money. Still broke, Joe pawns his radio.

Central to Midnight Cowboy’s plot is Joe’s friendship with Ratso. This important male-male relationship is similar to the importance of male-male friendships in traditional westerns, except that this friendship becomes more and more homosexualized as the movie develops. John Wayne throughout his film career was known for having younger men in lesser roles who he helped (in the movie) to become “men.” This is true with Matt in Red River (1948), Martin in The Searchers (1956), Dude in Rio Bravo (1959), and Smitty in The Alamo (1960). Yet the caricature of Wayne in Midnight Cowboy, Joe Buck, learns the fallacy of the frontier myth from a homeless con man. The two engage in petty crime together to survive. By the end of the film, Joe’s concern, and one could argue love for Ratso, is very strong. Ratso, whose worsening cough displays a serious health condition, wants to go to Miami in hopes that the weather will make him better. Joe agrees, beating up a man – not out of Wayne’s concept of honor – but out of a need to steal money for the bus tickets. On the way, Ratso urinates on himself, with the now-caretaker Joe consoling him. Ratso dies on the bus, never making it to Miami, while Joe, by the end of the film, has thrown his cowboy outfit into a garbage can. This movie placed in that same garbage can the western as a genre and its representation of white masculinity.
The representation of white masculinity underwent a tremendous transformation during the first two decades of the Cold War. *High Noon*’s Will Kane was the heroic sheriff while *Midnight Cowboy*’s Joe Buck was the homeless bisexual. Shane saved the Starrett family while Ratso Rizzo just stole. John Wayne played the patriot in both *The Alamo* and *The Green Berets* despite also presaging and conjoining the lies of the Vietnam War with that of the frontier mythology in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. What is left after two decades of Cold War film is not the idealization of white masculinity in the form of a sheriff or patriot or even in its disparaging in the form of a bisexual or a thief – it’s just men.
CHAPTER 2
FROM BRITISH EMPIRE TO BRITISH IMPOTENCE

In addition to the western and the cowboy, the Cold War era spy film is also fundamental to examine for its representations of white masculinity. This chapter, therefore, will focus on the figure of James Bond. Though an English creation both in print and film, James Bond fits into the wider Hollywood style and genre for many reasons. First, as Vivian Halloran discusses in her article “Tropical Bond,” James Bond, having a Scottish father and Swedish mother, is “whiter than he is British” (163). Other scholars, including Tony Bennett and Janet Woolacott, authors of Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero, argue that James Bond’s role was as “an exemplary representative of the virtues of Western capitalism triumphing over the evils of Eastern Communism” (25). This, Bennett and Woolacott continue, made Bond more of a NATO representative than a strictly British one (99). Moreover, the shear scope of the Bond production budgets and the popularity of the films at the box office, combined with its political messages, further cement James Bond into the Hollywood genus. In addition, the audience who viewed the Bond movies was expecting a “traditional” Hollywood experience. Thus, the Bond films follow the big budget movies of Hollywood. For example, the first Bond film, Dr. No (1962), cost nearly one millions dollars to produce, an amount that would multiply by a factor of six for the series’ films of the late 1960s and 1970s (Chapman 60). Regarding the popularity of the Bond films, it is estimated that half the people in the world have seen a James Bond movie, “ensuring that billions of people have viewed an image of global struggle through western eyes” (Black xiii). Finally, John Bronson, author of James Bond in the Cinema, compares the Bond films to that most American of film genres, the western:

“In many ways the Bond films are like westerns dressed up in modern clothes. As with westerns there is a similar simplicity of plot . . . Good and Evil are easy to identify. The black hat of the western is mirrored by the blatant grotesqueness of the Bond villain, while Bond himself is the contemporary Western hero, solving all his problems, despite living in our over-civilized, complicated world, with his fists and a gun” (11).
Much like the representation of white masculinity as portrayed by Shane in the film of the same name or even by Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) in *The Searchers*, James Bond’s representation of ideal white masculinity placed him on the fringes of law and lawlessness in a world filled with Cold War tensions. That representation can be explained through a discussion of the history that immediately preceded Bond’s cinematic creation.

In the immediate years that followed World War II, Britain still enjoyed a worldwide empire. In 1947, the “Union Jack still flew over more than a quarter of the human race” (Booker 85). The infrastructural and economic damages of the war, however, had taken its toll. The empire was barely able to keep up with its own debts and had, as a sign of its gradual weakening, to renege on a $250 million pledge to the United States’ plan to assist in the rebuilding of Greece and Turkey (LaFeber 43). Not even Soviet Premier Josef Stalin, an otherwise usually shrewd political observer, understood the degree of Britain’s waning influence. The inevitable war between the capitalist powers that he assumed would happen never did, as the extent of Britain’s decline created a position of near servitude to America’s ascendancy (Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 196). Two international events in particular, one secret at the time and the other internationally known, illustrate the degree of Britain’s decline.

In the early 1950s, Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh attempted to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Mossadegh offered Britain 25% of the net profits and guaranteed both the safety and employment of any British citizen who remained behind to work. He further guaranteed a steady supply of oil (Blum 65). Having previously received 100% of the profits, Britain responded with a blockade. The details of what happened next were made public in a leaked news story by the *New York Times* in only 2000. As a result of that story, the Central Intelligence Agency declassified and released the particulars of “Operation Ajax,” the codename for the operation that ousted Mossadegh from power in August of 1953. According to one of those documents, titled “Initial Operational Plan for TPAJAX,” the British Secret Intelligence Service (commonly called MI6), as a sign of a weakening Britain’s inability to act unitarily, partnered with the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency to develop and carry out the coup. The plan shows that the CIA provided a majority of the funding.
Furthermore, having already gained the cooperation of the head of Iran’s military, General Fazlollah Zahedi, it would be an American representative – not a British one – who would meet with the Shah to gain his support. Britain and the United States took advantage of Cold War tensions by using as a pretext for the coup Mossadegh’s supposedly, and probably falsely, communist leanings. To cover all bases, though, accusations of communist leanings were coupled with the bribery of religious leaders, parliamentary leaders, and even the media. In an effort to conceal involvement, the CIA and SIS hired Iranians to pose as the Tudeh (Iranian communists). These masquerading Tudeh destroyed mosques and pro-Mossadegh businesses. As a result of Britain’s inability to carry out the coup alone, American corporations received 40% of Iran’s oil profits in the overthrow’s aftermath – the same as British corporations. Though the operation displayed British weakness, it was a secret operation that did not illustrate that weakness on a world stage. That would not be the case with the Suez Canal crisis.

By 1956, the year of the Suez crisis, the United States’ perception of England as an equal partner in the Cold War had eroded. John Dumbrell, author of *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After*, agrees, pointing out that President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles only considered “the British relationship as one relationship among many.” The lack of equal standing between the two former Allies caused both the lack of communication and cooperation during this international Cold War crisis, resulting in Britain becoming internationally embarrassed. Dumbrell declares that “the Suez Crisis represented a major break in the development of the ‘special relationship,’” something that is later cinematically represented with the juxtaposition of MI6’s James Bond and his sophisticated, almost royal, masculinity versus the CIA’s bumbling Felix Leiter.

In the first days of 1956, news reports assessing Middle East politics warned of the impending danger to Britain’s prestige. An article in the *New York Times* on January 5th describes Communist military aid to Egypt, the Communist-led training of those weapons, and the seemingly prophetic “blow to British prestige” that was to come. Like the situation in Iran, however, tensions between England and Egypt further heightened not so much over Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s
connections to Russia and China than over the proposed loss or shifting of British corporate profits. On June 7, 1956, Egypt announced that it would no longer permit the Suez Canal Company, an Egyptian company owned mainly by British and French interests, to divert its reserves out of the country. According to *The New York Times*, the Suez Canal Company would be forced to invest nearly $60 millions dollars “in Egyptian industries, banks, and short-term national loans” (“Egypt Will Receive Suez Canal Funds” 36). This was a part of Nasser’s building program and was in conjunction with his plan of using the proceeds from the tolls of the Suez Canal to construct the electric-generating and flood-controlling Aswan Dam on the Nile. That plan initially met not only British and American support but also British and American pledges to assist in the construction of the Aswan Dam. That support encouraged Nasser to seek funding from the United Nations’ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (“Nasser Asks U.S. Speed Aswan Bid” 2). A June 22nd *Times* news piece offered one of the first explanations of American hesitance:

> “Western offers to help finance the High Dam have not been withdrawn, but it was obvious that the United States and Britain had been stalling on final negotiation of their offer. The hesitation originated in the growing Western concern as to whether Premier Nasser was a good risk in light of his nationalist attacks on Britain and his so-called neutralist dealing with the Soviet Bloc” (2).

Printed only a month before the apex of the crisis, this article also describes American and British refusal to lend financial assistance to Egypt if the Soviets also provided part of the funding. In light of the Cold War, any connection to the Soviets was a deal-breaker. Eventually, nonetheless, both England and the United States withdrew hundreds of millions of dollars in pledged support for the dam, citing Egypt’s inability to carry out the project successfully on a long-term basis as well as declaring their displeasure with the nation’s weapons purchases from Communist nations (“No to Nasser” E1).

The next phase of the Suez Crisis came to a head on July 26, 1956 when President Nasser nationalized the canal, declaring that its profits would be used, in the wake of the British and American turnabouts, to build the Aswan Dam. Even on the first day of the crisis “British officials were said to believe that any counter-action would have to be
taken in close collaboration with the United States” (“British Stunned at Suez Seizure” 2). According to John Dumbrell, Britain assumed such American support because of Egypt’s connections to communist nations (47). What British Prime Minister Anthony Eden did not consider, however, was that 1956 in the United States was a presidential election year. President Eisenhower’s belief that the joint British/French attack (Israel also attacked in an independent yet simultaneous manner) on Egypt was both “misconceived and mistimed” (47) led him to condemn all three aggressors. The apex of the crisis, then, and in line with Eisenhower’s concern over “timing,” was that the military operations began a week before his re-election. In a televised speech to the nation, Eisenhower, whether as diplomat or candidate, offered the following rebuke:

“We believe these actions to have been taken in error, for we do not accept the use of force as a wise or proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes . . . there will be no United States involvement in these present hostilities” (“Text of Eisenhower Broadcast on the Mideast Crisis” 14).

Eden’s assumption of American support led to failure, as Britain, France, and Israel all withdrew in favor of a United Nations force. Humiliated, Eden resigned from office a mere two months later (“Eden Resigns” 1).

The necessity of this discussion on the Suez Crisis is that it profoundly humiliated Britain on the world stage. James Chapman states that England “was no longer militarily or economically capable of acting independently to protect its strategic interests without the support of the United States of America” (38). Robert Hewison’s *In Anger: British Culture in the Cold War, 1945-1960* strikingly states that the Suez Crisis was “the moment when Britain had to come to terms with her second-class status in the world, though this truth was only gradually appreciated (127). Still another historian describes England as simply “tired” (Spanier 32). The slipping of British stature, indicated by Eden’s disgraced resignation and corroborated by later scholars, eventually influenced the cinematic creation of James Bond, whose representation of masculinity would metaphorically rehabilitate and re-establish England’s role as a first-rate power.

Though the cinematic James Bond did not come into existence until 1962, the James Bond of the novel “was born at Goldeneye [the Jamaican home of author Ian
Fleming] on the morning of the third Tuesday of January, 1952” (Pearson 167). According to John Cork and Bruce Scivally, authors of *James Bond: The Legacy*, Fleming was motivated to create James Bond after two well-educated and elite British diplomats, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess, disappeared (12). Later proven to be spies for the Soviets, authors Cork and Scivally state that Maclean and Burgess disappeared after having received information from an informant that their roles were about to be revealed (12). James Chapman characterizes this event and others as “embarrassing revelations of moles in the British intelligent services [that] fatally weakened the prestige of the real-life equivalent of Fleming’s fictional secret service” (38). Consistent with a weakening Britain, its failures extended, then, from the inability of its secret service to keep information from about-to-be-caught traitors in the Maclean and Burgess affair to internationally embarrassing events like the Suez Crisis.

Fleming was a former spy himself, yet one whose service as a bureaucratic staff officer rather than an active secret agent frustrated him (Lycett 223). Basing the James Bond of the novels on various figures with whom he worked (223), Fleming wrote the novels for at least several reasons that are connected to the Cold War. First, according to Chapman, he wrote the novels to allay British concerns over their diminishing presence in the Cold War (33). In writing the novels, Fleming stroked the egos of his fellow countrymen by placing Britain, whose stature had, again, been in decline, as the leader of the West. Even though the relationship between the United States and Britain was a strategic partnership in which the United States took the leading role, as evidenced by the U.S.’s nuclear leadership as well as eventually evident in the Suez Crisis, the Bond novels and films, in an obvious fit of nationalistic pride, portray the Central Intelligence Agency’s Felix Leiter as bumbling and insignificant while Bond is charming, cultured, and sexy. According to Jeremy Black in *The Politics of James Bond: From Fleming’s Novels to the Big Screen*, “Bond was a conduit through whom Fleming explored [this] ambivalent relationship between a declining Britain and an ascendant United States” (xii). Second, after years of stark and depressed economics, Fleming wanted to flaunt England’s new wealth, thereby sustaining national pride through a spy who wore tailored suits and tuxes, knew the year of wine by taste, favored Beluga caviar and vodka martinis, had a gadget for every perceivable adventure, had sex with beautiful women,
and who always completed the mission successfully (35). This representation of the cultured, snobbish spy is a hallmark of the Bond novels and later in the films. In repeating why Bond is as much a figure of the West, of NATO, and, therefore, squarely in the Hollywood mold, he, as Lee Drummond states in American Dreamtime, “is an agent . . . for the new global empire of consumer capitalism” (130). Finally, Fleming may have created James Bond as a way “to take [his] mind off the shock of getting married at the age of forty-three” (Pearson 169). Though this point may not be clearly relevant, the issue of the emasculating influence of marriage is reminiscent of the discussion on marriage in the films High Noon and Shane. Domesticity is depicted as the enemy of masculinity.

With a background to Bond’s creation in the novels by Fleming, understanding the appeal that made for an easy transition to the cinematic representation of Bond’s masculinity is important as well. Many consider James Bond to be “the most popular . . . figure of the post-war period” (Bennett and Woolacott 11). Why? In light of the previous discussion of a masculine representation based on sex appeal and affluence, Bond represented a “mythic conception of nationhood” (28). James Chapman and Matthew Hilton, authors of “From Sherlock Holmes to James Bond: Masculinity and National Identity in British Popular Fiction,” cite Paul Hoch’s statement that “competitive masculinity” fluctuates between two types – the hard-working puritan of tough times and the self-indulgent playboy of “periods of economic surplus and consumer affluence” (139). Bond’s representation of white masculinity, thus, is that of the obvious playboy. However, isn’t the representation of Bond as an agent of one of the world powers disingenuous? After all, by the time James Bond became a film commodity the empire had nearly crumbled. In fact, a mere two years after the Suez Canal Crisis, Empire Day had been changed to a more humbling moniker, Commonwealth Day (Cannadine 166 – 167). Peregrine Worsthorne, the editor of the British newspaper The Sunday Telegraph, even questioned the need for a monarch, asking. “What is the point of maintaining a Queen Empress without an Empire to rule over?” (172). It seems that the realist Worsthorne’s question fell on deaf ears.

Christopher Booker’s work The Neophiliacs might help one to understand why an empire on the wane would so willingly embrace a playboy agent of a mole-ridden secret
service agency as its Cold War representative. It defies reality, which is his point. Booker describes the ready acceptance of Bond as a heroic Cold War figure as a “group fantasy [that is a] symptom of social disintegration, of the breaking down of the balance and harmony between individuals, classes, generations, the sexes or even nations” (61). Booker also adds the element of “vitality” to fantasy, or that of James Bond’s sex and violence (65). Bond’s popularity, then, is rooted in escapism and not reality. Booker thus argues that the goal of the cinema in representing James Bond as the cultured, snobbish spy is to produce “day dream heroes with which its audiences can . . . identify” (60). Booker perhaps most importantly connects elements of Cold War culture, the historical development of the Hollywood film industry, and the impact of Hollywood’s representation of the United States to both James Bond’s escapist representation of white masculinity and before that, shockingly, to even his very cinematic creation:

“The extraordinary infectiousness of the imagery of America, seen in everything from the supermarkets to the adoption of Americanised vocabulary, from Rock ‘n Roll to the introduction of one-armed bandits, was a recognition of the fact that, owing to the accident of America having pioneered so many of the techniques of a modern mass society, the American Dream has grown up throughout the twentieth-century into the most powerful ‘vitality image’ in the world – and it is therefore the example of America which any country wishing to escape into the modern dream must follow” (79).

Adding sexual potency and violence to the image of a cultured, intelligent, and athletic James Bond only magnifies the fantasy...

The James Bond films are filled with images and action that foster the desire to escape – and the masculine desire to escape in particular. With one kiss or even just a look, Bond easily seduces the films’ women. This aspect of masculinity in Cold War spy films is especially important for the female antagonists since they inevitably turn to the “good” side after having been kissed or seduced by him. In this respect, Bond “[repositions] the female villain by putting her in her correct place” (Chapman 33). Having sex in the line of duty and in the name of nationalism or, as Bond puts it, “for Queen and Country,” reinforces Bond’s role as not just an individual but also the
personification of Britain itself. And by “repositioning” the female villain with his penis, the ideal of masculinity in Cold War cinema arrives in the form of a rich, cultured, sex-loving and sex-having superman who places his motherland, not to sound Oedipal, before himself. Bond, therefore, becomes England and represents what has already been stated, the western alliance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The villains, almost all of which are from the East, are either communists or supported by communists. They, therefore, become the East and represent the evils of the East.

The power of NATO and, hence, of American masculinity is evident immediately in the opening scene of every James Bond film. The viewer, watching the agent walking and then shooting at what seems like the audience itself, is actually looking through the barrel of a gun, which explains why the screen is black except for the small hole in the middle. The gun, of course, is a phallic symbol. Booker furthermore connects Bond’s gun with the Cold War’s nuclear threat and to fantasies:

“For James Bond, the gun becomes a symbol of virility, just as aggressive weapons have always been – from the spear to that symbol of national virility in our own time, the ballistic missile; phallic symbols uniting in human fantasies the ultimate vitality images of sex and aggression” (70).

According to the film, audiences might also see balloons shaped like condoms, a white cat being constantly stroked (an obvious sexual reference to women), or sexually connotative names such as Pussy Galore, Kissy Suzuki, Honey Ryder, or Chue Mee. Although the movies adapted to fit the world’s political changes, tensions, and events, the representation of masculinity through a charming spy with an irresistible sex appeal wavered little.

It is necessary to point out how much more important the image of Bond’s representation of white masculinity is in films than it is as described in the written word of the novels. In fact, according to John Pearson, author of *The Life of Ian Fleming*, it is near “impossible to visualize [James Bond] from anything Fleming says. . . The only time we catch a glimpse of the physical Bond is when he looks at himself in the mirror” (195). The physical image of James Bond certainly was a factor for Fleming and the two producers who moved Bond from the pages to the screen, Albert Broccoli and Harry Saltzman. Broccoli and Saltzman were looking, of course, to make money in the 1950s
British cinema, a time for that industry that has been characterized as the “doldrums era” (Chapman 66). That recipe for profit, therefore, included a hyper sexualized secret agent. In fact, Sean Connery, the actor who was cast to play the first James Bond, was selected because, according to Broccoli, “He looked like he had balls” (Bennett and Woolacott 56). Though Fleming disagreed with Connery’s selection (57), Connery’s representation of an ideal, white masculinity had a profound impact on the sales of Fleming’s novels, again pointing to the importance of the image. Fleming, for example, sold the same number of books in just the two years between 1964 – 1966 than he did in the eleven years from 1953 – 1964 (Jenkins 309). This is consistent with Bennett and Woolacott’s description of the early-to-mid 1960s as “the moment of Bond” (36). The early films of the Bond series will receive, consequently, a thorough treatment.

