Giving Voice To Values on
Business Ethics and Corporate
Social Responsibility Collection
Mary Gentile, *Editor*

War Stories

Fighting, Competing, Imagining, Leading

Leigh Hafrey

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To Nathaniel, Ben, and their Millennial comrades-in-arms

Abstract

War Stories: Fighting, Competing, Imagining, Leading advances a leadership model for business that takes Americans beyond combat and competition as the default setting for our daily enterprise. The book draws on feature and documentary films, TV, social science, and journalism to show that in the 21st century, the United States is reaping the fruit of a long-standing and deep-rooted faith in one take on business practice. Our emphasis on competition and individual initiative has made us the standard-setters for a truly global society, but it has also resulted in a nation on a permanent war footing. That stance threatens to undermine much that we as a nation have achieved; the challenge now is to determine how we might imagine our way forward to more positive social outcomes in politics and economics at home and abroad.

Rooted in the history of World War II and the Vietnam era, *War Stories* traces an arc of military American self-perception on the screen, the printed page, and in public conversation over the past 20 years. It juxtaposes to that arc a different, potentially more liberating and productive story, linking personal and professional commitments to organizational culture and, finally, systems thinking. Ethical, sustainable business practice depends on leaders who can tell that story of business in society, integrating public, private, and civil sector imperatives for an audience eager to engage them. *War Stories* ends on one such narrative, identifying the practical elements by which we can combine America's most cherished founding principles with 21st century realities.

Keywords

Afghanistan, American politics, autobiography, business, business ethics, combat, competition, conflict, corporate citizenship, creativity, culture, ethics, fiction, film, genocide, human nature, imagination, Iraq, leadership, narrative, race, Rwanda, story, storytelling, veterans, video games, Vietnam, war, weapons, World War II

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Acknowledgments

Over the years, the intellectual moments I have enjoyed most have always taken the form of conversation. *War Stories* aims to reproduce that experience: a conversation among real people, some living, some dead, and others who have been imagined and enacted by real people so ably that they come to life themselves. My thanks first, then, to the many people whose stories, real or imagined, fill the following pages. Bringing them together I hope does them no violence and may show them to us in their fullness.

War Stories is a business book. My thanks go next to two decades' worth of MIT Sloan-affiliated MBAs, senior executives, and other business practitioners who have taught me everything I know about business. They allowed themselves to be drawn out in my seminars, sharing their experiences and their wisdom in the—I hope, justified—belief that their confidences would be respected and reciprocated. My thanks, too, to the management scholars at MIT Sloan and other business schools who have shared their insights on leadership in and out of the corporation.

War Stories is also about war, so my thanks go as well to the many military-service veterans and active-duty officers who have contributed their insights and organizational skills to my work at MIT Sloan. In particular, Trip Bellard, Jason Chen, Socrates Rosenfeld, and Greg Zielinski taught me the spirit of service that motivates them and the leadership challenges that come with that service. Marshall Carter helped me think about the relation between management and the military and Roméo Dallaire alerted me to the full price of the Rwandan genocide and the fragility of the promise "never again." To all of you: your stories and your spirit have given the writing of this book a special urgency.

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CHAPTER 1

Why This Book

War, huh, good God y'all / What is it good for?

—Edwin Starr[1]

After all, the chief business of the American people is business.

—Calvin Coolidge[2]

War, Competition, and Commerce

War is good for business. The written record suggests that contractors have supplied shoddy goods at extreme mark-ups to the military for as long as men (and women) have fought battles. Edwin Starr sang the Motown hit protest song "War" into the tumult of Vietnam. Bruce Springsteen brought it back in the mid-1980s to protest Ronald Reagan's engagements in Central America and, in 2003, the wars that George W. Bush's administration had chosen to wage in Iraq and Afghanistan. Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker bond over it in *Rush Hour* (1998), trading martial arts and Western-style cop moves before breaking up an Asian crime ring in Los Angeles' fictitious Foo Chow restaurant. When Tucker claims the song for those in the know—does he mean Americans, Afro-Americans, or some other group?—Chan cries, "Everybody knows 'War'!"[3]

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[1] "War," recorded by Edwin Starr as a single in 1970 on the Gordy label. Words and Music by Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong. © 1970 (Renewed 1998) Jobete Music Co., Inc. All Rights controlled and administered by EMI Blackwood Music Inc. on behalf of Stone Agate Music (a division of Jobete Music Co., Inc.). All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured. Used by Permission. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Corporation.

[2] Calvin Coolidge, "Address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors," January 17, 1925, at: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=24180.

[3] *Rush Hour*, dir. Brett Ratner (New Line Cinema, 1998).

For all of us, then, the association of commerce with combat goes beyond the last century of American foreign policy and its connection to what we think of as Daddy Warbucks-style profiteering. It's about the larger society and always has been. In his now-canonic treatise *On War* (1832), the Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz articulated a science of war largely motivated by Napoleon Bonaparte's phenomenal military and political career in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Von Clausewitz comments:

> We say therefore War belongs not to the province of Arts and Sciences, but to the province of social life. It is a conflict of great interests which is settled by bloodshed, and only in that is it different from others. It would be better, instead of comparing it with any Art, to liken it to business competition, which is also a conflict of human interests and activities; and it is still more like State policy, which again, on its part, may be looked upon as a kind of business competition on a great scale.[4]

No surprise, then, that 20th-century Wall Street should embrace a vocabulary of military action reaching back to the Middle Ages: "white knight," "dark knight," "hostile takeover," employees as "soldiers" or "good soldiers," etc. No surprise either that we should have evolved a culture that puts more than five financial-sector lobbyists in Washington for every legislator on Capitol Hill[5] or that we should worry ever more about—another military-inspired phrase—"regulatory capture." The connection, it seems, is bred in the bone.

But is it? Or is there more to our business selves than war? In spite of our nature and von Clausewitz's narrow equation of commerce with competition and conflict, I would argue that we can tell a different story about business and that the story itself makes a difference. After the scandals of the early 21st century—Enron, WorldCom, Global Crossing, and others—and the Great Recession that followed, Americans seem collectively to have recognized the need to rewrite the dominant national

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[4] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (1832; repr., New York: Penguin, 1968), 202–203.