“The moment of Bond,” clearly crucial for the Bond series, paralleled very tense years of the Cold War. The events, including the Cuban Missile Crisis, the construction of the Berlin Wall, the continuing war in Vietnam, and the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, followed the previously embarrassing events of the Suez Canal Crisis and the downed U-2. Likewise, a Bond film was released every year from 1962 – 1967, except for 1966. The most important films during this time for the purpose of this study are Dr. No (1962), From Russia, With Love (1963), and Goldfinger (1964). These films constitute the first three films and adhere fairly closely to the novels’ plots. James Chapman, furthermore, states that the first three films are closest to the “snobbery-with-violence ethic of the British spy thriller (65). Quite simply, the first three films “set the formula” (111) for the Bond series. John Brosnan agrees, stating that “between them, the first three movies had more or less covered all the variations that were possible, and after Goldfinger the producers were faced with the problem of what direction to take” (73). Therefore, how ideal masculinity is represented in the figure of James Bond, especially during the tensest of Cold War years, in the first three films is important. No other Bond film will be studied in detail, though Live or Let Die (1973) will be referenced in a discussion of the anti-hero in Chapter 3 since there are elements in that film that tie in closely to both blaxploitation films [Shaft (1971), for example] as well as in law and order films [Dirty Harry (1971), for example].
*Dr. No* (1962) opened in England during the month of the Cuban Missile Crisis (Chapman 88). The plot was inadvertently timely since the crisis of the film was set in the Caribbean on the island of Jamaica. This was metaphorical for both England and the United States. For England, Jamaica had been granted its independence only two months before the Cuban Missile Crisis, thereby speaking to Britain’s crumbling empire. For the United States, NASA, situated close to the Caribbean, had had a number of mishaps in its missile development, thereby referencing the plan of Dr. No, the title character of the film, to disrupt American missiles (75). *Dr. No’s* plot also had broader Cold War tie ins, as Fidel Castro’s presence in the Caribbean was also relevant. Only two years prior to the film’s American release, the United States and Cuba had cut diplomatic relations due to Castro’s economic agreements with the Soviet Union (LaFeber 217).

The juxtaposition of white masculinity is starkly contrasted to the first three figures of the film, three black men pretending to be blind. They are, however, actually assassins. Cynthia Baron, author of “Dr. No: Bonding Britishness to Racial Sovereignty,” argues that the three black men had been “relegated to a world of nursery rhymes” (139). The first whites in the film, on the other hand, are the two people who are killed by the “three blind mice” after having left a “club in Kingston that is the center of white, male society” (Black 93). The next whites in the film, moreover, are the “young white men in white shirts” (Baron 140) at MI6. The film continues the foundation of the comparative representations that are to come by next depicting a casino, to where agents from MI6 have been dispatched to inform James Bond of the murders in Jamaica. Here the audience is introduced to Bond for the first time in a scene where “masculine style is characterized as stylized masculinity” (Hovey 45). Not coincidentally, to make the point clear on the juxtaposition of the cultured, stylized James Bond to the “three blind mice” and the antagonist, Dr. No, who is to appear later, a painting of a thoroughbred horse is hanging in the casino’s foyer (Baron 140).

Bond, played by Sean Connery, is sent to Jamaica to investigate the murder of Strangways, the slain British intelligence officer in Jamaica, and to help the CIA determine the problem with NASA’s missiles. After several relatively minor harassments by some of Dr. No’s associates, Bond finds a black Jamaican named Quarrel. Quarrel, it turns out, was Strangways’ boatman and fishing companion and also a friend of Felix
Leiter, an American CIA agent. The treatment of Quarrel as a black Jamaican is pertinent to this study, as his lack of agency is revealing. While helping Leiter and Bond detain a suspicious photographer who had been taking pictures of Bond ever since his arrival, Quarrel is called an “ape” by the detainee. He is also very compliant, as he is ordered by Bond at one point to “fetch shoes.” Cynthia Baron describes Bond’s “phallic power” and Quarrel’s “native innocence” as follows:

“Quarrel embodies the ‘proper’ relationship between British imperial power and the Other, for he exists as an appendage to the British imperialist, and is the innocent, eternally loyal servant who follows the English unquestionably” (141).

Quarrel, then, embodies for England what England desired Jamaica itself to be – subservient. As a picture of that subservience, Quarrel was a ready assistant, rowing Bond out to the suspected hideout of Dr. No, Crab Key Island, despite his superstitious fear of dragons. The dragon, it turns out, was a mechanized vehicle with a flamethrower attachment, invented by Dr. No to scare away the curious locals. The dragon eventually does appear and, in a very racist moment reminiscent of a KKK “Grand Dragon,” burns Quarrel alive.

The arrival of Bond and Quarrel on Crab Key is significant for another reason – their encounter with Honeychile Ryder. As with his relationship with Quarrel, Bond’s relationship with Honey Rider is about control, though through a gaze more so than through orders. Bond’s masculinity is emphasized in their initial meeting. Bond’s position of power in that meeting does not come from his sexuality, intelligence, or even gadgets. It comes, rather, as a hiding scopophiliac. As the highly attractive Honey Ryder, played by the Swiss model Ursula Andress, is emerging from the water in a white bikini, Bond is hiding. The prolonged, appreciative gaze at Honey Ryder is seen from Bond’s vantage point. The audience, and especially the men in the audience, are put in a position of power as the onlookers of an unsuspecting beachcomber. Laura Mulvey, using psychoanalysis as, by her own admission, a political weapon, wrote “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” to demonstrate “the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form” (22). The male protagonist, Bond, of course, “controls
the film phantasy [through] . . . the active power of the erotic look” (28). Writing twelve years later, Mulvey reinforced the importance of the initial article:

“I argued that the spectator’s position, active and voyeuristic, is inscribed as ‘masculine’ and, through various and cinematic devices, the woman’s body exists as the erotic, spectacular and exhibitionist ‘other,’ so that the male protagonist on screen can occupy the active role of advancing the story line” (“Changes: Thoughts on Myth, Narrative and Historical Experience” 6).

Even in the novel the reader “sees” Honey Ryder” through Bond’s eyes. The essence of the scene in the novel matches that of the film, except that she is nude. Fleming went to great lengths to make it erotic. Fleming writes that Honey Ryder, upon realizing that Bond was gazing at her, used one hand to cover her crotch and the other to cover her broken nose, “thus allowing her ‘beautiful firm breasts’ to jut ‘toward him without concealment’” (Amis 44). Bond himself neatly concludes the significance of his gaze when Honey Ryder finally realizes she is the object of that gaze. Asking Bond if he is there, like her, to look for shells, Bond replies, “No, I’m just looking.”

At this point in the film, Bond has already taken over the operation from the CIA, telling Leiter to send the Marines if he’s not back within twelve hours. Thus illustrating Britain’s Cold War importance, Bond moves the narrative along, gazing at Honey Ryder and watching his near-servant Quarrel get killed by the “dragon.” Taken hostage after the death of Quarrel, Bond and Honey Ryder are taken to meet Dr. No. It turns out that Dr. No is the treasurer of the Chinese-backed criminal organization SPECTRE (SSpecial Executive for Counter-intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge and Extortion). Speaking to Cold War concerns, Dr. No, representing the danger of the emerging power of China in the Vietnam War and in nuclear weapons development, is even “fitted in clothes after the style of Mao” (Cork and Scivally 46). In fact, the actor who played Dr. No, Joseph Wiseman, more makeup to add to the “Asian” and, thereby definition (according to this film), “sinister” look. In further highlighting previous discussion on the “otherness” of the “three blind mice,” Quarrel, and Honey Ryder – so referenced by the painting of the thoroughbred on the wall of the casino – Dr. No’s masculinity is reduced by a pair of black hands (Baron 140). The emasculation of Dr. No by deforming his physical image
is a result of his work for the East. The East is feminized while the West’s power is represented by Bond’s gaze – a clear message of who is “winning” the Cold War.

By the end of Dr. No, Bond’s representation as the ideal of white masculinity is cemented. The “three blind mice” are dead. Quarrel is dead. Dr. No is dead, his plan to disrupt American missiles at NASA having been defeated. And Honey Ryder is about to be seduced by Bond. Speaking to Britain’s importance in the Cold War, Leiter, the other secret agent, is still around, but only after the British Bond has solved the problem. Again speaking to the unimportance of minority figures in the film, it never occurs to Leiter to inquire on his friend Quarrel’s whereabouts (Smith and Lavington 16 – 17).

Although James Bond spends most of the film From Russia With Love (1963) under the assumption that he is fighting the Russians, he is actually up against SPECTRE, who plots to avenge the death of Dr. No. Fleming wrote the novel in 1957 in the immediate aftermath of the Suez Crisis and Russia’s brutal suppression of the Hungarian Revolution. Prefacing the tone of the films, the novel contains a lengthy discussion by Russian counter-intelligence agents (SMERSH agents) praising MI6 and criticizing the Americans (Black 28). Whereas the plot and action of Dr. No took place in either England or a former English colony, From Russia With Love sets its plot and action in Europe. Furthermore, James Bond himself becomes the unwitting target of the movie’s plot rather than a nation or an agency (NASA) of a western government.

Though much of the plot surrounds SPECTRE’s plot to kill James Bond in retaliation for the death of Dr. No, the violence of the film, which begins with the garroting of a Bond look-alike, serves “as a way to mark the warming up of the Cold War (Smith and Lavington 31). The year 1963, of course, was not far removed from either the Cuban Missile Crisis or the beginning of the building of the Berlin Wall. From Russia With Love opens with a SPECTRE training session on tracking and assassinating Bond, therefore the need for the look-alike. The plot centers around a plan to lure Bond to Turkey, where a Soviet agent promises to defect with a Russian Lektor, a deciphering machine about the size of a typewriter that both MI6 and the CIA have long wanted to acquire. Britain is depicted as the leader of the West on an international level whereas its agent, James Bond, is the leader on a personal level (33).
In reference to the previous discussion as the Bond series being escapist in nature, Kingsley Amis, author of *The James Bond Dossier*, states that the idea of England as an international power “points . . . to the fanatical, deluded, almost demented constituent in the collective power-fantasy by which no contemporary Englishman is altogether untouched” (81). Adding to the fantasy is the ostensible claim that the beautiful Russian agent planning to defect, Tatiana Romanova, requests that only James Bond be the one to assist her since she has fallen in love with his picture. Michael Denning, author of *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller*, speaks to the importance of that photographic image in this film. Tatiana, Denning points out, is like the viewer in the respect that both have “invested [their] . . . energies in a mere image” (95). The Russians, furthermore, are aiming to destroy that image (95).

Bond’s arrival in Turkey parallels definite Cold War tensions. American nuclear-armed Jupiter missiles were placed in Turkey in the summer of 1961, thereby stationing the destructive weapons within close proximity to the Soviet Union. These types of Cold War tensions caused “the Soviet government [to] repeatedly [caution] the West that, if the Cold War ever turned hot in Europe, Turkey would be among the first nations attacked” (Mulvihill 344). As in *Dr. No*, furthermore, Fleming’s racism pervades. The name of the Turkish intelligence chief in the novel, Darko Kerim, indicates a masculinity that is not white. In film, nonetheless, it has been changed to simply Kerim Bey. Though a competent member of the British secret service, he will serve as a darker version of Felix Leiter. The use of darker-skinned, Turkish gypsies as a prop for what Mulvey would call visual pleasure is also apparent and will be discussed later.

Bond’s arrival in Istanbul is met with the reappearance of Red Grant, a Brit who killed the Bond look-alike at the outset of the film. He is a white, blond (though bleached for the role) Brit, yet one whose lack of a Bond-like cultural refinement is his ultimate undoing. Indicating his communist loyalties with a name such as “Red,” Grant is a SPECTRE agent, whose executive, Blofeld, is never once fully seen in the film, thus providing another contrast for Bond’s masculinity. Grant’s immediate supervisor in the plot to kill Bond is Blofeld’s underling, Rosa Klebb, a high-ranking SPECTRE officer who all believe to be still in the employ of the Russian SMERSH agency and who, according to Bennett and Woolacott, was purposefully depicted as extremely ugly and
sexually deviant (41). Tricia Jenkins agrees that Klebb’s sexuality is intended to reflect “the inhumanity and deviancy of the Soviets” (310), adding that “Bond’s national prowess is so dependent on the gap between his sexual potency and the sexual deviancy of the foreigners he encounters” (310). This, of course, is reminiscent of Dr. No’s metaphorically impotent hands.

After they are nearly killed with a bomb, Kerim and Bond spy on the Russians with the use of a periscope that reaches up into their consulate. The voyeur in hiding again is Bond, who sees Tatiana’s legs for the first time. This is a very similar gaze that was first found in Dr. No – Bond looking, and the audience with him, without the object of the gaze being aware of it. Because of this, Mulvey characterized the Bond films as pornography, stating that “Bond’s pornographic imagination is structured not so much around explicit depictions of sexual acts as around Bond as voyeur, Bond as spy” (quoted in Denning 110). The gazing continues after Kerim takes Bond to a gypsy camp as a way of escaping the Russian threat. They escape into another episode of voyeurism when two female gypsies, vying over a common love interest, fight. According to a documentary that accompanied the film, “From Russia with Love: An Original Documentary,” the gypsy fight took three weeks of rehearsal due to its choreographed nature in which the director intended to show “lots of legs.” Other scholars confirm Mulvey’s analysis. Chapman adds that even though “the girl fight is irrelevant to the main narrative . . . the purpose it serves is entirely for the erotic gratification of the spectators (both the characters in the film who are watching and the spectator in the cinema)” (97). Viewing Tatiana’s legs through a periscope or watching gypsies fight are eclipsed on the scale of scopophilia when Bond later returns to his hotel room to find Tatiana herself in his bed. The voyeurs in this case are Grant and the lesbian Klebb, who are not only watching the sex but, in line with Mulvey’s conclusion regarding the Bond films’ pornographic nature, also filming the sex. Lying in the bed, Tatiana says that she believes her “mouth is too big.” Highlighting his own masculinity and sexual potency, Bond replies, “No. It’s the right size. For me, that is.” It is pornographic because it is not about intimacy but power.

The plot after this point moves quickly, as Kerim and Bond explode a bomb underneath the Russian consulate to create a diversion. They successfully steal the Lektor machine. Bond and Tatiana are then able to escape the country aboard the Orient
Express, a train that famously ran between Istanbul and Paris. The theme of escape using the Orient Express has a Cold War reference. In February 1950, fearful that he was about to be arrested for spying, American Eugene Karp, a Naval attaché serving in Bucharest, attempted to flee aboard the Orient Express. He was followed by the Russians and killed, and his corpse thrown off the train (Cork and Scivally 14). Likewise, Bond was followed by the SPECTRE agent Red Grant, although, because of his masculinity and potency, the ending would not be the same.

Grant, having boarded the train after killing a British agent, convincingly pretends to be that very same British agent whose job it is to help Bond and Tatiana back to the West with the Lektor. At supper with Bond and Tatiana, Grant orders red wine with his fish, a faux pas for the cultured Bond. Grant then drugs Tatiana and subdued Bond, forcing the hero to his knees. Taunting Bond and juxtaposing Britain’s culture and sophistication with its crumbling empire, Grant says, “You may know the right wines, but you’re the one on your knees.” Grant by this point has stalked an unwitting Bond for the entire film. Whereas it is Bond and the audience who most often engages in scopophilia, it is also Grant and the audience who has been watching Bond. Grant's position of power, represented by a masculinity that ultimately reinforces Bond’s, is represented on the train by his forcing Bond to his knees, therefore metaphorically important. John Cox, author of “The Sexual Subtext of 007: Or, Why We (Really) Like These Movies,” states:

“The confrontation with Red Grant is the ultimate ordeal for James Bond in this sexually lethal world. Of all sexual terrors, being on the end of a homosexual rape certainly ranks high. The lead-up to the fight is highly charged with innuendos. Grant has clearly been aroused by the footage of Bond and Tatiana’s lovemaking. . . Grant makes Bond get on his knees (waist level) and tells him it’ll be ‘painful and slow.’ . . There’s an orgasmic quality to Grant’s silent death” (17).

By killing Grant, Bond emerges and passes the test, though initially challenged, as the ideal representation of white masculinity in the film. He escapes the train as well as a helicopter attack and successfully evades capture in a dramatic boat chase.
By the end of the film Rosa Klebb, chastised by Blofeld for the failure to kill Bond, takes it upon herself to find the British secret agent. Sneaking into Bond and Tatiana’s hotel room, she nearly fatally injures him with a poisoned spike in her shoe. Tatiana’s decision to shoot her boss consummates her loyalty to Bond. Tatiana, as one who started the film on the side of evil and “saw the light” through a sexual relationship with Bond, becomes the first female of many in the Bond series to be repositioned. Through superior culture and superior technology (an exploding briefcase that helped disarm Grant, among others), Bond ends the film with both a cipher machine and, after repositioning Tatiana, with one less KGB agent in the world. The theme of repositioning and the juxtaposition of masculinities is even more pronounced in the third film of the Bond series, *Goldfinger* (1964).

Since producers Broccoli and Saltzman intended *Dr. No* for the British market and *From Russia with Love* for the European market, they decided to broaden their appeal for the American market by focusing the plot of *Goldfinger* in the United States (Dunbar 47). Reflecting America’s Cold War concerns over the “gathering threat” of China in the 1960s, Goldfinger, a broker of gold supported by the Chinese, plans to make radioactive, with the help of American gangsters, the entire gold supply of Fort Knox, thus increasing the value of his gold and cornering the global gold market. By placing an agent of communism as a partner with the mafia against the United States, *Goldfinger* cinematically depicts the belief held by many that Lee Harvey Oswald, Kennedy’s assassin, was a communist sympathizer who associated with mafia members, albeit a minor one in the figure of Jack Ruby. It is also entirely coincidental, though still timely in the film’s respect, that China, viewed by the U.S. State Department as a “loose cannon in world politics” (Mulvihill 344), exploded its first atomic bomb the month after *Goldfinger’s* British release and shortly before its American release (Chapman 102). As with the other Bond films, there are chases, fights, explosions, and gadgetry. The representation and sexual power of ideal masculinity in *Goldfinger* and how that is compared to other representations, nonetheless, takes special and even exaggerated form.

The film begins with James Bond, for the third time in the first three films played by Sean Connery, destroying a Mexican drug cartel’s base of operations and fending off an assassin. Wanting to relax, he checks in to a posh Miami hotel in anticipation of a
nice vacation, though surprised by its luxury. He soon realizes that the reason for the
destination was not out of M’s appreciation but rather for an assignment. The title figure,
Goldfinger, is also there, cheating at cards with the help of Jill Masterson, who is seated
on a balcony behind Goldfinger’s opponent. Using binoculars and a wireless earphone,
Masterson and Goldfinger have been quite successful until the wily Bond breaks into
Goldfinger’s room. Displaying Bond’s sexual potency, the agent is able to seduce Jill
easily. The angry Goldfinger, whose scheme has been spoiled, sends his servant, Oddjob,
to the suite. Oddjob knocks Bond out. When Bond awakes, he discovers that Jill,
covered in gold paint, has been killed by epidermal suffocation.

The film’s plot then changes to London, where M describes Goldfinger’s threat to
the world. Believing him to be a SMERSH operative, M explains the importance of the
Bank of England as a depository of gold, comparing it to Fort Knox. Goldfinger’s
scheme is to buy gold cheaply in one country and move it to a country where the price is
higher. Bond’s job, then, is to find out how this gold is being moved so that his assets
could be seized. The MI6 agent finds the antagonist at a golf course, challenges him to a
match, then, turning the tables, essentially forces him to cheat on one hole by standing on
his golf ball, allowing Oddjob to illegally drop another one. Goldfinger loses thousands
of dollars and, understandably upset, leaves in his gold colored Rolls Royce. The title
character then flies, along with his car, to Geneva, where the rest of the story plays out.

Goldfinger, played by Gert Frobe, is just one of the characters whose
representation of masculinity is used to serve as a counterpoint to Bond’s. Goldfinger is
fat and pale-skinned. He cheats at cards and golf and is, therefore, no British gentleman.
Even his ownership of the very golf club that he cheats at speaks to British concerns
about being taken over by foreign investors (Black 119) rather than to a possibly high-
class status. His choice of a car is even suspect. John Cox describes the Rolls Royce as
symbolic of “old world power” (18), whereas Bond’s gadget-filled Aston Martin DB5 is
the “symbol of youthful sexual power” (18). Jeremy Black, in The Politics of James
Bond, agrees, describing Bond’s car as “fast, stylish, British, and deadly, an enabler for
Bond’s potency” (119). James Chapman refers to the DB5 as simply “a fantasy for the
male spectator” (105). David Holbrook’s analysis of Bond’s tools and gadgets being
symbolic penises” (75) is especially crucial in understanding Cox’s view that Oddjob was Goldfinger’s “penis substitute” (19).