[5] *Inside Job*, dir. Charles Ferguson (Sony Pictures Classics, 2010).

story in which, to paraphrase Calvin Coolidge, "the business of business is business" or "the business of America is business." Both those phrases have permeated domestic political discourse and to the extent that they offer a uniquely American model for daily life have become as significant an export to the rest of the world as the wonders of Hollywood and American popular music.

Two Related Challenges: Combat and Competition

It's true, business is everywhere, and that alone warrants a set of stories that take a broader view of our lives in society and the commerce that we believe to be our lifeblood. In *War Stories*, I argue that Americans, today and for the near future, face two challenges that we intuitively and correctly link through our ongoing concern with effective leadership. Those challenges are combat and competition: expressions of the same fundamental disposition. Let me take them one at a time.

Combat

Today we talk not just about the war but "the wars" (plural). Now a whole new generation has the opportunity to fight. Now women have joined the ranks of war-fighters. Now drones populate the skies, replacing the pervasive, rhythmic thud-thud of Huey rotor blades over Vietnam with the thin hum of unmanned aerial surveillance craft, monitoring the battlefield and facilitating strikes. Now the hostility with which returning troops were met during the Vietnam War has given way to the admiration and gratitude accorded the World War II generation before them. Still, far fewer fight now, so their stories may well become a short chapter in America's long history of combat rather than an opportunity to rethink the premises on which our society wages war and the way those wars, in turn, shape and constrain our notions of the good society. We cannot afford to let that happen.

In the face of the painful reality that those in positions of authority sometimes expend individual lives for a greater collective good, we romanticize the social order that enables and then depends on armed combat for its character. Americans have embedded the penchant

for strife in everything from our commitment to a fundamentalist interpretation of the Second Amendment to a video-game culture built around "first-" and "third-person shooters": from commercial aircraft boarding procedures—"we now invite armed services personnel to board" (along with families needing assistance and first-class passengers)—to the provision of large-scale military hardware to police departments in small towns. Other countries display the same predilection for body counts, but our founding documents—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—have set expectations over more than two centuries for a society that puts citizens' lives first, even as that same society has played a dominant role in the annals of lethal, global armed conflict over most of a century. We need now to look at ourselves and ask, "What do we value most: human life, or lost lives?"

Competition

The paradox of a simultaneous commitment to survival and a system predicated on the selectivity of that survival manifests itself equally in our civilian sphere. U.S. business practitioners have elevated individual success to a material level no other developed economy cares to match. Coolidge's iconic invocation of the American proclivity for business simply recognizes a national ideology that appears on the surface apolitical but has nevertheless aided, abetted, and certified our rise as the dominant political and economic power in the world. It has also enshrined a combat model for global leadership that cripples American-style democracy, here and abroad, in the name of a limited and limiting, albeit spectacular, individualism.

In the now-steady national debate about rising inequality, we need look no further than this background for an explanation of the trend. If we worry about both the near- and long-term implications of income distribution in the United States, we need a leadership that can address the philosophical implications not only of our national addiction to war but also its civilian equivalent, competition. As we have waged war in the Middle East, we have also fought at home over the damage that followed the economic collapse of 2008 and the years following. The cost of prosecuting those wars aside, we made choices at all levels—public sector, private sector,

civil society—that came home to roost with the bursting of the subprime mortgage bubble. There is enough blame to go around, enough so that each of those sectors and their subdivisions—executive, legislative, judicial; banking, real estate; individual brokers and mortgagees—could and should spend significant time attending to its own faults. But will they do so?

One Unitary Solution and an Outcome: Telling—and Testing—Our Stories

We can and should take the heat, both individually and collectively. *War Stories* shows how to rise to the challenge by exploring a few of the stories we have told ourselves in recent years and distinguishing the useful stories from the harmful ones, those that help us progress and those that hold us back. It also highlights the qualities that make for one or the other so that we can think about ourselves not just as passive recipients of these influential narratives but as storytellers in our own right, with the responsibilities that that right imposes. Building on combat and competition, the war stories we tell factor in imagination and in so doing generate the opportunity that we seek for leadership.

Imagination and Leadership

We live by story. The works of art that compel us most also compel most of us: They capture a situation that we do not know, or think we don't know, and reveal to us a range of commonalities that make the strange familiar and vice versa. They keep us alert, intellectually and morally. As a result, those who find and tell us these stories about ourselves acquire the status of leaders, and to the extent that each of us individually does the same, we acquire leadership status for ourselves, in however small an ambit. We, and those we follow, don't always bear the titles that signify leadership, but this is the magic that makes the world sit up and take notice. Officially or unofficially, our stories guide us to our destiny.

In *War Stories*, I focus on a dozen such tales. They have reached and registered with a broad audience. They tell us about war as we have recently lived it. They also tell us how our business endeavors, our politics, and our civil society might be reframed to help us live better, less conflict-ridden

lives. The films and books discussed in the following chapters take us to France, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Rwanda. They also take us home, to the intersection of Wall Street, Main Street, and Pennsylvania Avenue, a nexus of aims and aspirations that should be Americans' crowning achievement as a people yet seems now only to reflect confusion, disagreement, and reciprocal blame. Yet we know that in a democracy, leaders must balance performance with compassion, the forces that drive successful organizations with a recognition of the people who make them work.

The stories highlighted here document both the failures and the route(s) to success in living up to what we know to be true. Chapter by chapter, I extrapolate approaches to leadership from them, working through the progression of fighting, competing, imagining, and leading:

1. A Conflictual Vision: According to von Clausewitz, both war and "State policy" express the social nature of commerce and competition. Do Americans simply have a genius for struggle? How do the stories we tell about ourselves amplify or mitigate that impulse?
2. *The Assault* and *Saving Private Ryan*: How do we tell the story of the good war so that we understand why it was good?
3. 9/11 and *Homeland*: Are enemies really "others," or simply other versions of ourselves?
4. *The Hurt Locker* and *Blade Runner*: What does it mean to be human and how do we honor that identity?
5. *American Sniper* and *Three Kings*: When conflict occurs, how do we make it meaningful?
6. *Hotel Rwanda*, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, and *Consilience*: How do we align individual, organizational, and systemic responsibilities in the face of competition for resources and behavioral patterns that guarantee those resources to some groups and not others?
7. *War*, *Restrepo*, and *Riding Giants*: Why does it take outliers to imagine and then structure the forces that civilize us?
8. *Citizenfour* and *Jerry Maguire*: Can we reconcile social control and individual ambition and in so doing produce successful social enterprise?
9. Frontier Havens: What stories do we tell to ensure that we never lose sight of the horizon, even as we cherish the community it invites us to leave behind?