Oddjob, as Goldfinger’s henchman, is yet another figure whose representation of masculinity was used to oppose Bond’s. As the “muscle” behind the title character’s orders, Oddjob’s role is important. Speaking to the fear of the foreign immigrant influx in England in the 1960s, Brian Dunbar states that “the absurdity of Oddjob in the clothes (of an English butler) only emphasizes how ridiculous it is for foreigners to be part of the English establishment, and further enhances the xenophobia of the film” (67). That absurdity was further accentuated by Oddjob’s lack of dialogue. He had no voice in the film except the occasional grunt and scream. Because he executed Goldfinger’s orders so efficiently, there is much merit to Cox’s view that Oddjob was Goldfinger’s “penis substitute.” As, therefore, Goldfinger had no phallus and Oddjob had no voice, Bond’s representation of masculinity had no competition.

Once in Switzerland, Goldfinger was pursued not just by Bond but by Tilly Masterson. Tilly, of course, wanted revenge for her sister’s death. She provides, through her aggressive chase of Goldfinger, another source of magnification for Bond’s masculinity. Since she is already aligned against Goldfinger, there is no need to reposition her through sex. Fleming connects her near masculine aggressiveness with her sexuality through a discussion of female suffrage in a time, as previously discussed, of a weakening masculinity:

“Bond came to the conclusion that Tilly Masterson was one of those girls whose hormones had got mixed up. He knew the type well and thought they and their male counterparts were a direct consequence of giving votes to women and ‘sex equality.’ As a result of fifty years of emancipation, feminine qualities were dying out or being transferred to the males. Pansies of both sexes were everywhere, not yet completely homosexual, but confused, not knowing what they were. The result was a herd of unhappy sexual misfits – barren and full of frustrations, the women wanting to dominate and the men to be nannied” (Goldfinger 269).

Tilly’s cinematic representation of second wave feminism, therefore, is that of an aggressive pursuer of Goldfinger, himself not very masculine. It is through her ineptitude
with a weapon, however, that she is found out by Bond. And it is through her clumsiness that, by tripping an alarm, she, since this type of new, aggressive woman must be eliminated, is killed and Bond is captured by Goldfinger. Caught by Goldfinger, Bond is tied to a table in a spread eagle position. A giant phallic laser, ironically, is pointed at the hero’s phallus. The laser slowly advances toward Bond’s “symbol” of potency and stops “a mere inch or so away from the world’s most famous crotch” (Brosnan 65). Agent Bond convinces the antagonist to stop the laser with bluffed knowledge of “Operation Grand Slam,” Goldfinger’s plot to drastically increase the worth of his gold supplies by detonating a nuclear device inside Fort Knox. The explosion would contaminate the fort’s gold and, therefore, make it worthless.

After the confrontation with the phallic laser, Bond meets a woman who deserves a fair amount of attention, Pussy Galore. As Goldfinger’s private pilot, Pussy Galore is also a part of the planned attack on Fort Knox. Fleming positions her in the novel as one whose homosexuality is not so much due to confusion as it is to her being a southerner who was raped by her uncle (Jenkins 311). “Fleming specifically implies that Pussy’s lesbianism emerges from the familial and cultural dysfunction of the American South, and given the Bond formula, this deviancy can only reflect the degeneracy of the United States” (311). The point is that she is not simply confused in her sexuality – she is supposed to be entrenched in her lesbianism due to her background and due to her being sexually assaulted. In their first meeting, aboard the plane from Switzerland to Fort Knox, Bond makes the usual attempt at charm and seduction. What normally works in this case does not, as Pussy, loosely stating her sexual persuasion, states “You can turn off the charm. I’m immune.” Later, Goldfinger instructs his pilot to “change into something more suitable” in an effort to find out what Bond knows about “Operation Grand Slam.” In reply to this order, and again affirming her sexuality, a compliant Pussy states, “Business before pleasure.” After another of Bond’s attempt at charm, the then nicely dressed Pussy flatly says, “Skip it. I’m not interested.” A violent, judo-laced fight ensues. Bond, forcing himself on her and forcefully kissing her in a way that could be considered rape, results in Pussy being repositioned to the side of good and, according to the masculine message of the film, her being heterosexually repositioned. The strength of Bond’s potency and sexuality is represented as one that can both reposition and
“straighten” out a lesbianism that stemmed from rape. This significance, of course, is the represented superiority of Bond’s masculinity and of the West’s capacity to reposition the world.

With Bond’s urging, a repositioned Pussy Galore notifies the CIA of Goldfinger’s plot. Ultimately, Goldfinger’s plan is spoiled. One last fight, though, was left with “the extension of [Goldfinger’s] sexuality – namely, Oddjob” (Cox 20). The Korean servant is killed and the atomic device is disarmed. Goldfinger evades capture, however, somehow convincing Pussy to hijack a jet that Bond is supposed to take to Washington, D.C., to receive a personal thank you from the President of the United States. The film ends with a struggle between Bond and Goldfinger that results in the villain being sucked out of the plane due to his own gun’s misfire. The irony is that the villain’s masculinity is represented by a misfired phallic symbol that results in his demise. Bond, finally, is able to rescue Pussy from the falling airplane and the status quo returns.

Important to a critical understanding of the Bond films is the scholar Umberto Eco. From Eco’s analysis of Superman in “The Myth of Superman,” one can draw comparisons to James Bond. Eco states, “Superman, by definition the character whom nothing can impede, finds himself in the worrisome narrative situation of being a hero without an adversary and therefore without the possibility of any development” (quoted in Role of the Reader 110). Bond had adversaries to be sure, but adversaries that he vanquished so easily that sexual asides with easily seduced women along the way were made possible. And much like the Superman series, the plots from different Bond episodes are either completely separate or the time between them is made to be so “hazy” (114) that neither of the figures really age. Connecting former discussions on fantasy and gadgets to Superman and Bond, Booker states that it was the use of guns and machines . . .

“that completed [the] image of James Bond as the romantic dream hero of the technological age; for it was his guns, his cars and his gadgets that extended him into a super-human embodiment of self-assertion, able to conquer anyone or anything” (63).

In terms of Bond’s representation of ideal, white masculinity, Eco’s article “Narrative Structures in Fleming” examines elements of the novels that are eventually reflected in
the films. For example, Eco examines the characteristics of villains that are expedient for this discussion, especially those figures whose sexuality or lack thereof serve to accentuate Bond’s representation of masculinity. Eco points out that:

“the villain is born in an ethnic area that stretches from Central Europe to the Slav countries and the Mediterranean basin; usually he is of mixed blood and his origins are complex and obscure. He is asexual or homosexual, or at any rate is not sexually normal” (40).

Eco goes on to describe Rosa Klebb as “sexually neutered,” Dr. No as a “Chinese-German half-breed,” and Goldfinger as one who has “a probable Baltic origin, but also has Jewish blood” (41-42). These descriptions only help to clarify and define Bond’s representation of a pure, western, and capitalist model of white masculinity.

The thinking of Stuart Hall on the importance of the representation and of “the other” is, of course, also critical. Hall, in a lecture entitled “Representation and the Media” delivered at the University of Westminster, challenged the viewer to question, examine, and probe the image. Many viewers of cinema, however, view the James Bonds films as spectacle and entertainment. If viewed in a critical way, one would challenge and probe both the representation of James Bond and of the “others” in the films. Regarding blacks, for example, Hall states that “blacks could gain entry into the mainstream – but only at the cost of adapting to the white image of them and assimilating white norms of style, look, and behavior” (Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices 270). This is true of the demeaning representations of the “three blind mice” and of Quarrel in Dr. No. They played a servant’s role, being reduced to nursery rhyme characters or either receiving orders to paddle a boat or fetch shoes. The same point can be made with minorities in the other two films, whether they are belly-dancing gypsies in From Russia with Love or Asians in Goldfinger. Arguably the most important “other” in the Bond series are females. Hall’s ideas on identification in his lecture dealt with advertisements. Being able to identify with an image that is being presented, however, also applies to the gaze, as Mulvey’s thesis states that the viewer identifies with the images on the screen – whether it is the one gazing or the actual object of the gaze. In addition to Honey Rider and Tatiana being the objects of the gaze, women were further reduced to objects of pleasure or easily repositioned pawns. They were
scantily clad, patted on the bottom, killed and then painted, and even turned straight. Even a female statue is beheaded by Oddjob in *Goldfinger*. As David Holbrook succinctly writes in *The Masks of Hate*, “woman as woman does not really appear, and if she threatens to show her face she is annihilated [and] controlled, subject to contempt, humiliation, or death” (78).

The ideal representation of white masculinity as depicted in the first three James Bond films changed only somewhat throughout the Cold War. After *Goldfinger*, no Bond film had a strong Cold War theme for almost twenty-five years. In that span of time, the James Bond films responded to the blaxploitation genre and the anti-hero. Meanwhile, the ongoing Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal strengthened the presence of the anti-hero in the Cold War. Many films of this era reflect society’s anger and resentment, thus forcing the ideal image of masculinity to change from the John Wayne patriot or the James Bond hero to the government’s skeptic or the public’s critic. Although this style of masculinity took much longer for James Bond to adopt, he did. No gadget or seducing one-liner could have kept this from happening. In Bond’s box office fight against feminism, civil rights, and cynicism, even Viagra could not help keep the British end up.
CHAPTER 3
CHALLENGING THE IDEAL

The hegemonic representation of an ideal, white masculinity faced serious cinematic challenges by the 1960s as a result of Cold War tensions. Previously discussed representations of white, heterosexual masculinity came in the form of the tough and rugged cowboy or the cultured and sexy spy, the focal points of the first two chapters, respectively. This chapter, however, will focus on how the ensuing political chaos of the Vietnam War, and later coupled with the Watergate Scandal, resulted in new representations of white masculinity, including homosexual representation, as well as in the advent of the representation of black masculinity. The impact of the Vietnam War on the representation of white masculinity in film has already been addressed somewhat in the discussion of chapter one’s *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), a scathing attack on the traditions of the western genre. This chapter, therefore, continues that discussion by focusing on films released after *Midnight Cowboy*. The ongoing dialectic between these films is also crucial, as film as an art form transforms itself, using the representation of masculinity as its vehicle, from society’s flatterer to its critic.

It is no coincidence that the American Cold War policy of containing the spread of communism dates to the same year as American involvement in Vietnam, which before 1954 was called French Indochina. In 1946, the United States, in an effort to minimize the perceived threat of communism in Southeast Asia, began providing financial support to the French in an effort to crush Ho Chi Minh’s revolution (Gibson 10). Even though the United States was paying 80% of the French costs by 1950 (10), success still had not materialized, thus leading to the first shipment of American arms in summer of that year (Blum 122). The injection of American money and arms into Vietnam proved fruitless. Ho Chi Minh’s victory against the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 eventually precipitated the Geneva Conference, itself resulting in the Geneva Accords. In these agreements, Vietnam became an independent nation. Ho Chi Minh also received a promise of free elections by 1956 (LaFeber 163). Continuing to be backed by the United States, the emboldened South, however, led by provisional leader Ngo Dinh Diem, cancelled the planned elections in 1955 (165). Renewed fighting began
and by the early 1960s President Kennedy had introduced 15,000 troops and advisers to help turn the tide (Gibson 10). The introduction of American troops and advisers at these levels also proved futile. In August of 1964, President Johnson claimed that the United States had been attacked by Vietnam in two separate incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin. The outrage was shared even by Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, Johnson’s opponent in that year’s presidential election, who sanctioned Johnson’s plan to increase military efforts against Vietnam (Mohr 4). The apparent American unity resulted in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, in effect a blank check passed by a near unanimous Congress that gave Johnson wide latitude to wage war against Vietnam. The escalation of American troops began, then, in 1965. By 1969, there were over 550,000 American troops in Vietnam (Gibson 10). Eventually, over 58,000 American soldiers would die in the war. The United States and North Vietnam signed the Paris Peace Accords in January of 1973, effectively ending hostilities. The last of the American troops withdrew several months later.

Though more specifics of the Vietnam War will be discussed in the context of the relevant films, one should not confuse this rather short and cursory history of the Vietnam War as one with inconsequential results. In fact, the war had disastrous effects. In addition to the war marking the end of American supremacy in international affairs, the defeat in Vietnam also “created a cultural crisis among the American people” (Gibson 20). This cultural chaos, furthermore, was magnified by advances made by African-Americans and white women in the 1960s and early 1970s. Eben J. Muse, author of *The Land of Nam: The Vietnam War in American Film*, aptly describes the impact of both the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War on Hollywood film. He writes:

“By the 1960s, however, America’s assumptions about itself were in crisis. In previous years, Hollywood had been able to present the United States as a predominantly white, technological, male society united by a common goal to stop aggression. By the height of American troop presence in Viet Nam, however, little of this presentation remained unquestioned. The Civil Rights struggle had radically altered American society and fractured ideas about the melting pot. To assume that all races melded into one society in America had become a racist attitude. The African, American
Indian, and Asian cultures had all gained ground in the United States and claimed a stake in the American dream. The war film had used race as a convenient marker to delineate the enemy in previous conflict; now that marker drew jagged lines at best” (36 – 37).

Nicola Rehling, author of *Extra-Ordinary Men: White Heterosexual Masculinity in Contemporary Popular Cinema*, agrees. She states, “The war comprised a national trauma, not only because it was a war that America failed to win, but also because, on the domestic terrain, the myth of American unity was shattered. Intimately tied as they are, the crisis in nation was articulated as a crisis in masculinity” (56). The shattering of the myth of American unity, combined with a crisis in white masculinity, resulted in Hollywood representing masculinity in new ways.

Hollywood’s transition in becoming society’s critic by representing competing forms of masculinity was assisted by the rise of television. Television competed with the motion film industry for profits, resulting in the decrease of film budgets, which in turn opened a small window of opportunity for the rise of independent producers and directors. These independent artists, who are the reason “for the movies' sudden change from the public’s flatterer to the public’s critic” (Mordden 115), also pressured the major studios to respond to the times in producing films which reflected the anti-conformity and anti-establishment mood of the sixties. Nonetheless, in the tradition of Hollywood cinema, that mood led to a representation of masculinity steeped in violence.

It is necessary to offer a brief synopsis of a few films before discussing the most important movies of this chapter. The violence displayed in many of these films, as discussed in the first two chapters in relation to the cowboy and the spy, are rooted in the myth of the frontier. Whether these films involved detectives, gangsters, police officers, or the cavalry, the “male hero has been created on the model of the frontiersman” (Mellen 11) – and those figures were white. That model, in the context of the turbulent 1960s, came, again, to question the establishment. *Bullitt* (1968) is a part of the police/detective genre popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s that effectively critiqued abuses within police departments. This genre, coinciding with and coming on the heels of the famous 1968 National Democratic Convention where Mayor Daly ordered Chicago’s police to attack Vietnam War protesters, also sharply criticized mayors and other politicians for
exerting political influence over their police departments. Frank Bullitt exemplified the confident masculinity of doing an honorable job without compromising values for politicians. Ordered to guard a man in the witness protection program, Bullitt is caught between Walter Chalmers, an unscrupulous state senator using the case as a springboard for higher office, and the actual murderers. Because the witness is killed, Bullitt takes the unconventional measure of hiding the dead body to make everyone believe the witness is still alive. This, Bullitt believes, is the only way to capture the killers. The entire time Bullitt has to fend off attacks from both politicians and officers in his own department. Through the frontier characteristics of toughness and guile, Bullitt captures the killers while maintaining his integrity. *Dirty Harry* (1971), representing an exaggerated version of masculinity displayed earlier in *Bullitt*, is another example. “Dirty Harry” Callahan, a loner in the style of the frontiersman, uses a no nonsense approach to his work. He beats up suspects and shoves the phallic barrel of his .44 Magnum, characterized by Mellen as a surrogate penis (297), in their faces to ascertain information. Faced with the task of finding a sniper who has kidnapped a child, Harry must work within the political confines of a scared District Attorney more concerned with public perception than with the public’s safety. Heeding only his own rules, he captures the assassin. The assassin, who calls himself Scorpio, is then released on a technicality. Sickened by having to chase and capture Scorpio all over again, Dirty Harry does just that and, frustrated by his own system, concludes the film by throwing his badge into a lake.

Frank Bullitt and Harry Callahan, though introducing anti-establishment heroes to the movies, still represented white men of the tough and rugged masculine mould found so often in Hollywood film. African-American representations of masculinity also began to appear. Sidney Poitier, the main representation of black masculinity throughout the 1950s and 1960s, was criticized, however, for playing “simple, one-dimensional roles” (Leab 230-231). Poitier, additionally, played in largely integrationist roles that did not challenge the dominance of white masculinity. Thomas Cripps, writing in *Black Film as Genre*, states that Poitier’s films “bordered on contributing to a white generic cinema in which the Afro-American figure was seen mainly as the embodiment of a society where good race relations and racial integration of social life were grudgingly becoming the norm” (129). Donald Bogle, in *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An
Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films, describes Poitier as nonthreatening, amenable, and pliant – “a throwback to the humanized Christian servants of the 1930s” (176). Bogle’s work is also important, for it clearly explains how Poitier’s amenability and pliancy did not completely represent the frustration and anger of black Americans. Writing of Poitier’s integrationist films, Bogle states:

“Yet they seemed out of place in this separatist age, and they found competition from a number of motion pictures removed from the mainstream of American moviemaking. These films, in which the evolving militants were first to appear, presented a world heretofore ignored on the American screen – ghettos, whores, hustlers, addicts, pimps, and pushers, a world of racist sickness, of oppression, of black despair and rage” (195).

The Cold War, especially the prospect of fighting for the rights of others abroad while rights at home were being denied, only frustrated further this sense of despair and rage in the black community.

One of the most renowned voices of the black American community was that of Eldridge Cleaver. In his book Soul on Ice, Cleaver discusses how the national liberation movements that were taking place within the larger Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement challenged the “fantasy world” of America’s white citizens. Describing young whites as appalled and ashamed at the representation of some of the cinematic heroes during such turbulent times, Cleaver writes:

“But it is away from this world that the white youth of today are turning. The ‘paper tiger’ hero, James Bond, offering the whites a triumphant image of themselves, is saying what many whites want desperately to hear reaffirmed: I am still the White Man, lord of the land, licensed to kill, and the world is still an empire at my feet. James Bond feeds on that secret little anxiety, the psychological backlash, felt in some degree by most whites alive” (80).

It was not, however, only youthful whites who wanted something different. American blacks, yearning to see their own likeness on screen and by the late 1960s having the financial power to fuel such cinema, were also quite unlikely to “be seduced by mass-produced fantasies” (Corber 46). Some scholars, including Donald Bogle, describe a
rising militant black class who identified blackness “with the degrading conditions imposed on black America by white America [and who] sought to glamorize poverty and the ghetto” (234). Black filmmakers, then, satisfied the black cinematic appetite by producing films cast nearly entirely by black actors. Because the detective film, unlike the western, was not cyclic but rather a constant genre throughout Hollywood history, it made perfect sense to juxtapose the representation of black masculinity to that of Frank Bullitt or “Dirty Harry” Callahan.

Promoted in advertisements as “Hotter than Bond. Cooler than Bullitt,” (Bogle 235), Shaft (1971) is one of the first hits of the blaxploitation genre, and followed on the heels of the success of Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song (1971), itself dedicated to “all the Brothers and Sisters who [have] had enough of The Man.” It is now clear, though, that MGM appealed to white audiences by referencing Bond and Bullitt, but hired a black advertising agency to promote Shaft separately in the black community as “a man of flair and flamboyance who [had] fun at the expense of the white establishment” (Leab 251-252). In an opening scene reminiscent of Midnight Cowboy, Shaft walks by a row of movie theatre marquees with the names of recent movies, obviously mocking the western by displaying the name of The Scalp hunters (1968), a film about white Americans who were paid by the government for each Indian scalp. Also like Ratso Rizzo in Midnight Cowboy, Shaft screams “Up Yours!” after almost being hit by a taxi. In contrast to Dirty Harry and Bullitt, he is a former police officer who works within both crime and police circles in his role as a private detective. In this case, Shaft works with both law enforcement and with Bumpy, a Harlem crime boss, to achieve his goals. The plot of the film centers on the title character being hired to rescue Bumpy’s daughter, who has been kidnapped by the mafia. Shaft, as a representation of black masculinity, proceeds to challenge both the white police establishment and even his client. He is well-dressed, smart, and takes no attitude from anyone. One white officer, recognizing Shaft’s toughness, tells another white officer that Shaft is “man enough to back it up.” He fights and fends off assassins, then uses the police for information without giving up too much information in return. When pressed too far by white officers on where he’s going or where he’s been, Shaft simply says either “going to get laid” or “just got laid.” Shaft’s super-masculinity is, therefore, contrasted to arrogant white officers, white criminal
mobsters, or gay (white) bartenders, and affirms the patriarchal and stereotyped phallo-centric black man. In *Queer Images: A History of Gay and Lesbian Film in America*, Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin argue that “queerness functioned in opposition to the black hero or anti-hero, and some of the films equate homosexuality with a corrupt white culture” (146). Ultimately, then, Shaft serves as a tough and sexually potent representation of black masculinity that confronts and contests the usual white representation of masculinity.

Stuart Hall has studied how films have served as a “therapeutic release for blacks” (Bryan 163-164) during the 1970s, a time in which the Vietnam War fueled much social angst. In his essay, “Representation, Meaning, and Language,” Hall discusses the importance of the 1960s slogan “Black is Beautiful” and how the slogan helped change the perception of blacks by serving as a morale booster. Hall, furthermore, discusses the “Other,” in this case black Americans, in another essay titled “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’”. According to this essay, blacks became more aggressive after the Civil Rights Movement, something that is cinematically represented in the blaxploitation genre. In fact, Hall characterizes films such as Shaft as “revenge” films. Hall defines “revenge” films as films that allow blacks to “win” over whites and, perhaps more importantly, actually get away with winning (Bryan 163-164). Not all blacks celebrated Shaft, however. Clayton Riley, a black film critic for *The New York Times*, lambasted the film as a “disaster,” ridiculing Shaft’s representation of black masculinity as “a Xerox copy of all the fraudulence America can construct in its mania for hero worship, or white anti-hero worship” (D13). Though there was no consensus on the viability of Shaft as a representation of black masculinity, his cinematic contestation of white masculinity was severe enough – and popular enough within the black community – that it could not go unanswered.

The producers of the Bond series had learned the importance of topicality from the success of films like *Bullitt*, *Dirty Harry*, and *Shaft*. The lesson of not making Bond movies relevant to the times, displayed in the box office failure of *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (1969), was corrected in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971) and *Live and Let Die* (1973). *Live and Let Die* is more important to this discussion, as it speaks to the competing representations of white and black masculinity. Feeding off of the explosion
of blaxploitation films, the plot focuses on Mr. Big, a Bumpy-like Harlem crime lord, who also doubles as Kananga, the Prime Minister of San Monique. Assisted by a beautiful aide named Solitaire, who is able to predict the future with tarot cards, Kananga’s plan is to flood the United States with free heroine, thereby driving all other dealers out of business so that afterward he would control the market. James Bond, sporting, like Dirty Harry, a Smith and Wesson .44 Magnum rather than his usual Walther PPK, even ventures to Harlem, also the home of John Shaft, to defeat Kananga’s plan.

The racial tones of *Live and Let Die* as a challenge to *Shaft* are more than coincidental. The book on which the film is based, Ian Fleming’s second novel of the same name, was released only a month before the landmark *Brown* decision. In the book Mr. Big is an “intimidatingly large Negro.” Fleming, in a way that could only be described as racist, attributes Mr. Big’s criminal intelligence to the “good dose of French blood mixed in with his Haitian black” (Stephanson 64). Because a quarter of American moviegoers were African-American, the Bond producers had to be careful, nonetheless, in its nod to blaxploitation without simultaneously alienating its white audience (Chapman 163). For example, though Solitaire’s part was written for a black actress, United Artists concluded that it “would be difficult . . . to sell a picture with a white leading man and a black leading lady” (Smith and Lavington 128). It is especially important to note, in terms of a sexually potent masculinity, that Solitaire, whose tarot card reading power stems from her virginity, was seduced by Bond and not by Kananga. Like many women in other Bond films who are in the employ of the villain, Solitaire is repositioned by Bond’s masculinity. She also, perhaps more importantly, is “saved from losing her virginity to the black villain by losing it first to the white hero” (Chapman 166). In light of this discussion, moreover, it is ironic to note that *Live and Let Die* screenwriter Tom Mankiewicz consciously attempted to portray black antagonists “without being patronizing” (Rubin 115). In *The James Bond Films: A Behind the Scenes History*, Steven Jay Rubin notes how Mankiewicz solved his dilemma: “It was felt that having killed off practically all the black villains, it was important to end the film without a clear victory for Bond” (116). Nonetheless, as Chapman points out, Bond still
wins, thus “reasserting the supremacy of the white hero” (166). James Bond’s popularity, nevertheless, still had to contend with political scandal and international relations.

The tensions and effects of the Vietnam War have been noted. The Watergate Scandal, of course involving government officials and even shadowy figures with CIA connections, also contributed to the transformation that would soon develop in how Hollywood represented white masculinity. Consider the following quote from K.A. Cuordileone’s book *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*:

“The Cold War cult of masculine toughness was diffused by the crises of authority that brought Johnson and then Nixon down. It was delegitimized by the catastrophe of Vietnam, which called into question the morality of America’s assertion of will and power in Southeast Asia. It was discredited, too, by Watergate, which exposed the extent to which the power of the executive branch had run dangerously amok, and raised questions about the imperial presidency” (237-238).

The “imperial presidency,” as Cuordileone calls it, denotes Johnson’s lie regarding the previously discussed Gulf of Tonkin phantom attack as well as Richard Nixon’s authorization of the break-in of the Democratic National Committee’s headquarters at the Watergate. These events, one external and one internal, created massive unrest and eventually led to a cynicism that is still pervasive. The dominant theme of many post-Vietnam and post-Watergate films, therefore, was an indictment of American leadership as well as the arrogance that precipitated these events.

Two years after Nixon’s resignation came a film about the scandal, *All the President’s Men* (1976). The film not only cinematically depicts the work of the two Washington Post reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, who painstakingly sought information that would eventually uncover the embodiment of government corruption, but it also along the way did so through the representation of a new, yet complete and accepted masculinity. Woodward and Bernstein, played by Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman, respectively, are neither John Wayne nor James Bond. They never engage in violence, an element which had defined toughness ever since the frontier. They work against the government (nation). They never shoot a gun. They never have sex. In fact,
Bernstein’s flirtation with women whose testimony might prove helpful is comically ineffective. There are no fancy cars, no tuxes, and no explosions. And, there are two! In effect, they were investigative spies, so they adapted that element from the spy genre, but they represented little of Wayne’s domineering physique or Bond’s sophistication. Because of society’s need for honesty in a world so recently dominated by Johnson’s and then Nixon’s unscrupulous acts, masculinity had to be coupled with integrity. Donald Spoto, in *Camerado: Hollywood and the American Man*, clearly agrees when he wrote in 1978 that . . .

> “the only type of appeal that works today is the kind that is linked with sociopolitical integrity, or at least with some social issue. Perhaps American audiences are becoming more honest – or at least more open about their confusion – about what constitutes an endorsably appealing man. The qualities thought attractive to women and imitable by men are no longer simply a matter of wardrobe, inflection, coloring, or physique” (83).

As part of that sociopolitical integrity, as Spoto calls it, Woodward and Bernstein toiled tirelessly during their investigation and never gave up, despite doubts from their bosses. Wayne’s toughness and Bond’s abilities had been replaced with a more believable combination of determination, integrity, and hard work. As the heroes of the Watergate Scandal, they also displayed a more believable and socially conscious ideal of masculinity.

The discussions of ideal masculinity covered so far indicate the extent to which the Vietnam War and the Watergate Scandal, the tensions of which were magnified by the Civil Rights and feminist movements, fractured the representation of masculinity in Hollywood film. Though the discussions have not included every possible film, they do address a cross-section of the period. Dirty Harry and Frank Bullitt were white officers who criticized the white establishment. Shaft, as a representation of black masculinity, did the same. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, whose partnership flies in the face of the frontier, loner myth, did as well. None of these films, however, situate any action in Vietnam. The war caused so much societal disruption that few producers and directors were willing to risk it. In fact, the only film about the Vietnam War that was actually
made during the war was *The Green Berets* (1968), a film which was covered briefly in chapter one and will receive more attention, due to its propagandistic nature, in the final chapter. Because of the importance of Vietnam-related war films, and how those films represent a fractured, white masculinity, most of the rest of this chapter will be devoted to pertinent examples. The chapter will then conclude with an example of the fissure of traditional white masculinity in *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975).

William J. Palmer, in *The Films of the Eighties: A Social History*, divides the Vietnam War films into three categories. His structure will be used to organize most of the remaining discussion. The first phase, lasting until 1979, he calls the “Epic Phase,” and includes such films as *Coming Home* (1978), *The Deer Hunter* (1978), and *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Palmer calls *Coming Home* “a domestic, soap-opera treatment of that theme” (22) and Eben J. Muse, in *The Land of Nam*, says it is simply “more of a love story” (97). Therefore, it will not be included in this study. The second phase lasts from 1980 – 1986. Because Palmer calls it the “Comic Book Phase,” the *Rambo* series will be most relevant. The third and final phase, lasting from 1987-1988, is the “Symbolic Nihilist Phase,” where filmmakers attempted to re-present the reality that the Vietnam War was, including its sad and tragic personal and collective implications. Examples include *Platoon* (1987) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987).

According to Palmer, *The Deer Hunter* “reigned for twelve years as the epic treatment of the ‘coming home’ theme” (*Films of the Eighties* 22) and deals with the guilt, confusion, and vulnerability felt by many returning Vietnam veterans (64). The film, through its representation of fractured, white masculinity, also deals with how family members and society as a whole suffered. The film begins with a group of friends, the three main of which being Michael (Robert De Niro), Stevie (John Savage), and Nick (Christopher Walken), working in a steel mill. Michael and Stevie represent the extremes of masculinity while Nick’s actions negotiate between the two. In *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War*, Susan Jeffords discusses this triangulation of masculinity. Michael, the subdued leader of the group, is a loner who doesn’t dance at Stevie’s wedding. A cowboy-like outdoorsman, Michael goes hunting after the wedding and maintains a strict code of killing a deer with one shot. The emasculated Stevie, on the other hand, is admonished by his mother for not wearing a
scarf and even celebrates (by dancing) his marriage to a woman who he knows is pregnant with another man’s child. He, unlike Michael and Nick, does not go hunting. Nick, on the other hand, tries to have it both ways. He proposes to his girlfriend but makes no certain commitment. He both dances and hunts (95). Because of his failure to negotiate between traditional and new masculinity, he is the only one to die in the film.

After a final, mellow reunion at their neighborhood bar, the movie shifts to action in the Vietnam War. The masculine Michael, as Rambo will be later, is shown fighting alone in a village with a rifle and a flamethrower as fellow soldiers, including Stevie and Nick, show up to help. The surprise reunion is brief. They are taken hostage by a group of sadistic Viet Cong who amuse themselves by betting on games of Russian roulette, using, of course, their hostages as the players. The emasculated Stevie cries during the game while Michael screams “Go ahead! Show ‘em you got balls!” Stevie breaks down, purposely fires above his head, and is replaced by Nick. Michael and Nick are able to overpower the guards and escape, saving Stevie in the process. Though inspired by Eddie Adams’ famous photograph of Vietnam’s police chief, Lt. Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Loan, assassinating a suspected Viet Cong, there is no evidence that Russian roulette was played as such a game in the Vietnam War (Palmer, The Films of the Seventies 11). It does for the purpose of this film, however, symbolize “the gamble of American intervention in Southeast Asia, a gamble which ultimately must be lost (as Nick does) or withdrawn from (as Michael urges)” (194). Nick losing his life is already clear. Michael urging withdrawal refers to later in the film, when he returns home and remembers an earlier promise to Nick that he would not leave him behind.

When Michael returns home he assumes that both Stevie and Nick are either dead or missing. He soon learns that Stevie is at a hospital and goes to see him, where he finds out that someone has been sending Stevie money from Vietnam. Knowing that Nick is the real father of Angela’s child, he suspects it is Nick. Thus, Michael, to fulfill the promise he made, returns to Vietnam to find Nick. Palmer declares that Michael’s return represents a fantasy that many Vietnam War veterans have, “the desire to go back and bring through combat buddies who didn’t make it” (The Films of the Seventies 196). Nick, now playing Russian roulette either for money or out of insanity, is urged by Michael to withdraw both from the game and from the country. Referencing Michael’s
one-shot code, Nick says “one shot,” and kills himself. It is not clear whether Nick wanted suicide or “one last shot” before his return home.

_The Deer Hunter_ ends with Nick’s funeral and illustrates the sad impact of just one loss on a community. All the friends later gather at the neighborhood bar, the last place they were all together before their direct or indirect involvement in the war, to remember and honor Nick. Over breakfast they collectively sing “God Bless America.” Palmer states that the scene “shows how everyone was touched by the war, how we were all victims, all were wounded” (_The Films of the Seventies_ 196). Jeffords adds that not only did the scene illustrate “the collectivity . . . of healing,” but also that it showed “the extent to which the current regeneration of an American ‘good’ is ultimately linked to and dependent on the regeneration of the American masculine” (_The Remasculinization of America_ 82). The focus on the American masculine, though, came at the expense of the representation of the Vietnamese.

In a lecture given at the University of Westminster in 2002, Stuart Hall defined representation as “the way in which meaning is given to the things depicted.” Meaning, then, according to Hall, did not exist until it was represented. In the case of Hollywood film, the control of the meaning came though Hollywood’s control of the means of representation through its studios, producers, and directors. Several film historians have been critical of white Hollywood’s representation of the Vietnamese in _The Deer Hunter_. Palmer condemns it as a “one-dimensional characterization of the Vietnamese as sadistic degenerates [and] avid gamblers” (_The Films of the Eighties_ 104). Muse, declaring that the Vietnamese were offered neither sympathy nor history (107), cited the fact that for Vietnam War veterans the film bore only the “slightest remembrance to their remembered war” (106). For some, then, though it did represent a masculinity that was fractured and did deal with the wide implications of war, it just wasn’t realistic. The “horror” that war was would be clearly depicted in an epic film released the next year, _Apocalypse Now_ (1979).

In a documentary titled “Heart of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse,” Francis Ford Coppola, the director of _Apocalypse Now_, states, “My film is not about Vietnam. It is Vietnam. It’s what it is really like. It’s crazy.” He also stated that the process of making the film paralleled American involvement in Vietnam in the sense that in both
cases there was too much money and too many of “us,” and, as a result, “we went insane.” Film critics took the films as Coppola intended it. Writing in “Do You Walk the Walk?: Aspects of Masculinity in Some Vietnam War Films,” John Newsinger described *Apocalypse Now* as “the Vietnam War as madness” (127). The above mentioned documentary also addresses how tensions surrounding the Vietnam War precluded films being made about it. The script for *Apocalypse Now* had been written in 1968. George Lucas considered doing it, but was turned down by fearful studios. In the decade between the release of 1968’s *The Green Berets* and 1978’s *Coming Home* and *The Deer Hunter* Hollywood instead focused on the “coming home” theme rather than producing an actual war film. Gilbert Adair, in *Vietnam on Film: From the Green Berets to Apocalypse Now*, describes this decade as a period in which Hollywood “[averted] its gaze from the horrors of war itself, opting instead for such Vietnam-related themes as campus unrest and the troubled reintegration of vets into civilian life” (114). The start of filming of *Apocalypse Now* in 1976 is not coincidental, as the American mood also embraced and elected Jimmy Carter, who was “unsullied by either Vietnam or Watergate” (143), as President. Coppola’s wealth from *The Godfather* films also allowed him to finance much of the film (“Heart of Darkness”).

Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*¹, on which *Apocalypse Now* is loosely based, is about, to summarize it simply, Marlow’s mission to return Kurtz to civilization. While the plot also involves ivory trading, Marlow, presumably the “good guy,” is to travel up river and find his compatriot. Upon arrival, however, he discovers that Kurtz has taken over a tribe of locals, and desires, though on his death bed, to remain with them. Kurtz is harshly critical of the economically imperialistic ivory trade while Marlow, much like the basis for the character of Willard in the film, struggles with his own beliefs along the way. Furthermore, as the dialectic between Cold War films is important, *Apocalypse Now* is connected to, albeit strangely, to the detective films *Bullitt*, *Dirty Harry*, and *Shaft*. Regarding *Apocalypse Now* and the detective formula, John Hellmann writes:

> “Both have isolated protagonists on a mystery/adventure who are in

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¹ Nigerian postcolonial writer Chinua Achebe has criticized *Heart of Darkness* as a racist work. The book, Achebe stipulates, characterizes Africa as the opposite of (white) Europe and, thus, the opposite of civilization. As adapted by Coppola, *Apocalypse Now* also characterizes Vietnam in the same way in its juxtaposition to the United States.
the employ of others while actually preserving their personal autonomy of judgment. In both works the protagonist encounters revelatory scenes of the depravity of his society in the course of his journey. And the final apprehension of the criminal, while on the surface restoring moral order, actually ends in dissolution, with the protagonist more cynical about his world than before” (“Vietnam and the Hollywood Genre Film 69).

As the detective formula was used to criticize a corrupt internal government, Apocalypse Now criticized through its timely focus on the horror of war American international relations.

Apocalypse Now begins with a special ops officer, Captain Willard, played by Martin Sheen, receiving orders to find and assassinate Colonel Kurtz, played by Marlon Brando. Colonel Kurtz is reminiscent of the Korean War POW’s who would rather stay with an “inferior” people than come home. Willard encounters Colonel Kilgore, who wears a cowboy hat and on which is the emblem of the cavalry. His name, a spoof of “kill/gore,” or even perhaps “kill galore,” is apt. Kilgore’s persona was shaped “from bits and pieces of old John Ford westerns” (Adair 156), thus the cowboy hat. Newsinger equates him with Custer (127), a not so effective military commander. Responsible for transporting Willard and the rest of the crew to the mouth of the river that will lead to Kurtz, Kilgore slaughters (killing galore) villagers with heavy machine gun fire just so his men can surf. He then plays cards on the dead bodies, exclaiming, with bombs dropping in the background, that he “loved the smell of napalm in the morning.” This is only one representation, done so through Kilgore’s white masculinity, of the horror of war.

As Willard and the crew travel up the river, they encounter more horrors, some of which are their own making. For example, they, in the fashion of Kilgore, murder an entire group of Vietnamese on a small boat. Willard himself calmly assassinates one of the women. This river journey, however, is not just about killing Kurtz. Willard, as a representative of the U.S. military, represents a condemnation of war itself. Though they are also attacked along the way, Willard and his crew are, it must be pointed out, in their country. Vietnamese are killed because they are in the way of surfing – or, they are just
killed. Playboy bunnies show up out of nowhere, their performance apparently intended
to increase the morale of the American soldiers. Gilbert Adair, furthermore, points out
the lunacy of “the whole concept of Kurtz reigning, like some existential Tarzan, over an
army of ‘natives’ who worship him in authentic ‘Great White Master’ style” (161).

Willard and Kurtz, then, are representations of a fractured and competing
masculinity. Willard is on a journey based on orders while Kurtz has already arrived at a
symbolic destination of rebuke for war. Willard acts for the imperialists while Kurtz has
settled for a basic and primitive culture. Upon finally meeting, Kurtz offers eloquent
commentary on the humanity of “these people” (Vietnamese, Cambodians) and addresses
the lies and actions of the United States, as depicted in Willard’s own murder of the
Vietnamese. Cognizant of Willard’s true mission, Kurtz recognizes Willard’s right to
complete his mission but refuses the assassin the right to judge him. Although the entire
film leads up to Willard killing Kurtz as the climax, one must examine Willard’s
transformation in the course of the film. After all, voiceovers reveal his thoughts and
declare his “confession.”