War stories, both literal and figurative, capture individuals and groups in struggle that we sanctify as heroic or revile as cowardly. They show us ourselves at our most human, for both good and ill. They invite us to relish the absence of conflict, even as they inspire us to acts that peace rarely occasions. For the leaders among us, they posit the necessity of putting others' lives or well-being at risk, even as we seek to maintain and better those lives. This is the ultimate leader's challenge in the armed services and equally in the public, private, and civil sectors, regardless of primary occupation. How we rise to the challenge and the responsibility it imposes determines the light in which our followers, our fellow leaders, and history itself judge us.

The progression articulated in *War Stories*, from fighting to competition to imagination to effective leadership, should be read as embodying that awareness and identifying examples of the stories by which we might live it. The arguments advanced in the following chapters are intended to help us move away from old, routinized approaches to social order to a more productive, more creative application of our natural impulses and a rephrasing of our ideological commitments. In so doing, they also offer a new model of leadership that we are already implementing, however fitfully: the change has come about despite the steady drumbeat of war, in part thanks to generational change but also because of social media, new technologies, and new philosophies of how the different sectors should interact.

Given my professional background, about which I will say more in the final chapter, I offer much of my commentary with a focus on the promise of private enterprise in its relation to both the public sector and civil society. It was Alexis de Tocqueville, as shrewd an observer of our social mores as has ever visited America, who commented succinctly and all-inclusively:

> In democratic countries the science of association is the mother science; the progress of all the others depends on the progress of that one.[6]

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[6] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, edited by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (1835/1840; repr.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 492.

De Tocqueville takes us back almost two centuries to an apparently very different, perhaps more hopeful America. Yet the associations—political, economic, social—that he celebrates here and the managerial skills that they imply are still very much with us and not just for us. The world and America have had a tough two-and-a-half decades. Isn't it time we sought a different path and managed our collective way to a better place?

CHAPTER 2

The Good Story

Survivors scarcely spoke of their torment. They did not tell their children. They repressed their memories. Perhaps discretion seemed the safer course; certainly it seemed the more dignified. … But there was something else, something really unsayable. Survival itself was somehow shameful, unbearable. By what right, after all, had one lived?

—Roger Cohen[1]

Return of the Repressed

In early November 2014, a website alerted me that someone had searched for my column "War Stories for a New Generation." I had forgotten I ever wrote the piece, which appeared in a small magazine in 1992, but it now felt like the first shoot of what had since grown into a tree (or perhaps a small grove) of ongoing concern with the legacy of World War II and the generations that told stories about it. The way in which that war had translated into America's engagement in Vietnam and the very different legacy that the later war appeared to have left only exacerbated my original concern. In 1992, America had comparatively limited military engagements abroad and it seemed we might have the opportunity to take stock at home of both past and possible future armed undertakings.

I include parts of the 1992 column here because it measures how much has changed on both the national and the international scene in the 20-plus years since and how much needs restating:

War Stories for a New Generation

Behold, I cry out, 'Violence!' but I am not answered; I call aloud, but there is no justice.

—Job 19:7

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[1] Roger Cohen, "The Discretion of Nicholas Winton," *NYT*, October 30, 2014.

I confess I have always been suspicious of war stories. The real war story seems too easy a means of generating dramatic tension in art: why else have purveyors of books, and movies, and TV series around the globe continued to draw so persistently on World War II, for example, a conflict that officially ended almost half a century ago? And why do audiences who had no direct experience of that conflict continue so insistently to attend their productions? I distrust the peacetime war story just as much, because it seems a comfortable way, not of generating, but of avoiding dramatic tension; told in daily life rather than fiction, it provides a reasonably social means of forestalling critical thinking about a situation, rather than encouraging it.

I realized the value of both forms, though, and in a very personal way, as I was preparing recently to teach the Dutch writer Harry Mulisch's 1985 novel, *The Assault*. Mulisch's book is a real war story: it tells of one Anton Steenwijk, a 12-year-old living with his parents and older brother on the outskirts of Haarlem in early 1945. Much of the rest of Europe has already been liberated, but the Netherlands is still German-occupied. So, when a collaborator is murdered in the street outside the Steenwijk home, a combination of Nazi reprisal policy and sheer chance results in the deaths of Anton's brother and parents as well.

The remainder of Mulisch's novel is, as his narrator tells us, "a postscript"—35 years of apparently normal life, with Anton following much of Europe to pull himself out of the war and into prosperity. While Anton may have suppressed his memories of what happened to his family, though, he has not resolved them; and so everything, in Mulisch's remarkably compact tale, derives from Anton's inadvertent or unconscious attempts to deal with the past. As the book closes, the author plants a final clue that the whole tale has been a gloss on the story of the Biblical Job, the "blameless and upright man" whose faith is sorely tried by God; and there he leaves us, together with his protagonist, a little wiser about why his fellow men did what they did, but still at a loss to determine God's motives.

As I read Anton's story, I was puzzled to find myself suddenly remembering my family's move, a few years after I was born in 1951, to a new development on the outskirts of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Nothing about my family's new neighborhood suggested the kind of trial to which both Anton and Job are subjected in their respective stories. We lived in a little ranch, and our neighbors lived in little ranches, and our parents all sent us, their children, to school in a big yellow bus; I know this from our home movies. Our families had cars, and radios, and TVs, and food; they were prosperous, or on the way to being so. They were confident, or they seemed so in retrospect, and the times repaid their apparent confidence—on this latter point, the facts speak for themselves.

And yet what lingers like a voiceover to those silent 8-mm scenes are the stories, stories that I haven't heard in years now, but that had then both the power and the foreignness to remain with me ever since. They were war stories, stories about a real war. Like the stories we read or watch on the screen, they had to do with bombing missions and drowning GIs and hard-faced SS officers and suicide in hiding and near-death in open fields—only these stories were told by real people, not characters in a book or movie, and I hadn't gone looking for them. The scenes in which the stories came out escape me now for the most part, but a few remain—a half dozen figures seated in clear light at a mid-Sunday dinner, with the summer sky beyond the windows promising rain; a room full of overstuffed, brown-upholstered furniture, the walls lined with books, and the Minnesota winter somehow comfortingly still and frozen outside.

If in the first scene the accents on the soundtrack were solidly Midwestern, in the latter they harked back to the Jewish communities of central Europe. And again, the soundtrack assures me the stories came out in accents from around the globe, from all over Europe, America, and Asia. The tellers were adults, parents, and grandparents, or sometimes just friends of the family. Everyone had lots of friends, from all over, all united by … by what? Their roots, their language, their education, even the places they now

lived? In retrospect, it seems obvious the common denominator here was the war, or the fact the war was over.

As often as not, there was humor in the stories these familiar people told about their bond, headshaking as often as horror. Looking back now, I wonder where the rage went, the fear, the disgust, the resistance. Was it simply something to be forgotten, suppressed, gradually worked off as Anton Steenwijk does through his career as an anesthesiologist, through his two marriages, two children, four houses in the city, the country, the southland? We know about the people who couldn't cope with the war after the fact. But what about the ones who did—was telling those stories enough to restrain reality, keep it at arm's length, disarm it? Or had they already discovered the truth about the other war stories—that they could, if not wipe away the past, then at least apply it constructively? And is that why they gradually stopped telling the real war stories and, in their prosperity, shifted to something to all appearances more benign?

One cannot justify the ways of God to man, as Job and his friends, as Anton Steenwijk and his friends, discover. But the problems my parents and their friends faced coming out of World War II did not, do not lie far beyond our ken. The son of one of Job's friends, Elihu, argues that a man's deeds benefit God, but they certainly affect his fellow men—and that is something we have been able to talk about, of course, because the wars keep happening. …

[D]uring a conversation in New York after the English translation of *The Assault* appeared in 1985, I asked Mulisch who else was writing interesting fiction in Holland today. I recall him smiling and saying that the best writers today were the ones who were writing after the War. Perhaps, the smile was for the fact that writers are always writing after the War; perhaps, it was for the fact that he, born well before the war and a senior figure on the Dutch scene, has contributed so much. Either way, his example makes clear that complaint in Job's tradition will not be enough, if only because we who come after have previously aspired to more.

> Criticism and irony will not be enough, either, though they mark a new beginning at a time when as a nation and a generation—despite the rhetoric—we haven't achieved the unity, or unity of purpose, that finally makes war stories unnecessary. That is what the real war stories were about, back in the beginning, for those of us who were lucky enough to hear them. At the very least, remembering them as we tell our stories from daily life will add the necessary perspective, the necessary note of urgency. Because the urgency remains, the wars continue—can we afford not to say that?[2]

Bringing It Home

Saving Private Ryan, Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-winning 1998 film about D-Day and the fighting that followed is probably the best incarnation of my rather cryptic reference, in the 1992 essay, to a "peacetime war story," and its differences from Mulisch's book explain my skepticism. Spielberg makes his intentions clear with the opening scenes: the Stars and Stripes rippling in the breeze and then a tracking shot of an aging gentleman trudging ahead of what are clearly his wife, children, and grandchildren, prosperous and handsome and very American. The location: Colleville-sur-Mer, the cemetery and memorial to American soldiers who died on the beaches of Normandy and in other battles in Europe during World War II. The goal: Private First Class James Francis Ryan returns to honor the memory of Captain John H. Miller, 2nd Ranger Battalion, who died (we later learn) saving Private Ryan and is interred in the cemetery.[3]

I had made the same pilgrimage with my wife and sons four years earlier, during the 50th anniversary celebration of D-Day, June 6, 1944, without the baggage, fictional or real, of having experienced it. Yet I had my own deeply felt associations: my mother's stories of living through

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[2] Leigh Hafrey, "On Communication: War Stories for a New Generation," *Harvard Review* 1 (Spring 1992): 48–51.

[3] *Saving Private Ryan*, dir. Steven Spielberg (DreamWorks Pictures, 1998).

the closing years of the war on her grandmother's farm in Normandy had made the conflict real—the SS officers billeted with her family, the German soldier who commandeered a lamb she was leading to pasture, the German officer who ordered the lamb returned, the villagers' night-time excursions to bury Allied flyers who had been shot down in and around the village of Marcilly-sur-Eure; then, after the liberation wild Jeep rides across the Norman countryside and Marlene Dietrich singing for the GIs at the Olympia concert hall on the Champs Elysées.

In June 1994, my sons were seven and three years old, respectively. They were both enamored of the machinery of armed conflict, particularly World War II. They had developed the interest despite (or perhaps because of) their parents' initial, politically correct, gender-neutral inclination to keep weapons out of childish hands. The video-game industry provided them abundant means of overriding us, but our resistance to arming them had also driven the older of the two to serious military history: Nathaniel prepared for the trip by reading Cornelius Ryan's massive chronicle of D-Day, *The Longest Day*, and that literary accomplishment seemed to us to justify letting them take the lead in determining what we visited. When we arrived on site at an 18th-century farmhouse B&B a few kilometers short of Omaha beach, we turned over the guidebooks to Nathaniel and the video camera to Ben and chauffeured them around for the next six days. Sandra was less than entranced—"If you've seen one bunker, you've seen them all"—but the two boys embodied the data-sponge essence of being young and male and eagerly absorbed it all.

So why resist Spielberg's enshrinement of this signal moment in American history? For starters, does James Francis Ryan (played in the flashbacks by Matt Damon and at the beginning and end of the film by Harrison Young) return to Normandy because of the flag so amply displayed in the opening frames or because, as we discover by the end of the film, he has come to do penance for his role in Miller's (played by Tom Hanks) death? The realism of the scenes that immediately follow, in a flashback that theoretically reaches us through veteran Ryan's now-clouding gray eyes, also contribute to the feeling of unreality: on the beach and in scene after scene throughout the film, Spielberg goes to great lengths to capture the raw truth of armed combat, complete with

dismembered corpses, blood by the gallon, good guys gunned down in the most painful circumstances, and bad guys rewarded for being bad. We are treated to the full panoply of ethical choices under armed stress and helped to draw sad lessons from them about fundamental flaws in human nature. In other words, Spielberg embraces the violence of war more than his veteran's distress.