The importance of Willard killing Kurtz in the end is made more complicated by
Coppola’s direction. By the end of the over-budget filming project, Coppola had filmed
three endings – Willard killing Kurtz, Willard joining Kurtz, and Willard dying with
Kurtz in a bomb attack (Muse 114). Even after filming, Coppola showed up at the
Cannes Film Festival with two endings, described by Frank P. Tomasulo as an anti-war
ending, with Willard refusing to kill Kurtz, or the pro-war ending, with Willard killing
Kurtz and also exterminating the rest of the villagers (155-156). The end that
accompanies the film today is the end that effectively conjoins the fractured masculinities
that the two characters represent. Willard kills Kurtz, thus effectively becoming him
(155-156). Because of Apocalypse Now’s depiction of the horrors of war, so represented
by the simple last words of Kurtz (“The horror. The horror.”), the film “is still
unsurpassed as the Vietnam epic” (Palmer, The Films of the Eighties 22).

From the end of the Vietnam War through 1979, the year of Apocalypse Now’s
release, events in Southeast Asia confirmed to many Americans that the war had been “a
just cause after all” (Muse 78). Pol Pot’s mass murders and “reeducation camps” in
Cambodia, preceded by Vietnam’s invasions of both Laos and Cambodia, helped to
sustain the sense of frustration held by many soldiers that they were kept from winning the war by politically motivated bureaucrats. This is one of the themes of *Rambo: First Blood* (1982) and its sequel, *First Blood Part II* (1985). For the purpose of discussing the representation of masculinity in Cold War films, the first two films of the series will be covered.

The *Rambo* films are a part of the “comic book phase” of the Vietnam War film genre (Palmer, *The Films of the Eighties* 22-23). This second phase lasted from 1980-1986 (22-23). As a comic book representation of white masculinity, Rambo possessed “superhuman masculine power . . . [as a] strategy of compensation for post-defeat feelings of frustration and inadequacy” (Hellmann, “Rambo’s Vietnam and Kennedy’s New Frontier” 140). Philippa Gates, author of *Detecting Men: Masculinity and the Hollywood Detective Film*, calls Rambo a “male rampage hero,” declaring that he represented “the fear of masculinity’s loss of identity in the face of empowered women and minority men [that was] born out of a need to reclaim masculinity in the wake of the American failure in Vietnam” (128). True to the comic book nature, Rambo’s abilities were grossly larger-than-life.

*First Blood* begins much like the iconic western *Shane*, with a solitary and lonely figure walking toward a home (Hellmann, “Rambo’s Vietnam and Kennedy’s New Frontier” 143). Though the film borrows this motif from the western, Rambo, nevertheless, is no cowboy. He is a jobless, jaded Vietnam vet who is looking for a buddy, Delmar Berry, with whom he served in the Special Forces. He arrives at the Berry home only to discover that Delmar has already died from the effects of exposure to Agent Orange. Saddened, he continues into the small, adjacent town, only to be ridiculed by the local Sheriff, Will Teasle. Worried that allowing Rambo to stay in town will only attract others of his “sort,” Teasle offers the vet a ride to the city limits, stating “We don’t want guys like you in this town.” Rambo walks straight back into the city and is arrested even though he has broken no laws. Cleaned up with a high-power water hose because he “smells like an animal,” Rambo is then beaten with a night stick and mocked. It is when the deputies try to forcefully shave him that flashbacks from his days as a tortured prisoner of war occur. After he breaks out of the jail, Rambo heads to the mountains, a place from which he will eventually attack the same town that mistreated him.
The woods as a setting, due to his animalistic and wild tendency, is an important part of the film. The sheriff begins a large scale manhunt, though he has no idea of Rambo’s comic book-like superhuman abilities. John Hellmann argues that Rambo is a representative of the Viet Cong, citing Rambo’s use of booby traps, caves, and guile. In a critique of the United States, Hellmann continues, the National Guard unit that joined the sheriff’s pursuit represents the U.S. military’s ineffectiveness in Vietnam (“Vietnam and Hollywood Genre Film” 147). During the wooded hunt, Rambo could have easily killed all the deputies and even the sheriff with his skill, at one point taunting Teasle with the words, “In town you’re the law; out here it’s me.” Teasle then appears to cry. Susan Jeffords, author of *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*, uses the Rambo vs. sheriff battle to serve as an allegory for the contrasting leadership styles of Presidents Carter and Reagan:

“The very plot of the film – how a no-good, flip, useless, and soft male body is changed into a triumphant, resilient, and determined heterosexual hard body – narrates the transformations promised by the Reagan presidency. The softened, pampered, and ill-trained male body will become, for the Reagan imaginary, the body of the Carter presidency, the body that was unable to defend its country/its town/its values against outsiders” (32).

In fact, Rambo’s body in the film was juxtaposed against the police and the National guardsmen (33). Rambo is muscular while the sheriff is fat. Rambo is an elite fighter while the part-time guardsmen, in one case more interested in “getting back to the pharmacy,” flinch at bullets and cower despite their overwhelming numerical supremacy. Jeffords also refers to the practice of feminizing Rambo’s opponents as “cultural remasculinization” (Carton 301). Meanwhile, in comic book fashion, Rambo’s body, adding to the symbolism and allegories already discussed, is used “not as a vehicle for weapons, but as a weapon itself” (Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America* 12).

Colonel Sam Trautman, the man who recruited, trained, and led Rambo in Vietnam, shows up to warn the bumbling police and guardsmen of their nemesis’s Congressional Medal of Honor-level skill. Trying to coax Rambo out of the woods, Rambo replies, “There are no friendly civilians,” a statement which certainly reflected the frustration many veterans felt regarding how they had been treated upon return home.
from fighting. Trautman is only able to get to Rambo after the “superhero” had blown up a gas station, destroyed many of the town’s businesses, and ruined the sheriff’s department. In an attempt to persuade Rambo to end the rampage, Colonel Trautman says, “This mission is over.” Rambo then angrily responds, “Nothing is over! Nothing! You just don’t turn it off! I did what I had to do to win, but somebody wouldn’t let us win!” Though he cries at the end, his image as a white, masculine superhero is used as a political message for all those vets frustrated, much like Dirty Harry, Shaft, or Woodward and Bernstein, with the American government.

At the end of the first Rambo, the hero is arrested. At the beginning of the sequel, he is shown in a prison camp, there busting rocks as punishment. Colonel Trautman shows up and offers a presidential pardon to the prisoner if he is willing to join a special reconnaissance mission to locate prisoners of war in Vietnam. Whereas Rambo: First Blood ends with Rambo’s condemnation of American policymakers whose policies prevented victory in Vietnam, Rambo: First Blood Part II begins with Rambo asking Trautman a simple question, “Do we get to win this time?” He is then transported to Thailand and meets a government official of unclear title named Murdock. Murdock is in charge of the mission and instructs Rambo to take only pictures of the camp. He specifically orders Rambo not to take action. Rambo’s final orders are to rendezvous with a Vietnamese operative after his arrival.

Rambo does meet up with the operative, but surprisingly it is a woman. Hellmann points out that in First Blood Rambo “aligns himself with nature and a fellow black soldier against white society and in part II with a woman against ‘exploitative men’” (“Rambo’s Vietnam and Kennedy’s New Frontier” 141). In both cases, therefore, Rambo aligns himself with the “other” against the white, patriarchal society. Furthermore, though Rambo in First Blood: Part II is described by Trautman as “half Indian, half German,” he is represented as white. Philippa Gates says that his German ancestry allows for a white representation while his Indian blood allows for violence, thereby establishing a “white, masculine American hero in the face of the feminizing and racially ‘other’ enemy – the Vietnamese” (130) who is also skilled in the use of knives and bows and arrows. Gaylyn Studlar and David Desser, combining Rambo’s white masculinity
with Indian blood, equate Rambo with the frontiersman and the Vietnamese as the Indians of a frontier captivity story, offering the following argument:

“In this formula, a lone frontier adventurer is ambushed and held captive by the Indians. They recognize his superior abilities and wish to adopt him, but he escapes, reaches an outpost, and with the help of a handful of other settlers wins a gruesome siege against hundreds of his former captors. Sanctified by the trial of captivity, the hunter confronts an Otherness, represented by the wilderness and the Indians, that threatens to assimilate him into barbarism. Through vengeance, he finds his identity – as a white, civilized, Christian male” (107 – 108).

This analogy is nearly exactly how First Blood Part II plays out.

Though Rambo does have initial assistance from the Vietnamese operative, Co Bao, he performs most of the heroics alone. Overstepping his orders, he attempts to rescue the hostages. After Rambo carries a hostage back to the place where they are to be picked up by Murdock’s helicopter, Murdock abandons the mission, thereby metaphorically representing how the U.S. government abandoned American soldiers during the war. Rambo, as a result of Murdock’s decision, is taken hostage, tortured, and, as the analogy suggests, breaks out to plan his “gruesome siege” against the Other. Co, representing the “good” Other, yearns to come to the United States, thus validating American ideals. Sadly, though, she is killed, forcing Rambo to fight alone. After her death, Rambo, as a part of the comic book phase of the Vietnam War film, is, in a truly super-heroic fashion, able to kill singlehandedly countless Vietnamese and Russians, free the POWs, and destroy Murdock’s headquarters.

As examples of the comic book phase, the Rambo films ignore the reality of the pain, suffering, and death experienced by the Vietnamese. In both films, Rambo is seen as the victim of Vietnamese or Russian torturers, of the sheriff, or of society that didn’t honor his and his friends’ sacrifices (Jeffords, The Remasculinization of America 97). Rambo also validates the veterans’ sacrifices and restores some amount of pride for those former soldiers by rescuing the very hostages whose government has ignored them, or by exonerating the soldiers for the loss of the war and placing the blame on corrupt
politicians, to paraphrase Jeffords (129, 146). It is a very American-centered and white-centered approach, delivered through Rambo’s representation of masculinity. The third and final phase of the Vietnam War film, following the “epic” phase and the “comic book” phase, would address how the reality of war affected both sides, giving voice to the Other as well as to African-American soldiers.

Palmer characterizes the third phase of the Vietnam War film, which he dubs the “symbolic nihilist phase,” as the “whole concept of ‘re-presenting’ reality” (The Films of the Eighties 38). It, by definition, removes the superhuman, comic book-like elements as represented by Rambo. For example, it did not include, as First Blood Part II, some “preposterous military mission concocted by a scriptwriter to display a central character’s solitary daring” (Cawley 71). Rather, the films in this phase attempted to depict the reality of war itself, including elements of fraternity, loyalty, and bravery as well as awful aspects of war such as pain and suffering (Newsinger 126). Moreover, the films to be discussed, Platoon (1986) and Full Metal Jacket (1987), represent a masculinity that is fractured (129), using a “boys into men story” motif as its vehicle (129).

Platoon begins as a young soldier, Chris Taylor, departs for Vietnam. The image of his departure in this scene is met by an image of the return of a group of tattered and injured soldiers. They are expressionless and distant. There is also the image of body bags being unloaded from the same aircraft that is about to transport Taylor to Vietnam. The young soldier’s uniform is still crisp and unsullied by the war in which he is about to engage. Apparently, nonetheless, in a voiceover in the form of a letter to his grandmother, these images, along with “humping” though the jungle the first week, help him realize that his dropping out of college to fulfill some notion of living up to his father’s and grandfather’s military service in previous wars may have been a “big mistake.” He quickly realizes, upon seeing for himself the danger that now surrounds him, that survival is most important, even more important than winning the war. The reality of the prospect of death stands in contrast to Rambo’s focus on winning. It is part of the reality represented by this third phase, and has a very real Cold War basis. The Red Cross, for example, handed out calendars to the soldiers (Jeffords, The Remasculinization of America 7). Many soldiers, as Taylor typifies, on any given day
could tell you exactly how many days they had left until departure. They were not worried about bureaucrats. They were worried about making it home.

*Platoon* depicts the fraternity of the soldiers, but also the discomfort of Vietnam’s environment and the horror of war itself. The soldiers have to hike all day and take turns staying up at night to avoid sneak attacks. It is very hot. Leeches and ants are constant nuisances. A hellish firefight against the Viet Cong could erupt at any second, resulting in the loss of fellow soldiers. One new soldier, Gardner, didn’t even make it a month. Taylor refers to these soldiers as the “bottom of the barrel,” referring to the fact that the country’s poor usually fight the wars. He also calls them, though, the “heart and soul of the nation.”

It would not be accurate to refer to Taylor’s unit, however, as unified. In fact, the film makes use of factions within the platoon to represent a fractured masculinity, between which Taylor, like Nick in *The Deer Hunter*, tries to negotiate. The two factions are headed by Sergeant Elias, a more reserved and compassionate leader, and Sergeant Barnes, a hard-nosed leader with a more brutal outlook on war. Their leadership styles in the field parallel their party style while on standby. The more carefree Elias leads his group in smoking marijuana and homoerotic dancing while Barnes’ group bites chunks of metal out of beer cans (Newsinger 129). This difference in style is further depicted in the very next sequence, as the two factions, though one platoon, enter a village after a couple of their men have been killed by a booby trap. This event, dated January 1, 1968 in the film, is less than a month before the actual Tet Offensive and only about ten weeks removed from the actual My Lai Massacre, an event in which American soldiers killed approximately 500 Vietnamese civilians and on which this scene is based. Barnes’s hard-core group, angry over the loss of their comrades, begins killing Vietnamese civilians, including a woman. Taylor, also incensed, shoots at a man’s feet to make him “dance.” Taylor nearly gives in to his anger, but doesn’t. One of Barnes’s men kills the man with the butt of his rifle. Barnes himself is about to kill a little girl when Elias, showing up late, stops him. True to their natures, they fight over how to treat the villagers – either compassionately or brutally. Barnes’s men begin to burn the village while Elias’s men help the villagers carry their belongings. The battle between the two sergeants, as Clyde Taylor describes it in “The Colonialist Subtext in Platoon,” is a battle for Taylor’s soul.
Taylor, though, seems to side with Elias by attempting to end a rape of a little girl by some of Barnes’ men, for which he is called a “homo.” The violence represented here is what separates *Platoon* from *Rambo*. Rambo, according to Harry Haines in “They Were Called and Went,” “helped remove the Vietnam veteran from any specific historical context . . . [and] avoids the soldier’s knowledge of the peasants’ suffering” (88). Rambo also only “incidentally” and “unfortunately” kills civilians (88). *Platoon*, however, illustrates the depravity of some of the soldiers. It depicts American soldiers as either hardened killers or just wanting to survive, not patriotic fighters of freedom interested in, like Rambo, winning.

Barnes’ ruthlessness reemerges in the next battle scene. In the chaos of a fight against the Viet Cong, Barnes shoots Elias to prevent his testimony at a court martial that might come out of the massacre in the village. During their retreat, Barnes tells other members of the platoon that Elias is dead so that no one will help him. The group is then rescued by a helicopter and they see Elias, being chased by the VC, running for his life. He is shot and killed. Newsinger’s interpretation of this event is that “for the time being the dark side of American masculinity has triumphed” (130). As the triangulation of masculinity that is represented by Barnes, Elias, and Taylor is most crucial to this discussion, the remainder of the film that involves Taylor trying to kill Barnes is most important. In the next large-scale battle, Taylor and Barnes confront each other, only to be knocked unconscious by a bomb. Waking up the next morning, Taylor shoots and kills the semi-conscious Barnes, thus “exorcising the dark side of human nature” (Klein 27) that had been momentarily victorious since Barnes had killed Elias.

At the end of the film, a wounded Taylor in a final voiceover states his realization that the Vietnam War was against more than just the Vietnamese: “We did not fight the enemy. We fought ourselves, and the enemy was us.” This mindset furthermore separates the film from Rambo, who believed the enemy was American politicians and bureaucrats who were more concerned with political expediency than with winning the war. Both mindsets are simplistic, as David Desser notes in “Charlie Don’t Surf: Race and Culture in Vietnam War Films.” He states:

“But, of course, we did fight the enemy, or fought something, *someone*, and the failure to acknowledge this is indicative of a larger failure to
examine the Vietnam foray in the first place and a continued failure to come to terms with it” (88).

That “failure to examine the Vietnam foray” was represented in the war genre, as no war film that directly treated Vietnam’s battles was filmed in between 1968’s *The Green Berets* and 1986’s *Platoon*. *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) did at least continue the dialogue, especially with the memory and in critique of John Wayne’s white, patriotic masculinity.

Stanley Kubrick, the director of *Full Metal Jacket*, severely criticizes John Wayne’s representation of masculinity. Kubrick understood all too well the impact of the frontier myth and the popularity of the western in American culture. According to Mark Cronlund Anderson, author of *Cowboy Imperialism and Hollywood Film*, “the myth champions and rationalizes American expansionism as unavoidably good because territorial expansion produces and promotes Americanization, a self-evident good, according to mythical Americana” (23). Also, a part of that rationalization of American expansionism is the myth of the United States being a “city on a hill.” Some call it American exceptionalism, and with it comes a desire to expand or either a justification of expansion so that you can bring to the world (let your light shine as a “city on a hill”) your values and, perhaps more importantly, your goods. This is certainly indicative of propagandist films in John Wayne’s career such as *The Alamo* and *The Green Berets*. Both films, either heavily financed or supported by Wayne’s political ideals, served as Cold War allegories for democracy, capitalism, or support for the Vietnam War.

Kubrick, on the other hand, mocks the “boys to men” aspect of war that was prevalent in *Platoon* and leads the viewer to rethink the symbolism of the American West, especially the cowboy, through the representation of masculinity.

Whereas *Platoon* began with Chris Taylor and his fellow soldiers’ departure for the war, *Full Metal Jacket* begins with basic training. This was where, according to the film, the boys would be turned into men. Kubrick, however, combined a failed policy in Vietnam with the need to produce soldiers who could fight within the confines of such a failed policy. According to Michael Klein, in “Historical Memory, Film, and the Vietnam Era,” Kubrick wanted to portray the final product not as representations of an ideal masculinity, but as dehumanized killers. He writes:

“U.S. policy in the Vietnam land war was based upon a draconian
strategy of counterinsurgency: search and destroy missions; free-fire zones; destruction of the countryside and/or of the NLF’s base areas; attainment kill quotas. This strategy necessitated the production of a special kind of soldier, one who would not relate to potential objects of genocide (male or female) as fellow human beings” (30).

This required, Klein continues, producing a soldier who believed in the superiority of the United States, or the country as a “city on a hill,” and who had no feminine qualities (30).

*Full Metal Jacket*, then, begins with a group of new recruits on the first day of boot camp, the place where they will be both dehumanized and de-feminized. The very first scene is the de-feminization of the recruits through the shaving of their heads (Newsinger 132). The drill instructor, Sergeant Hartman, sarcastically calls them “ladies,” informing them that they won’t be men until he has finished with them.

Hartman not only tries to break them down through insults, but also tries to remove their identities for the purpose of rebuilding them. He calls a black recruit “Snowball” while offering the nickname “Cowboy” to a recruit from Texas. These two nicknames combine the tradition and importance of Turner’s white frontier on the United States. Anderson compares the rebuilding of the recruits to how the frontier “stripped down” white, male immigrants (37). Anderson states that “whereas Turner’s frontier fashions Marlboro men, Kubrick reinterprets the process to birth a dehumanized killer” (39). During the litany of Hartman’s insults, one recruit mocks Hollywood’s use of John Wayne as a masculine prototype by mumbling “Is that you, John Wayne? Is this me?” Hartman, infuriated, punches him in the stomach and gives him the nickname “Joker.” Michael Anderegg discusses the lunacy of attempting to fashion the identity of recruits by mimicking a cinematic representation:

“John Wayne seems simultaneously a potent symbol of toughness and bravery and a grim joke. The point about John Wayne as hero is the impossibility, the sheer fantasy of his heroic image; to be like John Wayne, to mimic his words, his mannerisms, his actions, is to imitate an imitation” (“Hollywood and Vietnam” 28).

Hartman’s process of breaking the men down continues, as he orders them to sleep with their rifles, to give their rifles a girl’s name, and to be “faithful” to their rifles. He also
leads them, with one hand on holding their rifles and the other hand holding their penises, in a repetitive chant – “This is my rifle, this is my gun – this is for fighting, this is for fun.” His ultimate goal, as he states, is to turn them into “ministers of death, praying for war.”