As the film ends, we return to the waving flag and our aging veteran, but we know now that he weeps not for Capt. Miller or even for the other GIs who sacrificed their lives to bring him, the lone survivor among four brothers who have fought in the war, out of combat and home to his mother. No, he weeps for himself because, as he begs his wife to reassure him, he wants to know he has been "a good man." Whatever his post-war virtues, one could plausibly argue that *Saving Private Ryan* offers a signal example of bad leadership. Hanks' school-teacher-turned-warrior has a hard time staying focused on the mission to save Ryan. Several of his men die in unrelated and avoidable engagements, and when he listens to a subordinate who cites the Geneva Convention and saves a captive German, the German resurfaces with disciplined single-mindedness to kill two more members of the squad. When the reduced team finally finds Private Ryan, the latter simply refuses to obey orders and Miller accepts this insubordination as a declaration of principle. In so doing, he effectively turns the rescue into a suicide mission, a fate his men have anticipated from the start.

One might read the film as an endorsement of the U.S. armed services' ethos, clearly articulated by the end of the 20th century, that every man put at risk in combat is worth heroic and costly efforts to recover alive; the post-World War II record is full of such anecdotes, from Vietnam to Kosovo to Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet the Normandy invasion and other battles during World War II also clearly recognized, and at times prioritized, a top-down, utilitarian assessment of the value of the individual soldier rather than a human-rights-driven conviction of his claim to life, regardless of circumstances. Even if the portrait of the military bureaucracy's high-minded commitment to save Private Ryan is historically accurate, it feels sentimental, especially when measured against the mayhem Spielberg so enthusiastically portrays. The director had had ample practice with the latter: the "special features" for the DVD edition

of *Saving Private Ryan*[4] includes footage from war movies Spielberg shot as a teen. The fascination is the same, albeit on a budget that significantly limited the scope of the young director's special effects.

Beyond the realism of the combat scenes, though, Spielberg has an ideological point to make. Elsewhere in the special features, he quotes President Eisenhower recollecting his time as Supreme Allied Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force that staged the landing: for Eisenhower, "an aroused democracy" made the difference in winning the war. "Freedom," Spielberg concludes, "does not come free."[5] The feature "Into the Breach" includes commentary to the same effect by the late, award-winning historian Stephen Ambrose (*Band of Brothers*, *D-Day*). Ambrose built a substantial career and a historical approach out of collecting the stories soldiers told about fighting the war, and *Saving Private Ryan* joins *Band of Brothers* and the various spin-offs it generated (Spielberg co-produced the TV series) in capturing the story of the common man at war.

If only by virtue of the wealth of material this approach reveals, it makes democratic impulses the measure of the conflict, expressing a philosophy of history that reaches well beyond discussions of World War II. In this view, the course of major events is not about the exploits of great men but about the many ordinary men who did the fighting and dying. That philosophy finds concrete expression in the careful shaping, for example, of the National World War II Museum (originally the National D-Day museum) in New Orleans, which is devoted to illustrating the stories common soldiers told about their experience. One could also argue that it expresses the managerial philosophy of Andrew Higgins, the founder of New Orleans-based Higgins Industries. Higgins' firm produced the landing craft, the so-called Higgins Boats, that allowed Eisenhower to put troops ashore in large numbers on D-Day. Here, patriotism and commerce are unabashedly intertwined.

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[4] "Into the Breach: Saving Private Ryan," Stu Schreiberg and Stephen Kroopnick, executive producers; produced and written by Christen Harty Schaefer; Kellie Allred, *Saving Private Ryan* (DreamWorks Video, 1998).

[5] "A Special Message from Steven Spielberg," *Saving Private Ryan* (DreamWorks Video, 1998).

Still, did World War II usher in a new, populist approach to warfare? Did "the aroused democracy" determine what we should fight for and how, or did it simply do the fighting? The disjunction between Spielberg's patriotic homage to national values and the men who lived them and the moments the film actually celebrates—albeit as cautionary tales—suggests we did not turn a corner at mid-century in our concept of war, even with Eisenhower's uplifting assessment. The piety is Spielberg's, not his characters', and that falsifies the story.

In the name of ideology, moreover, Spielberg opens himself and his film to correction regarding the historical record. Contradictory empirical evidence also generates "stories," and these, in turn, significantly complicate Spielberg's version of the Ambrosian enterprise. In 2012, Oliver Stone's *The Untold History of the United States*, a documentary series, aired on the American TV cable channel Showtime. Stone is best known for films that dramatically reinterpret moments in modern American history (*Platoon*, *Wall Street*, *JFK*), and, like these, Stone's *Untold History* has found abundant detractors because of its casual use of historical fact. That said, Stone presents numbers that have been available and acknowledged for decades on casualties on the eastern front. The Soviet Union lost millions of soldiers and civilians in the war. For Stone, D-Day and all that followed on the western front, while heroic, came late and only after the Russians had both sustained and inflicted monstrous losses, the latter a key factor in the German defeat. Moreover, one could argue that the Russians, too, waged a people's war, but it was hardly the work of a democratic nation.[6]

Then, in 2013, Mary Louise Roberts, a history professor at the University of Wisconsin, released *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*.[7] As the title suggests, U.S. strategists planning the invasion motivated their personnel through patriotic appeals but also quite deliberately planted the notion that once France had been secured, a very good time awaited the liberating army. Roberts' account of what

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[6] *The Untold History of the United States*, dir. Oliver Stone, 10-part documentary series aired on Showtime, 2012.

[7] Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

ensued is based on public records and runs counter to all of the myths about "the good war" and the soldiers who fought it. Those of us who visited France in the 1950s, 1960s, and later will remember the persistence of anti-Americanism in various quarters. In retrospect, that hostility may have stemmed less from French guilt over the weak resistance they offered their Nazi occupiers and more from their sentiment that the liberation had simply delivered them from the frying pan of totalitarian repression into the fire of unbridled New World lust.

The point is not which story is true—all three versions of the American involvement in World War II were and are based on solid evidence—but that a good story, one that might inspire inspired leadership, must capture the full context for the conflict and do so with that intent. That is why, as I discovered recently, Mulisch's novel *The Assault* has become standard reading in Dutch secondary schools. The stories that last, the good stories, combine a sense of the individual, the organization, and the system in which we operate. The stories that last, the good stories, find their way to a complexity that recognizes those relationships and then subsumes them in a version of the truth that allows easy access and quick apprehension, but then says, "And now what?" With that question, the reader, listener, or teller him- or herself realizes that the lesson is always a work in progress, the challenge never goes away, and the stories we tell work only if they keep us a little off balance, a little on edge, persistently hungry for an evolving truth. That is the challenge of virtuous decision making, on and off the battlefield.

CHAPTER 3

9/11 and the Alien Within

Vietnam, Vietnam, Vietnam, we've all been there.

—Michael Herr[1]

Real Life

By 2014, of course, events on the world stage looked very different from the relative peace of 1985 or 1992 or 1998. A short list of American war stories since my conversation with Mulisch includes:

- 1990–1991: The First Gulf War, waged by a U.S.-led coalition of 34 countries to defend Saudi Arabia and free Kuwait of Iraqi occupation.
- 1991 onward: The dissolution of the former Yugoslavia turns violent. Under NATO auspices, U.S. air and ground forces are involved at various times to the end of the century, with the United States taking a lead role beginning in 1995.
- 1993: Battle of Mogadishu ("Blackhawk Down"), Somali civil war—U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force attempt to capture Somali politician and later president Mohamed Farrah Aidid. The battle results in 18 U.S. soldiers dead and 80 wounded as well as hundreds of Somali casualties.
- 1994: The genocide in Rwanda, which over a period of 100 days costs some 800,000 Rwandans their lives. The Clinton administration hesitates to commit forces, then supports humanitarian relief efforts in the country.

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[1] Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 260.

- 1996–1997, 1998–2003, and continuing: The First and Second Congo Wars, initially an overflow from the conflict in Rwanda but involving a much wider set of players, at the cost of over five million lives.
- 2001 onward: 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States at the cost of several thousand lives, which leads the administration of George W. Bush to launch the war in Afghanistan, still unconcluded.
- 2002–2011: The George H.W. Bush administration launches the war in Iraq, which ends with the pullout of U.S. ground forces in 2011.
- 2014 onward: The Obama administration begins returning U.S. advisors to the Middle East to aid in the fight against the self-proclaimed Islamic State.

Meanwhile, as we descended into war again on a global scale, here's what was happening on the home front:

- September 10, 2001: Sandra and I are co-masters of one of the undergraduate residential complexes for Harvard College, Mather House, which is home to 400 sophomores, juniors, and seniors as well as tutorial staff. Our job description is "to see to the well-being of the community." On September 10, 2001, we take our new class of about 120 sophomores on an outing that will introduce them to the House and its staff. We have chosen a retreat facility north of Boston: it is a glorious New England day, sunny and in the 70s. We play acquaintance games, swim, eat, and relax.
- September 11, 2001: On the morning of 9/11, on TV, I see the first plane hit the World Trade Center's south tower; at first I think it's a movie. After a confused hour or two we realize that whatever the facts on the ground, the House needs to mount a response. We set up TVs in the House dining hall, alert our resident staff to watch for students in crisis, and start hunting through the list of affiliates to see who might have family in New York City. Over the next several months, Harvard's

mental health services see a spike in visits, though the students in question rarely tie their distress to 9/11. Somehow the cataclysm transmutes into the more typical student concerns with life, purpose, study habits, relationships, eating disorders, suicidal ideation, but on a significantly larger scale.

- 2004: The force commander of the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) during the genocide, Lt. General Roméo Dallaire, stops by our residence at Mather to introduce himself. We have welcomed him as a tenant during his fellowship year with the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. His host and fellow Mather tenant Michael Ignatieff, the director of the Carr Center and a well-known author and historian (and later politician), has promised that Dallaire will talk with our students about the ethics of peacekeeping, which he plans to study during his year at Harvard. In October, Dallaire gives the talk over dinner in a small room off the main dining hall in the House. About 30 students attend. I arrive late, as Dallaire is presenting a slide on the numbers associated with the genocide. To this day, I remember a dark, quiet room filled with distress while the main dining hall just outside buzzes with undergraduate high spirits. Our students have gathered, as they do every evening, under the glittering chandeliers that Sandra and I ourselves chose during a renovation of the space a few years earlier. The price of that light, it strikes me then, includes Dallaire's mission and Dallaire's suffering, of which more shortly.
- Around 2005: At MIT Sloan, I begin working with U.S. veterans of the Afghan and Iraq conflicts on a course they have created to explore and present leadership lessons learned from the military that might apply to business practice. The course continues to this day.
- 2006: Our older son, Nathaniel, who read *The Longest Day* to prep for Normandy, publishes an article on the Vietnam War. Co-written with one of his faculty, it is titled "The Turnaround Point: Vietnam Movies, Protest Literature, and

the Feedback Loop of Contemporary American Identity."[2] He follows it with a second article, again co-written, titled "'George, They Were Only Movies': The Vietnam Syndrome in Iraq War Culture."[3]

- September 10, 2011: Ben, our younger son, and his fellow editors at the school newspaper collect essays by staff writers and classmates about where they were on 9/11. He contributes an essay of his own. On that day, he recalls, the teachers recessed all classes so that parents could pick up their children. As he sits waiting for us at the top of the playground slide, he learns that World War III has begun; he wonders why he isn't upset.[4]

Hanging Private Ryan

One can measure the shift in mood from *Saving Private Ryan* in 1998 to the present by the films that have been released about the American-managed conflicts in the Middle East. The most obvious response to 9/11 is director Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), about the assassination of Osama bin Laden, the alleged mastermind of the attacks on 9/11. Bigelow also directed *The Hurt Locker*, about a bomb disposal squad in Iraq and the addiction men can develop to mortal danger; we will return to this film in Chapter 4. Other films include *In the Valley of Elah*, *Green Zone*; two films by John Cusack—the critically panned satire *War, Inc.* and award-winning *Grace Is Gone*; and the Mark Wahlberg vehicle *Lone Survivor*. And then there is the television series *Homeland*, which in its

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[2] Nathaniel Naddaff-Hafrey and Zoe Trodd, "The Turnaround Point: Vietnam Movies, Protest Literature, and the Feedback Loop of Contemporary American Identity," in *Americana: Readings in Popular Culture*, edited by Leslie Wilson (Los Angeles: Press Americana, 2006), 264–278.