The main object of Hartman’s scorn during boot camp is recruit Leonard Lawrence. Like the sheriff in Rambo, Lawrence is overweight, which in this case, since he is the opposite of the tough, muscular, and manly marine, means feminized. Lawrence smirks during the insults, causing the supermasculine Hartman to choke him. Hartman then gives him the nickname “Gomer Pyle,” a character on both “The Andy Griffith Show” and “Gomer Pyle – USMC” that was played by Jim Nabors, allegedly a homosexual (Willoquet-Maricondi 8). The unmanly Pyle is unable to perform on the obstacle course or even keep his left from his right. He can’t do a single pull-up. Hartman, therefore, is especially brutal to Pyle, making him walk with his pants down while sucking his thumb, teaching him left from right by slapping both sides of his face, and ordering the entire squad to punish him whenever he makes a mistake. The group attempts to “purge [him] of [his] feminine nature and dependencies” (Muse 190) by beating him with bars of soap wrapped in towels, and he starts to do better. Joker is even assigned to help him, teaching him such domestic (or feminine) activities as lacing boots and making his bed. Most of the recruits take the masculinization process well, but Pyle starts to break down. By the time he makes it to graduation, Pyle represents a weakened and soft masculinity. In a fragile emotional and psychological state, he kills the exact opposite representation of his own masculinity, the super-tough Hartman, and then himself.

Much like Nick in The Deer Hunter and Chris in Platoon, Joker negotiates between two opposite masculinities, the softness of Pyle’s and the brutality of Hartman’s. Joker succeeded at boot camp and arrives in Vietnam representing both masculinities, with a peace symbol on his jacket and a Hartman-style motto on his helmet, “Born to Kill.” As a writer for a military newspaper, he is in the non-violent journalist component of the Marines but wants and asks to see action. During a helicopter ride the gunner kills fleeing, unarmed Vietnamese and admits to having also killed women and children. When Joker asks how he could do this, the gunner sarcastically responds, “Easy. You
just don’t lead them as much.” *Apocalypse Now* offers a similar scene, but Kubrick is saying “that unless we adopt another perspective we are no more than helicopter machine-gunners” (Klein 30).

The representation and negotiation of white masculinities is strongly juxtaposed to the representation of the Other in this film. When Joker arrives in the combat zone, he is asked by a Colonel about the contradictions of wearing a peace symbol and having the slogan “Born to Kill” on his helmet. Joker responds vaguely that it refers to the “duality of man,” which could also refer to the dual representations of white masculinity (Pyle and Hartman, with himself as a mixture of the two) or even to how white masculinity is juxtaposed to that of the Other’s. The Colonel’s immediate retort is to tie the war to American exceptionalism. He states “Inside every gook there is an American trying to get out.” Kubrick later connects this statement directly to the American Indian by having the soldiers compare their battles to Custer versus the Indians, with, of course, the “gooks” being the Indians. Immediately after the “gooks will be the Indians” scene, part of the squad is shown negotiating with a Vietnamese prostitute “outside a theater advertising *The Lone Ranger* and displaying a poster of a Native American” (Willoquet-Maricondi 12).

Perhaps the most important “other” in the film is the Viet Cong sniper at the end. By this point in the film, Joker has reunited with Cowboy and has joined up with his friend’s squad. The sniper kills both 8-Ball, a black soldier, and then Cowboy. The rest of the Marines attempt to sneak in the building to kill the sniper whom both the soldiers and the audience assume to be a male enemy. Nevertheless, the sniper is a woman. This sniper, therefore, being neither white, male, nor Christian, represents in every way a complete Other (Klein 32). Injured by Rafterman but not killed, Joker kills her, becoming more like the slogan on his helmet than the peace symbol on his jacket. How we view the sniper has been conditioned, Jeffords argues, by the representation of two previous Vietnamese prostitutes (Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America* 177). Jeffords also declares that this scene makes the film . . .

“a more definitive depiction of the feminine as enemy and rewrites the novel as a story of a gendered opposition between masculine and feminine, a battle that the masculine must win in order to survive the
Joker, therefore, overcame his feminine qualities. He proves he is a man (Willoquet-Maricondi 6). Newsinger characterizes Joker’s killing of the female sniper as a “pornographic experience, cheered on by other men” (133-134). By using Joker to kill a woman, especially since he mocked John Wayne and questioned a helicopter gunner as to how he could do the same thing, Kubrick “criticizes the whole process of masculinization by showing that it involves not only the defeat of an ‘other’ (female, or otherwise) but, more fundamentally, the defeat of the very self” (6).

*Full Metal Jacket* depicts the transformation of Marine recruits into, as Hartman would put it, “men.” Pyle, of course, could not handle boot camp. Joker attempted to negotiate his masculinity, but became a killer by the end. After he kills the sniper, the Marines leave the town, marching and singing the “Mickey Mouse Song.” A group of “killers” singing “M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E, Mickey Mouse, Mickey Mouse” just doesn’t fit with what just happened. Willoquet-Maricondi argues that this scene “represents a return to childhood that puts into question the process of maturation and masculinization we have just witnessed” (18). Klein states that the scene is reminiscent of the “senselessness” of similar acts by the Nazis (33). By using the motifs of the frontier, Kubrick is saying that what once was a cherished representation of white masculinity, as was John Wayne, is now senseless and childish.

Whereas these films represent the angst caused by the Vietnam War and the Watergate Scandal and critique the establishment through a fractured masculinity, *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), a good film with which to conclude this chapter, does so through the collapse of masculinity. The film begins with the date of the actual event on which the film is based, a robbery of a Chase Manhattan bank in Brooklyn, New York on August 22, 1972. In the film, though, the sign on the bank reads “First Brooklyn Savings Bank.” Three men enter the bank. One of them gets frightened and decides to take the subway home, leaving the two main figures, Sonny and Sal, to finish the job. Sonny, the leader of the duo, is smart and knows what fake money looks like as well as where the alarm trips are. However, he is also foolish, as his plan to burn the traveler’s checks register causes enough smoke to alert someone outside to call the police. The situation then devolves into a hostage crisis.
Due entirely to the tensions arising from Vietnam and Watergate, *Dog Day Afternoon* makes heroes out of a bisexual bank robber, Sonny, and a naïve accomplice, Sal. They are not tough and violent like Frank Bullitt, Harry Callahan, or John Shaft. They are not icons in the style of John Wayne or James Bond. Indeed, they have no comic book-like heroic talents such as Rambo. The bisexual Sonny, rather, is robbing the bank to get the money for a sex change for his “wife,” Leon. Sal, meanwhile, is a pliant, naïve simpleton who thinks Wyoming is a foreign country. According to Joan Mellen, Sonny’s masculinity comes from his humanity (342). He allows one of the female hostages to take a call from her husband, is concerned about the security guard with asthma, and pays for the pizza for the hostages.

Sonny’s compassion for the hostages, whose innocence he recognizes, is coupled with outright contempt for law enforcement and the government. He deals sternly with the police negotiator, telling the overweight and, therefore, feminized officer that he’s a Vietnam vet, so killing means nothing to him. He also might not be a representation of physical toughness, but he endears himself to the supportive crowd outside the bank by leading them in the chant “Attica! Attica! Attica!” He and the onlookers, then, taunt the police officers by reminding them of the 1971 prison riot that resulted in the, what some think, needless killing of inmates. Vincent Canby, a film critic for *The New York Times*, stated, in describing Al Pacino’s representation of Sonny, that the bisexual bank robber had “a great deal of bravura style and sidewalk wit [as he made] his periodic forays outside the bank to talk to the cops and the Mardi-Gras-like crowds” (“FILM VIEW” 129). Sonny also successfully negotiates transport for the entire group, including the remaining hostages, to the airport, where a plane is waiting to take them to a foreign country of his choice.

In addition to being both compassionate and stern, Sonny’s masculinity is further complicated by the fact that he has two wives and by his treatment of them. One of his wives is a woman while the other, whom he married in a drag ceremony, is, of course, a man. All of this means little to the crowd, as they hold up signs reading “We Love You Sonny” and “Sonny all the way” to show their anti-establishment sentiment. In fact, Sonny is represented as being very comfortable and secure in his bisexuality, leading Mellen to conclude that he is “more masculine” due to this confidence (9). Sonny,
furthermore, is an enigma. He treats hostages well, but his previous dealings with his two wives is depicted as harsh. His female wife, Angela, is clearly exasperated and angry with how she has been treated. She doesn’t understand Sonny’s love for Leon or her husband’s planned robbery. Leon, meanwhile, had previously attempted suicide as a way to get away from Sonny.

The breakdown of masculinity is represented again at the end of the film when Sonny writes out his will. He leaves money to both his wives, using tender and loving language. Money is left specifically to Leon, his “darling wife,” for the sex change operation. He declares that Angela was the only woman he ever loved. He also demands the military funeral that his service in Vietnam entitles him to. Immediately after this, however, he uses the hostages as pawns for his escape. He uses them as shields, boards the awaiting vehicle, and is driven to the airport. As in the actual event, though, Sal was killed and Sonny taken into custody.

The Cold War plus the Watergate Scandal, then, created anti-war and anti-government sentiment. These tensions are reflected in the era’s cinema and are reflected also in the changing representations of ideal white masculinity. Cinema, using the anti-hero as its vehicle, began to harshly criticize the government as well as social norms. The attack on corrupt politicians in general that initially began with figures such as Bullitt, Harry Callahan, Shaft, and Woodward and Bernstein eventually evolved into a specific critique of the Vietnam War. *The Deer Hunter* showed the impact of war on individuals while *Apocalypse Now* depicted the horror of war itself. The cartoon-like figure of Rambo represented all those veterans who were frustrated with not winning the Vietnam War, regardless of war’s horror. And near the end of the Cold War films such as *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket* depicted the transformation of boys into men while mocking the masculinization process. Only in a Cold War that caused governments to engage in these questionable activities, though, could *Dog Day Afternoon*’s bisexual bank robber with a fractured representation of masculinity be elevated to a hero status.
CHAPTER 4
FROM HYPE TO HYPOCRISY

Writing to a friend regarding the impact of the frontier on American history, historian Frederick Jackson Turner stated that he one day hoped “to see the subject developed more fully in regard to the effect of the advance of these pioneer fringes upon economics, politics, and society” (Jacobs 171). Decades later, George F. Kennan, author of the Cold War policy of containment, was criticized by historian William Appleman Williams for failing “to probe the relationship between economic forces and foreign policy” (Williams 106). Though not apparent initially, Hollywood film as an industry merges Turner’s combination of economics, politics, and culture with Williams’ desire to study the relationship between economic forces and foreign policy. This chapter, therefore, will study not only the historical partnership between Hollywood and the U.S. government but will also examine how the government used the representation of white masculinity in Hollywood film as its chosen and preferred ambassador for capitalism.

The government of the United States has a long history of using Hollywood film for propagandistic purposes. And the Hollywood film industry likewise has a long history of exhibiting a willingness to be used for such purposes. This mutually beneficial relationship, as will be shown, enriched Hollywood while furthering the nation’s foreign policy objectives. The government, specifically offices at the Commerce Department and later the Pentagon, often approved and edited scripts and story lines out of diplomatic concerns. Hollywood, as the recipient of government assistance and cooperation that not only saved them money during the production process but also enabled them to dominate the world’s movie screens, obliged. Though the partnership is especially important during the Cold War, it is also crucial to explore the symbiotic relationship that existed in the interwar years. The historical cooperation that existed before World War II serves as an important preface to understanding their Cold War affiliation.

In 1919, Paramount Studios announced plans to open, lease, or build theatres in England (Segrave 19). Many British citizens were outraged. Those citizens, tired of “American scenery, American flags, American divorce courts, and American customs” (“Protest Film Invasion” 13), protested the “American invasion” and called for
government action. During the ensuing debates in parliament, J.A. Seddon, a prominent member of the Labor Party, stated the following:

“I admire much in the United States, but it is a business nation. There is going to be a great scramble for the trade of the world, and we cannot see the peaceful penetration and capture of such a powerful means of popular education as the picture houses. It would enable the Americans in a couple of decades to undermine our national ideals” (13).

Despite the debates taking place in the British parliament, Hollywood’s dominance of England’s movie screens began. One reason for this was a Hollywood technique called “block booking,” whereby nations were forced to buy a certain number of American films each year regardless of quality. This technique forced British cinema owners to rent “twenty or more pictures which [were] less desirable and which he may not [have] wished to rent or exhibit at all” just to rent one popular film (Seabury, “British Producers” X7). Hollywood’s cultural invasion of England through film exasperated British cinematographers since the cinema owners could rent an American film cheaper than they could make one in England. Economic concerns and fear of losing money prevented the English from making their own films, thus creating a dependent and tense relationship with Hollywood.

Tensions between England and the United States continued throughout the 1920s as the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), an organization that was created in the wake of Hollywood’s banishment from Mexico to help the United States dominate the global film industry, increased Hollywood’s share of the British market. The MPPDA was successful, as “Hollywood’s colonization of the British market was such that by the middle 1920s over 90% of the films shown in British cinemas were American” (Reeves 137). In 1923, England considered placing a 33% tax on American films in order to protect its domestic industry. This, however, would have drastically impacted the domestically-owned theatres that depended on American movies to make profits (Vasey 44). This catch-22 of protecting English culture at the cost of closed theatres or lost jobs, itself a form of imperialism, prompted the development of other strategies. In 1927, the British parliament passed legislation requiring that British theatres show British-made films at least 7.5% of the time (Sklar 233). In 1928, England
banned the practice of block-booking altogether (Segrave 46). Hollywood’s response, typical of its arrogant imperialism, would be both patronizing and condescending.

Hollywood lectured the European producers while simultaneously working with the U.S. government to obtain political leverage. With a commitment to assuring dominance of the global film industry by Hollywood producers (Trumpbour 63), the Department of Commerce, at the request of the head of the MPPDA, Will H. Hays, created the Motion Picture Section to both monitor and influence foreign cinematic markets (Segrave 66). Hays, with authorization from the Commerce Department to use the threat of an American boycott of any foreign nation that restricted the access of American films (Trumbour 65), became a virtual delegate of international trade. Hays’ influence within government, therefore, enabled Hollywood to pursue a policy of cultural imperialism through cinematic dominance. England, however, was not the only nation to be economically and politically abused by Hollywood.

The example of Hollywood, led by Hays and assisted by the U.S. government, culturally dominating England was replicated in Germany as well. Between 1919 and 1933, Germany attempted several times to either restrict or outright close its film market to American firms. In 1919, Germany placed an embargo on all American films (Segrave 18). The American firms, however, continued to smuggle its films into Germany, prompting the German government to outright ban the screening of American films the following year (“Germany Puts Ban on American Movies” E1). Hays, in an effort to place economic pressure on Germany, lobbied American banks to limit or even cease loans to Germany (Segrave 36). This move by Hays could have been responsible for the eventual destabilization of the German currency in 1924. This economic instability enabled Hollywood to flood the German market with American films, effectively driving many German production studios into bankruptcy (Reeves 93). The German companies, organized as The League of German Cinema Owners, met in late 1924 and requested a ban on foreign films during 1925 (“Would Bar All Our Films” 26). Paramount and MGM, in a shrewd effort to take advantage of the fledgling German studios, offered subsidies and other financial assistance to those German studios, thus receiving favorable access to the German market in return (Reeves 95). Because some Germans wanted the
economic benefits associated with the presence of American films while others preferred German-made films, an oscillating battle amongst the Germans ensued.

While the German movie industry waged “underground warfare on American pictures,” (“German Films Glorify Old Imperial Army” 3), the German government struggled with the adoption of protective policies. The decided upon German policy, adopted in late 1925, attempted to control the importation of film through theatre licenses. “The system of regulating film importations into Germany is to grant permits only to houses which agree to exhibit a ‘compensation’ German film of a certain date and a certain length” (3). Hollywood, knowing that foreign markets made up 40% of its profits (Segrave 17) and the U.S. government, an entity that viewed film as “a voiceless salesman for the goods it pictures in its scenes” (“Germany Restricts Use of Our Films” XX3), circumvented German policy with several measures. One of those methods was to import German acting talent, thereby “crippling them [the German movie industry] and at the same time gaining the [German] people’s affections” (Vasey 163). Hays also courted the Germans with the promise of access to the American market, albeit with the caveat that those German films “meet the standards of our audiences” (“Deplores Barriers” 25). This pledge by Hays was met by distrust and paranoia by the Germans and by 1929 Germany had capped the number of imported films to 210 a year (Segrave 32). The oscillating power struggle between Germany and American movie producers ended when Adolf Hitler became the German leader in 1933. Hitler nationalized the German cinema and concentrated the power of the industry under the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, gathering support for this plan by blaming the problems of the industry on Jews (Reeves 93).

American interests also battled the French motion picture industry while concurrently struggling with English and German interests. American interests, moreover, had to battle French culture itself. Although France had been a pre-World War I cinematic power, by 1927 only 5% of the nation’s films were French-made. American films controlled 80% of the French market (Segrave 37). Fearful of an American economic and cultural invasion, France took measures to protect both its economy and culture. In a fit of linguistic Puritanism, the French banned the word “Boche” from use in titles or subtitles. “Boche” was American slang for Germany (“France Bans” 19).
France also became upset over the depiction of its men and women in American films. The French Association of Motion Picture Exhibitors passed a resolution on November 17, 1927 urging Hollywood to “cease making films which portray the men of France as without morality and French women as dolls for everyone’s amusement (“French Move to End Films That Offend” 8). The cultural invasion and degradation of France, in addition to economic concerns, spurred the French to restrict American films. The French government not only enacted a quota system which established an 8:1 protective ratio but also strictly defined what a French film was. “It must be produced by a French company; the scenario must be written by a French citizen; the producer, operators, and assistants must be French and the greater part of the scenes must be produced in French studios, though exteriors may be taken beyond the French frontiers” (“French Movie Plan Worries Americans” 7). Threatened by restrictions, Hays, inconsiderate of French national pride, began to exert political pressure. Working in conjunction with Myron Herrick, the U.S. ambassador to France, Hays, as virtually an officer of the government himself, threatened France with a complete American boycott of all French goods as well as with high tariffs (Segrave 39). This extreme pressure resulted in a French retreat of the 8:1 quota. Instead, the French decided on a 4:1 ratio (“French Defer Curb” 24). By May of 1928, less than a year after the 8:1 quota was proposed and less than two months after the 4:1 compromise, France, still suffering through diplomatic pressure and cultural embarrassment, abandoned the quota proposal altogether. This staggering reversal took place due to the prospect of a complete withdrawal by Hollywood from the French market and in effect turned what started out to be an 8:1 ratio (in favor of the French) to a 7:1 ratio in favor of the United States (“France Abandons” 1). France’s quota threat had, however, political repercussions. Senator Shortridge of California threatened to “find ways and means to convince that republic of the unwisdom and folly of her legislation” (“Hints at Reprisals” 4). A week after Senator Shortridge’s inflammatory rhetoric, American film officials in France fired approximately 1,000 of its French employees and threatened that 9,000 more would be terminated if the quota system was ever adopted (“1,000 Lose Film Jobs” 9). The extraordinary amount of political and economic pressure placed on France by the Hollywood film industry and the U.S. government led to the French ignoring whatever
protective or restricted measures they themselves passed. By 1931, France had removed all restrictions on American films (“France Ends Curb” 8). In 1932, a new cap on foreign movies was enacted but due to American pressure it was ignored (Segrave 109). As in Germany and England, the American movie producers gained favorable concessions from the French through its formidable partnership with the U.S. government.

Although England, Germany, and France constituted Europe’s main cinematic powers, the MPPDA yearned to dominate the rest of Europe’s smaller, yet still profitable markets. These smaller nations met Hollywood’s attempts at economic and cultural imperialism with an easily conquered hostility. In 1926, Poland, inspired by the French, placed a 20:1 quota on American films. Bowing to pressure, Poland compromised at 10:1 and then abandoned the idea altogether (Segrave 47). That same year witnessed attempts by Hungary to place taxes on American films, resulting in Hollywood’s boycott of Hungary and the firings of over one hundred Hungarian workers (“Film Boycott on Hungary” 13). Hungary, as a result, caved in to American demands. The threat of boycotts by Hollywood also worked in several other European nations pursuing protective measures such as Austria, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. In every case the European nations either rescinded legislation or just did not enforce it (Segrave 47, 103-104). Feeling impotent and powerless, the Europeans decided that fighting together might be more effective than fighting alone.

In the midst of the previously discussed cultural, economic, and political struggles, the Europeans joined to form the International Motion Picture Congress. Meeting in late 1926 under the auspices of the League of Nations, of which the United States was not a member, the Congress passed resolutions to ensure that the cultures of each respective nation received respect. The resolutions encouraged movie producers to study and appreciate the nations which were being depicted as well as to “avoid presenting foreign nations in an embarrassing or ridiculous light” (Seabury, Motion Picture Problems 357). The Congress even created a permanent committee within itself to deal with cinematic issues. The committee, in an apparent to attempt to counter the power of Hollywood and Hays, initially consisted only of European nations (357). The League, nonetheless, eventually did encourage American film makers to join their organization and even promised that Hollywood would have “nothing to lose and
something to gain” (“Plan World Movie Office” 20). The American producers, already members of the ultra powerful MPPDA which worked in conjunction with its government and not interested in global cinematic equity, refused participation in the League of Nation’s new motion picture congress.

The partnership between Hollywood and the government continued across presidencies, as evidenced by FDR’s plan to fund the representation of traditional, white masculinity with New Deal monies (Lugowski 13). FDR’s focus on the cinematic representation of heterosexual masculinity came at a time when Hollywood was “at its most queer” (12) – an era in which homosexuality had become increasingly included in film scenes. Thus, FDR was the first president to consciously use the image of the heterosexual white male as the preferred symbol of the United States. That symbol, of course, would dominate the world’s movie screens due to Hollywood’s affiliation with the Commerce Department. At the outbreak of World War II, furthermore, President Roosevelt invited Hollywood directors to the White House “in order to commission dozens of films from the standpoint of the country’s psychological call-to-arms” (Valantin 6). War films were released and Hollywood also simultaneously responded with a “swarm of anti-Hitler” films (Moser 731). Connecting Turner’s desire to study the frontier’s effects on society and politics, Hollywood also started producing westerns after the genre’s popularity had slipped in the 1930s (Stanley X1). The appropriation of the western genre clearly linked American foreign policy and Hollywood to Turner’s study of the frontier’s impact on American history and culture.

With this foundational understanding of the government’s partnership with Hollywood prior to and during World War II, actions by both entities in the first years of the Cold War can be better understood regarding the political use of the representation of the white, heterosexual male in film. A mere two weeks after the end of the war, President Truman issued executive order 9608, which dismantled the Office of War Information and reaffirmed Hollywood’s role as a tool of overseas propaganda. Speaking on August 31, 1945, the day that he signed the order, Truman stated the following:

“To the fullest possible extent, American private organizations and individuals in such fields as news, motion pictures and communications will, as in the past, be the primary means of informing foreign peoples
about this country. The government's international information program will not compete with them. Instead it will be designed to assist American private enterprises engaged in the dissemination of information abroad, and to supplement them in those specialized informational activities in which commercial or other limitations make it difficult for private concerns to carry on all necessary information work.”

Following up on Truman’s promise of assistance and non-competition, Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA, formerly the MPPDA) president Eric Johnston stated as part of the organization’s 1947 annual report that “the American motion picture will carry the ideas of Canton, Ohio to Canton, China; the point of view of Paris, Maine to Paris, France” (Segrave 141). In fact, some referred to the MPAA as the “little State Department” (144). The same year that Johnston announced his plans to spread American ideals abroad the government, perhaps not coincidentally, established a permanent film liaison office at the Pentagon (Valantin 6). Johnston, therefore, like Hays before him, combined Hollywood film and politics by marketing films “as a package of freedom and democracy for the world to unwrap” (Segrave 142). The packages, of course, also contained representations of ideal, heterosexual white masculinity.

*Red River* (1948) is an example of a Hollywood film that serves American economic interests by situating the microeconomics of the American frontier within the macroeconomics of a global economy. The movie begins with Tom Dunson, played by John Wayne, claiming the land across the Red River by killing a Mexican whose boss already owned it, thus also immediately establishing the hegemony of white masculinity over the “Other.” Dunson also brands his neighbor’s cattle that stray onto his land. Because of Dunson’s toughness that serves to magnify his white masculinity, the neighbor makes a deal with Dunson rather than fight him. Rather than viewing Wayne’s character as a thief, he is heralded for his “aggressiveness and independence [that is] idealized throughout the film” (Mellen 176). In *Big Bad Wolves* Joan Mellen links Hollywood to the nation’s historical tendency to use force, like Dunson, in its pursuit of wealth. She states:

“It is the same rationale which underlies the western’s basic approach to the American past. It knows the land was taken by conquest from
the Indians, even as the small homesteaders were displaced by mine
owners, banks, and railroads. But Hollywood was in the business of
ratifying American history, not indicting it. Here the male image comes
together with the legacy of the country. Despite its escapist and romantic
setting in the frontier past, the settling of the West poses all the problems
of an unjust society in which force and profits go together” (177).

Because Dunson’s plan of becoming a large cattle baron involves shipping his cattle east
and eventually overseas, “the legitimacy of conquest is never morally questioned because
it always produces a moral good – Americanism, or democracy” (Corkin, “Cowboys and
Free Markets” 84). Corkin connects that “Americanism” in Red River to the Cold War
by describing the film as an analogy for Wallerstein’s “World Systems Theory.” He
begins by quoting diplomatic historian Thomas McCormick’s description of the theory:

“The system consists of three successive zones, each performing a
specialized function in a complex, international division of labor. Core
countries (the First World) own most of the high tech, high profit enterprises.
The periphery (the Third World) specializes in primary production of
agricultural commodities and raw material – they are the ‘hewers of wood
and carriers of water.’ Between them the semi periphery (the Second World)
performs intermediate functions of support, local capital mobilization, and
less complex, less profitable forms of manufacturing” (76).

Using this description, Corkin describes Texas, a land of raw materials and Dunson’s
cattle, as the periphery. Corkin continues to define the Europe as the semiperiphery,
especially in light of the fact that the Marshall Plan, as part of the United States’ plan to
contain communism, “provided aid to European nations in order to implicate them in an
international system of trade that had the U.S. at its center” (85). Dunson, therefore, is
acting, through a representation of white masculinity, as a cog in the United States’
efforts to supply the world with the nation’s goods.

The main aspect of Red River’s storyline, since Dunson must deliver the cattle to
market in order to serve the nation’s economic interests, is a “heroic cattle drive”
(Corkin, Cowboys as Cold Warriors 31) which he undertakes. Taking a long, dangerous
route to Missouri in hopes of gaining a better price, Dunson is tyrant-like. He verbally
abuses his hired helpers. Matching Turner’s description of the impact of the frontier on men in his “frontier thesis,” Dunson is tough and rugged. He pushes the men so hard that even his adopted son, Matt, played by Montgomery Clift, rebels, gathers all the helpers, and instead heads to Abilene, Kansas, with all of Dunson’s cattle. Matt reaches his destination, sells the cattle for a handsome sum, and avoids Dunson’s revenge. Though the two reconcile at the end, Dunson’s representation of masculinity is cemented as tough, determined, and, most importantly, with dialogue scattered throughout the film regarding his desire to have a son of his own, heterosexual.

The importance of heterosexuality, as earlier stressed by FDR and then represented in *Red River*, is followed by government actions throughout the 1950s. Senator McCarthy, for example, routinely equated homosexuality with communism (Cuordileone 46), telling reporters “If you want to be against McCarthy, boys, you’ve got to be a communist or a cocksucker” (47). In June of 1950, only four months after McCarthy first claimed to possess a list of names of communists working in the State Department, Senator Clyde Hoey, a Democrat from North Carolina, and a senate subcommittee “began its official investigation of ‘homosexuals and perverts’ in government” (52). Their final report, called “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government,” stated that homosexuality made people unfit for government service (52). This emphasis on heterosexuality by McCarthy and Hoey started within months of the beginning of the Korean War, and suggest what is valued in times of national distress – the heterosexual, white male. The 1950s white male, however, was suffering a “crisis of masculinity (17).”

One seemingly small historical event, the “Kitchen Debate” between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, combines Cold War ideological differences, the frontier, and the 1950s masculinity crisis. Representing the United States in July 1959 in Moscow at an exhibit designed to showcase American goods, in particular kitchen appliances, Nixon and Khrushchev debated the merits of capitalism and communism in a make-believe kitchen. Nixon supposedly at one point stated, “You may be ahead of us in rocket thrust but we are ahead of you in color television” (Cuordileone 181-182). John F. Kennedy, who understood the power of the image invoked by the West, subsequently calling for a “New Frontier,” made fun of
Nixon as a “married, thoroughly domesticated man” (182). That comment by Kennedy played on 1950s studies in masculinity which had declared that “the male self was no longer a fortified, unified, autonomous entity. Rather, it was dependent, defenseless, impressionable, [and] open to intrusion” (17). The crisis of masculinity that existed in the 1950s, and with which Kennedy successfully scored political points, also provoked a cinematic response that attempted to reestablish the male self.

John Wayne, in an attempt to reestablish the tough representation of white masculinity that had existed in Red River and which had come into question in the crisis of masculinity that had occurred in the 1950s, expanded on Red River’s theme of taking Mexican land. Whereas the land taken by Dunson in Red River was from a single person, Wayne’s The Alamo (1960) recalls America’s taking all of Texas and eventually, as a result of the Mexican-American War, the northern half of the Mexican nation. The Alamo neatly combines both the western and war genres, the importance of the geography that Turner studied, and speaks to the Cold War through Wayne’s representation of ideal, white masculinity. Mark Cronlund Anderson, in Cowboy Imperialism and Hollywood Film, describes how the historical event at the Alamo, much like historical events in the Cold War, “rest upon the idea that the United States is a blameless victim of alien aggression” (157). The film, then, serves as an allegory for the Cold War itself and situates the United States as the defender of freedom rather than the global bully who picks on weaker nations. Stanley Corkin agrees, declaring that The Alamo represents “freeing individuals from lesser ideological systems that constrain them philosophically and psychically” (Cowboy as Cold Warriors 179). The United States, then, serves as the world’s “redeemer nation” (Coyne 105-106), as discussed in chapter one, whose supposed ideological truth came from its whiteness (Corkin, Cowboys as Cold Warriors 189), as represented by the iconic figure of John Wayne. The role of cinema as a tool of promoting free markets in both Red River and The Alamo served Cold War national objectives.

Ironically, John Wayne had difficulty obtaining financing for The Alamo. He financed much of the project himself and, in order to make the most of his personal funds, produced, directed, and starred in the film. His political leanings, discussed in the first chapter, shaped the film. Though Wayne’s film is as much propaganda as it is
entertainment, the government’s lack of sponsorship goes against the grain of its historical support for patriotic films. In 1961, a year after *The Alamo’s* release and, not inconsequentially, near the beginning of troop insertion into Vietnam, the American government re-realized the importance of that historical relationship. Edward R. Murrow, director of the United States Information Agency (USIA) and responsible for information about the country to the rest of the world, both admonished and pled for help from Hollywood executives in a speech delivered directly to them in November 1961. Recognizing the need for Hollywood support in a year which included the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, the beginning of the construction of the Berlin Wall, and a Soviet detonation of “Tsar Bomba,” the most powerful weapon ever exploded, he stated:

“I suggest that the image conveyed abroad of our land is not always a healthy one, and self restraint may nowadays be a good prescription. I would be bold enough to suggest that the history of this land, done as only your skills could do it, would reap great benefits abroad and solidify the purpose of our own people” (MacCann 182 – 183).

Wayne did not need convincing. Having already funded *The Alamo*, he partnered with Murrow in 1961 in an Army-financed documentary called “The Challenge of Ideas,” a piece of propaganda which discusses the ideological differences between the Soviet Union and the United States. The next year Hollywood and the Pentagon partnered to produce *The Longest Day* (1962), a film about the D-Day invasion starring, of course, John Wayne. The purpose of the film, ostensibly, was the “promotion and legitimization of the U.S. presence in Europe” (Valantin 11). The goal was important, as the United States needed to rally its NATO partners in light of the year’s events. Although involvement in Vietnam continued throughout the 1960’s, it would be six years before the two entities would join to produce *The Green Berets* (1968), yet another film with John Wayne’s white masculinity providing the representation that the United States had chosen as its ambassador.

Events that occurred in the year that *The Longest Day* was released as well as in the immediate years are important in understanding the strength of the Hollywood-Pentagon partnership which eventually collaborated in producing *The Green Berets*. For one, Murrow, upon his departure from the USIA in 1961, insisted that someone with
Hollywood connections be his replacement (MacCann 183). The result was the appointment in 1962 of George Stevens, Jr., the son of the prominent Hollywood director of the same name (184). Second, the head of the MPAA, Eric Johnston, died in 1963, allowing that organization to find someone with better political connections. The result was the selection of Jack Valenti, a former aide to President Lyndon Johnson whose choice to head the MPAA gave the organization “a man of stature who has entry to the White House and respect in international diplomatic channels” (Segrave 195). To illustrate how symbiotic the relationship was, the USIA was a government agency that hired a person with Hollywood connections whereas the MPAA was a Hollywood agency that hired a person with political connections. These relationships were very important in the production of *The Green Berets*.

Kennedy’s call for a “New Frontier” is also linked to the creation of the Green Berets. Having supported the creation of the group, Kennedy later “expressed desire for a book that would celebrate the Special Forces” (Willoquet-Maricondi 9). The result was Robin Moore’s novel *The Green Berets*, on which the film is based. Corkin explains that “in their dual role as men of violence and nation builders, the Green Berets recapitulated the heroic figures of the Westerns” (*Cowboys as Cold Warriors* 244). The escalation of the Vietnam War under President Johnson prompted John Wayne to write a letter to the president. Once again linking American foreign policy objectives to Hollywood film, Wayne offered his representation of white masculinity to the nation’s service. Taking advantage of the Hollywood-Pentagon relationship, Wayne, in a letter dated December 28, 1966, requested help from Johnson himself, writing:

“We are fighting a war in Vietnam. Though I personally support the administration’s policy there, I know it is not a popular war, and I think it is extremely important that not only the people of the United States, but those all over the world, should know why it is necessary for us to be there. The most effective way to accomplish this is through the motion picture medium. Some day soon a motion picture will be made about Vietnam. Let’s make sure it is the kind of picture that will help our cause throughout the world” (Robb 281).
The letter arrived over two years after the Gulf of Tonkin incidents and over a year and a half after the beginning of Operation Rolling Thunder, events that escalated the war in Vietnam and which subsequently had led both to the unpopularity which Wayne referenced as well as to the virulent anti-war movement. Johnson, needing the support which Wayne offered, urged the Pentagon to help with the production of *The Green Berets* (Valantin 17).

With both the President’s and the Pentagon’s blessing, filming of *The Green Berets* began on August 9, 1967 and lasted 107 days (Robb 279). Wayne’s production company, Batjac Productions, was charged very little for that cooperation. Batjac Productions benefited from 85 flying hours of UH-1 helicopters as well as the use of M-16 rifles, grenades, grenade launchers, mortars, flamethrowers and other military equipment (Smith 128). An entire platoon of Hawaiian troops was sent to play the Vietnamese (Muse 30). In all, the military provided the equivalent of 3,800 man days of labor (128). Though all of this assistance, according to later congressional inquiries and a Government Accounting Office study, cost the taxpayers over a million dollars, Batjac Productions’ total bill amounted to only $18,623.64 (Robb 280). In return for the free use of military equipment and soldiers, and indicative of the close historical relationship enjoyed between Hollywood and the Pentagon, military officials successfully persuaded Wayne to remove references to the torture of Viet Cong prisoners as well as American involvement in other parts of Southeast Asia (282-283).

Up until the production and release of *The Green Berets*, Hollywood’s long partnership with the American government that dates back to the end of World War I had not caused much concern. Even Pentagon officials amid the tensions being created by the Cold War, however, realized that this film was such a piece of propaganda that they, in an effort not to be suspected of backing it, requested that the film credit be removed (Robb 277). Therefore, “*The Green Berets* is the only film ever to receive the full cooperation and approval of the military that does not have a screen credit thanking them for their assistance” (278). By 1968, the year of the film’s release, the Vietnam War had motivated such a strong anti-war sentiment in much of the populace that the mere prospect of the Pentagon supporting such propaganda was no longer tenable. Even the influential senator J. William Fulbright questioned the relationship between his
government and Hollywood filmmakers. In *The Pentagon Propaganda Machine*, based on speeches delivered on the floor of the senate in December 1969 that were released in book form in 1970, Fulbright declared that his purpose “was to make the Senate and the public at large aware of the multi-faceted and quietly pervasive nature of the Defense Department’s public relations activity” (Fulbright vii). Reserving special critique for *The Green Berets*, Fulbright stated the following:

> “Wayne requested a ‘staggering list’ of requests, including “jeeps, captured Viet Cong weapons, American rifles, machine guns, carbines, parachutes, mortars, trucks, tanks, armored personnel carriers, bulldozers, ambulances, helicopters, cargo aircraft, and scout dogs. Without apparent demurrer, the Army made the equipment available” (117 – 118).

Hollywood’s claim that it dominated the world’s cinema screens through superior films (Segrave 280) became to be questioned publicly, in the midst of the tensions of the Cold War, by even U.S. senators.

As a result of the public scrutiny Hollywood faced due to its partnership with the Pentagon during the Vietnam War, “any project bearing even a vague resemblance to *The Green Berets* was out of the question” (Adair 114-115). Whereas John Wayne’s film attempted to gather support for the Vietnam War, Hollywood director Francis Ford Coppola wanted to produce a film which would help the country recover from the war’s defeat (Kinney 157). As Wayne had done, Coppola also wrote to the President asking for assistance in producing a film that would “put Vietnam behind us, which we must do so we can go to a positive future” (157). President Carter, nonetheless, refused to offer the same support to Coppola that Johnson had provided to Wayne. To explain this lack of support, Coppola’s film did not fit the model of patriotism usually endorsed by the Pentagon, and Coppola himself was describing *Apocalypse Now* as “a film that would give its audience a sense of the horror, the madness, the sensuousness, and the moral dilemma of the Vietnam War” (Adair 145). As a result of the film being critical of American foreign policy, *Apocalypse Now* was the first war film since the conclusion of the Second World War that was made without assistance from the Pentagon (Valantin 18). In fact, Coppola stands as the antithesis of John Wayne. Whereas Coppola’s film depicted the horror of war and attacked American foreign policy, Wayne’s films used war
as a way to highlight American ideals. The Pentagon’s support for one and not the other illustrates the government’s preferred use of white masculinity in Hollywood film to further its political agenda.

The timely release of *The Electric Horseman* (1978), occurring the same year as *Apocalypse Now*, mocks the partnership of economics and the frontier. Released during a time in which there was still a lack of consensus about the Vietnam War (Muse 101), this film lampoons how the imagery of the West had been co-opted by the Hollywood-Pentagon partnership in order to sell goods and policies. Released only 4 months after *Apocalypse Now*, a film that, again, did not benefit from government assistance, *The Electric Horseman* serves to mock John Wayne’s role as a salesman for American foreign policy by including a main character, Sonny Steele, who is a pitchman for cereal. Steele is a former world champion rodeo star who appears at rodeos and other public events to promote “Ranch Breakfast” cereal. The film “shows American expansionism now at work through big business and advertisement. The colonization illustrated by this film is that of the minds of American consumers through the image of the western cowboy” (Willoquet-Maricondi 21). The image of the cowboy, though, is represented by the ridiculousness of a cowboy outfit that is very similar to the one wore by Joe Buck in *Midnight Cowboy* and is compounded by it being covered with lights. Steele, riding around on a horse holding a box of cereal, is lit up like a Christmas tree. His representation of white masculinity is not tough, rugged, or patriotic. His representation of white masculinity equates with the silliness of Hollywood’s use of the West to sell goods, and suggests that “the only space left to be explored by the western cowboy is the space of billboards, television sets, and cereal boxes” (21). He is also drunk during his appearances, which leads to his being replaced by an actor. The audience can’t tell the difference. This aptly serves as a metaphor for a film audience not being able to tell the difference between John Wayne the actor and John Wayne as Green Beret. “Ranch Breakfast” cereal is, furthermore, a product of Steele’s employer, AMPCO. The corporation’s planned merger meets a public relations obstacle when Steele is told to ride a champion race horse, “Rising Star,” on a Las Vegas stage. Realizing that the horse is drugged and hurting, Steele rides the horse off the stage and down the streets of Las Vegas. He is chased the rest of the film by the police and a news reporter, played by Jane
Fonda, who ultimately joins Steele’s plan to return “Rising Star” to the wild. Steele, therefore, exposes a corrupt corporate agenda through its mistreatment of the symbolism of the West, “Rising Star,” and successfully returns that symbol to its rightful home. It is a metaphor for saving the West from corporate molestation.