[3] Nathaniel Naddaff-Hafrey and Zoe Trodd, " 'George, They Were Only Movies': The Vietnam Syndrome in Iraq War Culture," in *Iraq War Cultures*, edited by Cynthia Fuchs and Joe Lockard (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 141–159.

[4] Benjamin Naddaff-Hafrey, "Clear Blue Sky," *Harvard Crimson*, September 10, 2011.

first three seasons won 33 Emmy, Golden Globe, and other awards and counts among its enthusiastic viewers President Obama (for non-*Homeland* watchers, the president appears upside-down and then right-side up in the opening montage to each episode).

The differences between the two wars, the military that fought them, and the stories they have generated are huge. Nothing captures that range of differences better, though, than the search in *Homeland* for the truth about Nicholas Brody, the U.S. marine who returns to a hero's welcome after eight years in captivity in Iraq at the hands of al-Qaeda. In *Zero Dark Thirty*, Bigelow hypothesizes a female Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analyst, Maya, who doggedly pursues every scrap of intelligence that might lead U.S. forces to bin Laden. According to the director, "Maya" is a conflation of various individuals who contributed to the hunt.[5] *Homeland*'s female CIA operative Carrie Mathison persists with similar intensity in ascertaining that Brody has been "turned" and sent back to the United States to commit an act of domestic terror. The story is complicated by the fact that Mathison and her suspect fall in love, that Brody's family and particularly his daughter have a strong hold on his conscience, and that politics at the agency and on Capitol Hill repeatedly cloud both the larger ideological issues around and the particular truth about Brody.

In Season 3, the agency effectively turns Brody again, using his alleged guilt in a bombing at CIA headquarters and his affection for Mathison to do so. He is then dispatched to Tehran to assassinate the head of Iran's intelligence services in a long-range play to achieve rapprochement between the United States and Iran over the latter's uranium enrichment program. When the plan to extract Brody following the assassination fails Mathison sets out to save him, but the agency protects its investment in the operation by revealing Brody's hideout to Iranian authorities. Out of solutions, Mathison stands by helplessly as Brody is arrested and publicly hanged. In this case and this war, there is no saving Private Ryan.

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[5] David Gritten, "Kathryn Bigelow Interview for Zero Dark Thirty: The Director on the Trail of Terrorism," *The Telegraph*, January 18, 2013, at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/9809355/Kathryn-Bigelow-interview-for-Zero-Dark-Thirty-The-director-on-the-trail-of-terrorism.html.

As so often happens, the change in relations between Iran and the Western powers that the writers of *Homeland* hypothesize did actually occur as season 3 ended. Coincidence? Perhaps. Certainly no one has revealed a carefully orchestrated synchrony between U.S. foreign policy and the gradual evolution of the TV series. At the level of *realpolitik*, though, it seems clear that especially with the specter of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) rising in 2014, the two countries share an interest in controlling Sunni ambitions for sectarian hegemony in the Middle East, and the entente would also help Iran persuade the United States and other Western powers to lift punishing sanctions. We will come to the fourth season of *Homeland* in the next chapter; the fifth season will release after this writing, when the story may take a turn that life as we know it has not and will not take. Whatever happens next on either stage, the correlation speaks to the verisimilitude of the program and the degree to which, even in its relish for Byzantine backroom maneuvering it has successfully captured the way we wage our wars in the 21st century.

It also highlights the fundamentally undemocratic nature of the leadership we exercise in our daily lives and the success we find in doing so at the price of individual liberty. No one in *Homeland* appears even to dream of the freedom for which Spielberg's GIs face withering German fire on the beaches of Normandy. Brody demonstrates the potential plasticity of human character under pressure: he grows to love his Arab captors and converts to Islam, then turns on them when U.S. agents subject him to similar pressure. Carrie Mathison leaps at the opportunity to become station chief in Ankara after demands in the workplace that even her boss, Saul Berenson, who has imposed them on her, recognizes as abusive.

Moral fiber? Would that we had it, either to resist this manipulation by others or refrain from manipulation. For good or ill, the call of duty sounds perpetually, and when it occasionally doesn't, it is only because a select few individuals in authority are cutting a deal to determine what duty they need met. In that sense, our love affair with hierarchy and the social stability it promises only guarantees our servitude. What could agree less with Americans' notion of themselves as a free and free-thinking people?

People's Wars?

The actual history of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan confirms this departure from the standard Spielberg wants us to associate with World War II. These are not "people's" wars because the people didn't know enough to know whether they wanted them. At this point, we seem to agree that the Iraqis had no weapons of mass destruction, that the information the intelligence community provided was either flawed or misused, and that we were led into that war on false pretenses. An appeal to revenge for 9/11 alone would not have taken us there, though it would have justified a measured response. The early intervention in Afghanistan aimed to do that, but we apparently missed an opportunity to eliminate Osama bin Laden and key elements of al-Qaeda at the outset and so continue to fight and lose soldiers in that part of the Middle East to this day. The realities on the ground aside, because of repeated tours of duty for the same very limited group, fewer than 1 percent of Americans have fought in these wars. Their families know what they experience and what that experience costs them and, by extension, the larger society, but the vast majority of us live our pre-war lives, now with a generous helping of the paranoia that accompanies imperfect knowledge. That is what makes *Homeland* so compelling.

In this brave new world, invisible authorities manipulate fundamentally decent individuals to do fundamentally indecent things in the name of larger social aims. Those individuals seem almost to welcome serving as instruments of the State, however defined, if only because it gives them an integrity they don't otherwise manage on their own. Carrie Mathison is bipolar, and while she spends a lot of time and effort disguising that fact, her condition also gives her the edge she needs to understand aspects of her story that no one else at the CIA does. For her, the constraints of her organization make her illness more manageable, more justifiable, even if her superiors abuse her for it. Brody has already given up when the agency repurposes him, and when he goes to the hangman, he says simply that he welcomes the peace that will come with death. He knows he is no longer master of himself, if he ever was. Brody jeopardizes our common notion of character, the idea that one has unshakeable and consistent

moral convictions. It is a concept of the individual that, at the societal level, hallowed our defeat of Germany and Japan.