The longstanding partnership between Hollywood film executives and government officials has fulfilled Frederick Jackson Turner’s wish to be able to study how the frontier affected economics, politics, and society. Movies, in the eyes of the government, were as much commercials for American goods and a way to depict the desired values of the United States than they were entertainment. This is proven by President Wilson’s call for Hollywood to send films to France after World War I, the American domination of Europe’s movie screens throughout the 1920s, and the ability of the MPPDA, often called the “little State Department,” and its successor, the MPAA, to deal directly with foreign governments. This partnership forced films on the world “through the careful engineering of taste, ruthless commercial clout, arm-twisting . . . , threats of reverse trade embargoes and other such heavy artillery” (Segrave 280). President Roosevelt’s deliberate use of New Deal funds to increase the representations of heterosexual masculinity in films of the 1930s is also very important, as it sets a later stage for the ideal image of the United States to be represented in film by heterosexual, white males.

The collusion between Hollywood and the American government in the interwar years, therefore, establishes a foundation on which one can better understand how the white male was used in films as an ambassador for American ideals. Though there are other actors that fit this description, John Wayne is the best example of that cinematic ambassador. His appearance in films which connect the frontier to world markets (Red River) or in which he allegorizes the Cold War (The Alamo) complements films in which he hunts communists (Big Jim McClain) or helps rally NATO allies (in the Pentagon-financed The Longest Day). His starring role in directing and starring in the propagandistic film The Green Berets during a very unpopular war is especially important. When considering the government’s history of using the cinema for selling its goods and ideals, in addition to the fact that it enthusiastically sponsored and funded films like The Longest Day and The Green Berets while not lending any such support to
films like *Apocalypse Now*, one must conclude that the government, whether consciously or unconsciously, chose as its cinematic image the representation of heterosexual, white masculinity.
CONCLUSION

The Cold War, as many had feared, did not end in the plumes of nuclear explosions. Tensions that had included wars in Korea and Vietnam, numerous clandestine activities by both sides, assassinations, and harsh rhetoric calmed with the ascension of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 to the Soviet premiership. As part of a new generation of more progressive Russian leaders, Gorbachev within six months of taking power announced a temporary ban on the testing of nuclear weapons. The United States and the Soviet Union also achieved arms control breakthroughs in both 1986 and 1987 even in the wake of the United States’ bombing of Libya, the exposing of the Iran-Contra Affair, and Reagan’s now famous demand that the Berlin Wall be torn down. Furthermore, Gorbachev’s announcements of “glasnost” (“openness”) and “perestroika” (economic restructuring) stood in contrast to the bluster of previous leaders such as Khrushchev. By 1989, the Soviet Union’s status as a weakening power was evident. Their withdrawal from Afghanistan was followed by their acquiescence to the tearing down of the Berlin Wall as well as the loss of control over many of the Soviet-bloc countries, including Poland and Romania.

The political events in the last few years of a waning Cold War and in its aftermath were embodied in the representation of white masculinity in Hollywood film. Writing in a film review in 1989 for The New York Times, Vincent Canby declared simply that the “red menace” was headed “into its last dissolve,” as exemplified by Rambo’s venture into Afghanistan to assist the mujahedeen against the retreating Russians (“Villains” H1). When the Soviet Union officially disbanded in 1991, new concerns and worries stemmed not from global concerns such as the spread of communism but from the spread of AIDS. Having no longer the Soviet Union to serve as a foil, American society rightfully became concerned with this new, faceless threat. William Palmer, author of The Films of the Nineties, writes:

“With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, the Nuclear Age came to an end and the age of AIDS began. America adjusted its historical gaze, stopped looking for death from the skies, and began looking within
at the excess, dysfunction, and the single disease that became a metaphor embodying all the debilitation to which American society was no longer immune” (3).

Palmer uses as an example the post-Cold War film *Forrest Gump* (1994), a movie in which white masculinity is represented as naïve and simplistic. In fact, Forrest Gump participates in but is completely ignorant of Cold War-era events, including the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-war movement, the Watergate Scandal, and the rising threat of China, among others. Though he is there when blacks integrate the University of Alabama, calls the police on the Watergate burglars, and takes part in a Black Panther party, an anti-war protest, and in international ping pong games of goodwill, he concerns himself mainly with his mother and especially with his love-interest and childhood friend, Jenny. Jenny, of course knowing that Forrest’s simplicity will not allow him to understand the seriousness of her health, describes her HIV infection only in general terms. Palmer argues that Forrest’s purpose for running in the film is not for world peace, the homeless, women, or animals, but, rather, as a metaphor for running from history (27). Forrest, as a representation of white masculinity, was essentially running from the chaos of the Cold War - and his masculinity-in-flight represents the crisis of masculinity that had developed in the 1950s and that reemerged in the 1990s. The dominant role that his mother played in his life, indicative of the many times he quotes her (“Stupid is as stupid does”), replays the “momism” of the two decades as well.

The “dysfunction” and “debilitation” that Palmer describes the United States as being in the immediate years following the end of the Cold War connects white masculinity to the post-Cold War vacuum that developed when the communist “other” disappeared. A film that is especially important in illustrating the post-Cold War crisis of fractured, white masculinity is *Falling Down* (1993). The film begins with Bill Foster, played by Michael Douglas, being stuck in traffic. His termination from a job at an apparently downsizing defense contractor, a timely post-Cold War theme, is only one of the reasons why he leaves his car on the freeway and begins a rampage across the city. Douglas B. Holt and Craig J. Thompson, authors of “Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption,” discuss the “Breadwinner Model” of masculinity and how that model is tied to financial success (427). Having no job,
Foster’s masculinity is defined as failure and is both reduced and minimized, causing him to lash out at society. His white masculinity also is juxtaposed to other characters he blames for his and society’s woes. Having no longer the communists to justify his continued employment or simply to fear, he destroys a Korean-owned store while criticizing the proprietor for not being able to speak correct English. Lashing out at an Asian character in a time of China’s ascendance is pertinent. Foster, in addition, defends himself against territorial Hispanic gang members, telling them that he wouldn’t want them in his backyard, either, and then beating them with a bat. Throughout his rampage, which includes other acts of violence against innocent people, his goal is to reach his daughter’s birthday party even though a restraining order taken out by his ex-wife forbids his presence.

Foster’s representation of white masculinity in crisis is contrasted to that of a white police officer. Detective Prendergast, whose last day on the job due to an impending retirement speaks to a stable, breadwinning masculinity, investigates Foster’s crimes. In “I’m the Bad Guy?” Jude Davies compares the Foster vs. Prendergast storyline to *Rambo: First Blood*. Like Rambo, Davies stipulates, Foster is a “loner” who faces the police and causes a great deal of destruction (147). Foster, is, then, both jobless and spouseless, a racist, and in opposition to the notion of law and order. Prendergast, on the other hand, is gainfully employed, married, a partner to a Hispanic female officer, and dedicated to the notion of law and order. In the vacuum left in the Cold War’s aftermath, the detective offers “an acceptable masculinity” with which Foster can be compared (150). Like many Cold War films, though, there is a negotiation taking place between masculinities. Foster, for example, encounters a Neo-Nazi who owns a gun shop and who . . .

“occupies a crucial third masculine position. He embodies the worst elements of patriarchal masculinity, to a psychotic degree. He is aggressive, misogynistic, homophobic, racist and he thinks he recognizes [Foster] as a brother” (149).

In this negotiation of masculinities, *Falling Down*, therefore, depicts a rampaging, unemployed divorcee as a “middle of a road” representation of white masculinity. In this context, the film almost serves as a justification for the actions of displaced, white males.
whose status as the breadwinner had been threatened or eliminated in a post-Cold War United States. In the confrontation that occurs at the end of the film between Foster and Prendergast, Foster wants to draw in the fashion of the Old West. “Wild Bill” Foster, however, only has a toy gun. Provoking Prendergast to shoot him so that his daughter can collect his life insurance money, “Wild Bill” is killed by the officer (sheriff). Being the masculine breadwinner and his family’s provider at the end of the Cold War meant, for Bill Foster, death.

Foster’s representation of masculinity serves as a bridge between the economic recession that occurred in the immediate years following the end of the Cold War and the economic boom of the later 1990s. According to his dialogue in *Falling Down*, Foster was dismissed from his job because he was no longer “economically viable.” His identification with “breadwinner masculinity” during a slumping American economy coincided with the increasing industrial strength of China. Though Forrest Gump’s travels to China spoke to the improvement of relations that occurred during the Nixon administration, the remake of *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004), conversely, illustrates how communism came to be perceived as a threat after the end of the Cold War.

The original version of *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) addressed the 1950s crisis of masculinity, where “smothering mothers” (Cuordileone 81) had supposedly produced soldiers in the Korean War whose weakness (lack of masculinity) led them to choose to stay there rather than come home. The fear that the soldiers had been brainwashed and the belief that Americans in general were brainwashed attracted the attention of Hollywood director John Frankenheimer (Carruthers 77). In his original film Raymond Shaw saves the lives of his platoon members in the Korean War and wins the Congressional Medal of Honor. Shaw, however, is dominated by his mother, Eleanor Iselin, who in turn also dominates her husband (Shaw’s stepfather), United States Senator John Iselin, a parody of Joseph McCarthy. Her complete command of the lives of a war hero and a senator is crucial to the plot, as it is her allegiance to the Soviet Union that leads her to use her own son to assassinate a presidential candidate so that she and the communists together could control the country after Senator Iselin steps into the presidency. Shaw’s platoon leader, Captain Bennet Marco, played by Frank Sinatra, attempts to uncover and foil the communist scheme. Shaw, though, kills his mother
instead of the presidential nominee and then himself. The theme of “momism” as being more of a threat to the United States than communism (84-85) connects the crisis of masculinity to Cold War Hollywood film.

The remake of *The Manchurian Candidate* as a part of a post-Cold War climate offers a challenge to patriarchal, white masculinity by adding prominent black actors and increasing the agency of Raymond Shaw’s mother while also resituating the communist threat. Captain Ben Marco is played this time by Denzel Washington, whose reprisal of Sinatra’s role gives much more agency to black masculinity than the original does. Although Shaw, a hero in Operation Desert Storm and a member of Congress, also gains more stature, his mother, Eleanor Shaw, is herself this time a U.S. senator rather than just the wife of one. Senator Shaw once again plots to insert a white male into power, but in the remake it is her son. Marco again seeks to uncover the plot. Since the threat of the Cold War had been replaced by the threat of a resurgent China, the Manchurian threat in the 2004 version is a Chinese conglomerate rather than a communist government. Having brainwashed Shaw, Marco, and others, the Chinese corporation, Manchurian Global, unwittingly speaks to the competition between international defense contractors that led to the demise of American ones, particularly to the one in *Falling Down*. It is interesting that Marco kills both Shaws, as his representation of black masculinity kills both the representation of white masculinity as well as the one attempting to control that white masculinity.

Though many post-Cold War films such as *The Manchurian Candidate* challenge the traditional representation of heterosexual, white masculinity, there are two in particular that ably conclude this study. The first example is *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). The West and the frontier had such a great impact on American culture and had enabled Hollywood to co-opt the western genre for political purposes. It also served as the ideal place where heterosexual, white masculinity could be idealized. That masculinity, though often violent and racist, served as the model masculinity for decades. *Brokeback Mountain* contests the notion of how that ideal white masculinity had to also mean heterosexual masculinity. By using the western genre to contest heterosexual, white masculinity, the film artistically challenges the norm much like how *Midnight Cowboy* and *The Electric Horseman* did. The other example is *What Dreams May Come*. 
(1998), a movie unlike any film covered so far. It is not a western, spy film, detective film, or war film. It is, rather, a romance-drama that situates much of the story not in Turner’s West but in heaven and hell. Its importance to this study is how it chooses to represent white and black masculinity among the living and dead. Furthermore, since the film contains a hegemonic white masculinity, the pattern of a dominant, heterosexual, and white masculinity seems to replicate itself across genres.

*Brokeback Mountain*, released in 2005, is actually set in 1963. As it is a film which mocks the western as a vehicle for the representation of heterosexual masculinity, it being set the year after what Corkin describes as the “end of the full flowering of the western” (*Cowboys as Cold Warriors* 2) is important. If 1962 represents the closing of the western genre much like 1890 marked the end of the frontier (Coyne 106), then 1963 marks the beginning of the cinematic challenge to the heterosexual, white masculinity. Furthermore, *Brokeback Mountain* serves to challenge the values of the West during a time of war much like *Midnight Cowboy* did. Both films, finally, represent a fractured, bisexual masculinity by main characters, Ennis Del Mar in *Brokeback Mountain* and Joe Buck in *Midnight Cowboy*.

*Brokeback Mountain* begins with the initial meeting of Ennis and Jack Twist, two ranch hands looking for work in Wyoming. They are both hired and assigned to the same sheep herd. Their close working relationship eventually leads to a close emotional relationship. While Ennis has plans to get married after the temporary work is over, his masculinity is minimized by his cooking, pan washing, and grocery shopping responsibilities. However, it is Ennis that kills the elk for food and later shows a much tougher, emotionally detached demeanor when dealing with their complex relationship. Their first sexual encounter occurs on a cold evening, as Jack tells a freezing Ennis to come inside the tent to spend the rest of the night. Though an uncomfortable silence follows the next morning, they share more intimacy the next evening. Up until the time they leave, they are playful and clearly enjoy each other’s company.

Both Ennis and Jack get married and attempt to become the representation of “breadwinner” masculinity. Ennis, as planned, marries Alma in November. He wrestles with her on the ground just as he did with Jack during their time together and even puts her in the same sexual position as he did Jack in their first encounter in the tent. Jack,
meanwhile, marries Lureen, whom he meets on the rodeo circuit. Lureen is the daughter of a wealthy businessman, so Jack’s masculinity is not tied as much to providing for the family. Even though Ennis and Jack are married with children, proof of at least a bisexual masculinity, they reunite and passionately embrace. For several years, Jack’s flexibility that comes with working for a wealthy father-in-law enables him to make a monthly 14 hour drive to Wyoming from Texas to spend weekends with Ennis. Jack often attempts to persuade Ennis that they should both leave their wives and spend the rest of their lives together. Ennis resists, though his resistance is out of concern for being “discovered” rather than out of loyalty to his wife. Ironically, Alma knows about the “illicit” relationship and eventually files for divorce. While Ennis struggles to pay child support, again minimizing his masculinity according to the “breadwinner” model, Jack near the conclusion of the film is killed in a homophobic attack. The film ends with Ennis visiting Jack’s parents’ home, offering to spread his lover’s ashes over Brokeback Mountain, per Jack’s wishes. Ennis, accepting Jack’s mother’s invitation to see her son’s room, enters Jack’s closet, finds some of the clothes he wore during their time together on Brokeback Mountain, and takes them home as a sentimental keepsake.

Brokeback Mountain challenges and attacks the notion of white, heterosexual masculinity after the Cold War by depicting two cowboys, who otherwise could be considered tough and rugged in the mold of John Wayne, and placing them in a context in which they prefer a homosexual relationship. The film makes clear that it is only society’s judgmental restrictions that keep the relationship from becoming open. Ennis rebuffs Jack’s attempts to make that relationship open due to the shame he would feel if anyone ever found out. In fact, his ex-wife does confront him about his relationship with Jack – and Ennis reacts very angrily, nearly hurting her with his rage. Furthermore, the note of a patriarchal masculinity also comes into question, as Ennis rarely support his own children financially or by spending time with them while Jack would willingly leave both his wife and child if Ennis would agree to it. Therefore, Brokeback Mountain not only serves as an artistic critique of white, heterosexual masculinity but also of patriarchy.

The importance of the frontier, as studied by Turner and included in film through the western genre, is crucial, as this study has illustrated, to understanding masculinity in
Hollywood movies. The violence of the frontier and the heroism of the cowboy figures, from Gary Cooper to John Wayne, served other genres as well. The gangster and detective genres are both extensions of the western, for example. *Brokeback Mountain*’s use of the western to criticize patriarchy and heterosexual, white masculinity during a very unpopular war, nonetheless, is specifically contained within one genre. It is very interesting that *Brokeback Mountain* was released the year after *Hidalgo* (2004). This film is the fictional story of a 1890s mustang racehorse named Hidalgo that is ridden by Frank Hopkins. Famed for its long distance running ability, Hidalgo, a mixed breed horse, is invited to race against the Arabian purebreds. Hopkins, the son of a white man and Indian woman and, therefore, also “mixed,” rides Hidalgo to victory. Though Hopkins is as much Native American as he is white, his masculinity is represented as white, though at the end he identifies more with Native American culture and history by allowing Hidalgo and the other mustangs he purchased with his prize money to go free. Also released during the very unpopular war in Iraq and Afghanistan, *Hidalgo* says that the melting pot of the United States, as represented by a mixed race rider and a mixed breed horse, is still superior to the “purity” of the Arabs. *Brokeback Mountain*, therefore, not only serves as the equivalent artistic example to *Midnight Cowboy* but also challenges the traditional, heterosexual white American masculinity of *Hidalgo*.

In *What Dreams May Come*, Chris (Robin Williams) and his two children die in car accidents that are separated by several years. They all go to heaven while Chris’ wife, Annie, unable to handle the grief, commits suicide. Because she committed violence against herself, she is consigned to hell. Nearly everyone in heaven is white while those that guard the gate of hell are black. Only a few people are people of color in heaven. Two of those, a black man and an Asian woman, are actually Chris’ children – and they turn back into Caucasians after they reveal themselves to their father! Even a white man who guides Chris into hell to help him find Annie was a black man on Earth. In the end, then, those who were people of color while living chose a white representation of masculinity in heaven or either willfully changed back into white representations after a short while.

The cinematic representation of white masculinity was varied after the end of the Cold War. It was also both attacked and disputed. In *Forrest Gump* it was represented as
simplistic while in *Falling Down* it was represented as economically displaced and fractured. The increase of the agency of black masculinity as well as by female characters is indicative of films such as *The Manchurian Candidate*. Of course, *Brokeback Mountain* serves as a strong artistic challenge to the representation of white, heterosexual masculinity that had been traditionally included in the western genre. These films speak to the partial victories of the Civil Rights Movement, the feminist movement, and the gay rights movement. Though many people hailed the election of President Barack Obama in 2008 as a sign of improving race relations, the advances are still only incremental and incomplete. The racial message that Hollywood sent in *Hidalgo*, for example, is troublesome. Coming only four years before Obama’s election, the message that “mixed bred” Americans are better than any “purity” of the “Other” is ironic. Obama is, of course, from white American and African ancestry. This is why ending with a discussion on *What Dreams May Come* is important. Though the representations of white and black masculinity were quite fluid in this film, indicated by how easily people changed from one to the other, white masculinity was clearly favored. Any future studies must include how white masculinity replicates itself across genres, including romance, drama, and science fiction. Given *What Dreams May Come*, a study of hegemonic, white masculinity will probably produce the same effects. Until more minorities are in positions of power in Hollywood and in the American government – and, therefore, are in control of the means of producing the images – nothing else can be realistically expected.
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Michael Kirkland was raised most of his life in Decatur County, Georgia. After graduating from Bainbridge High School in 1992, he attended Bainbridge College before transferring to the University of Georgia, where he earned a B.A in History in 1996. He then earned a M.A. in History in 1998 from Valdosta State University. Having taught history at Bainbridge College since 2003, he now resides in Iron City, GA with his wife, Katina, and their three children, Gracen, Landon, and Anna Kate.