Given the alternative views of that war mentioned above, we might ask whether we didn't almost from the beginning choose very carefully the way we portrayed ourselves then and whether we might want now to rethink our claims about American and more broadly human nature, given new evidence about how and why we fight. If that makes the reader uncomfortable, as it has made me uncomfortable to write this analysis of *Homeland*, then we need to look for dimensions of the story that suggest we can actually adhere to the values for which Spielberg nominally made *Saving Private Ryan* and to which we have always pledged our allegiance.[6] What story might we tell that would recognize the realities of America today and still point us in the direction of a principled consistency with what we believe has made our country great?

We can certainly start with the story of Nicholas Brody, Carrie Mathison, and the other lead characters in *Homeland*. What differential does the show offer that *Saving Private Ryan*, shot 10–15 years earlier, does not? Gender probably constitutes the most obvious difference. In Spielberg's film, the mother in the Ryan family collapses on her front porch as an army staff car approaches in a cloud of dust to inform her that three of her sons have died. A brief connection with a French mother and her daughter costs one of Captain Miller's rescue squad his life. Captain Miller makes loving references to his wife as he mentors Private Ryan, and a haunting prebattle calm is colored by the voice of Edith Piaf playing on a phonograph that the troops scrounge from the wreckage of the town they seek to hold. Total screen time: ~12 minutes, all in minor, albeit symbolically important, roles.

In *Homeland*, which has run a dozen hourly episodes a season for four seasons now, Carrie Mathison is on screen virtually nonstop. Much of the time, she is dealing with her own considerable psychological disability, which is also her virtue. In her undrugged, manic state, she sees things

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[6] Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013). Turner locates the organized democratic agenda that Spielberg, Ambrose, and others highlight during World War II in the work of American psychologists and European émigrés in the 1930s.

no one else sees, makes connections no one else can make, and has the drive to make her work stick. Another bipolar woman, the nonfictional Johns Hopkins University professor of psychiatry, Kay Redfield Jamison, has studied the condition at length and writes in her excellent memoir *An Unquiet Mind* that "having fire in one's blood is not without its benefits in the world of academic medicine, especially in the pursuit of tenure."[7] Drive, however secured, can make a difference. So Carrie, like Maya in Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty*, is the central figure in the show.

At all times, moreover, she supplies the conceptually and emotionally charged interface or bridge between dominant and conflicting or competing male groups in the series: on the one side, Nicholas Brody and his Arab handlers; on the other side, Saul Berenson and the hierarchy of men in the agency and the larger American political and military establishment. The two American groups also often face off, even as they share the belief that they all have a vital stake in—depending on the latest plot twist—Brody's death or his survival. And here, Carrie Mathison persistently introduces a fundamentally destabilizing force into the men's calculations, even when, as earlier noted, she seems to aspire to the status of "good soldier." The insider–outsider dynamic that her character represents is, for organizational purposes, one of the toughest to manage, but it also offers many organizations, in the public and private sectors and civil society, their best chance to improve their practices.

Nicholas Brody fares less well, even though he serves fundamentally the same disruptive purpose as Carrie Mathison. Particularly during the third season, the two of them are shown in parallel and usually victimized situations. Brody's version of Mathison's bipolarity is his simultaneous embodiment of aspirational American stereotypes—marine, war hero, prisoner-of-war, family man, congressman—and his deeply felt adherence to his erstwhile Arab captors' cause and their faith. While the American version of this story re-invents and domesticates its Israeli origins in the award-winning and, in Israel, hugely popular series *Hatufim* ("Abductees"), the show maintains its connection to the non-American world through Brody. He is simultaneously "us" and "the other," and

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[7] Kay Redfield Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 123.

not just any other, but America's sworn enemy. That, too, marks a major departure from the all-American inclination that characterizes Spielberg's film.

Hanging Brody, while a convenient plot resolution, only unleashes a horde of new possibilities at the end of Season 3. The biggest is probably Mathison's pregnancy by him, a recognition of the legacy that a character may leave through his or her offspring. Given Mathison's choice to take up the role of CIA station chief in Ankara after a maternity leave, it seems likely that Brody's spirit will live on in the work she does for or—if past patterns are predictive—counter to agency priorities. Brody's family also comes into play, through his wife, son, and daughter, all of whom may well feel relieved that he has vanished from their lives but will also feel that someone owes them the truth about what he did or did not do. In that sense, the alien presence that Brody introduces into the American patriotic and patriarchal idyll will continue to trouble the action and may actually succeed in re-routing it in a more productive, because less insular, direction.

That makes his story, and Carrie Mathison's story, an early 21st-century embodiment of what we seek here: the good story. It recognizes the ambiguities of our time and our motivations and asks us to measure our ideological and emotional commitments against realities that we will see if we take the time to look around us. In its complexity, it also warns us that we will almost certainly not arrive at a final solution to our condition; indeed, it warns us that a solution so conceived will serve us badly, even in the short term. By this standard, we can return to the legends spun out of World War II to find similar gems. In Europe, this would include films like Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946), René Clément's *Jeux interdits* (1952), and Alain Resnais' documentary film *Nuit et brouillard* (1955) and feature film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959). In the United States, we might single out William Wyler's multiple Academy Award-winning *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) or a film made of one of the classics of post-war literature, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (book 1955; film 1956). All of these films register for that war the complexities that *Homeland* does for our current conflicts in the Middle East.

They all embed the war in the lives of the average citizen, with or without direct experience of the war. In that sense, and regardless of the

command hierarchy that actually manages the conflict in question, these stories make the specific war to which they refer a "people's war": the costs and benefits of the conflict lie at or close to the surface and allow us collectively to assess complicity, commitment, stamina, and intent. No recent war film does this better than Michael Cimino's Academy Award-winning epic *The Deer Hunter* (1978), in which the action is pretty evenly divided between Vietnam and a small Pennsylvania steel town. The juxtaposition of the battle zone and comparative civilian repose seems to me fundamental to stories that successfully capture the complexity of armed conflict, for both good and ill. It also invites us to think twice about a world in which we applaud that disposition to conflict and measure it against the standard of who we think we are as a people. Finally, it allows us to see the transition from combat to our apparently more innocuous embrace and practice of competition and, with it, the structure of the American preoccupation with business.

CHAPTER 4

2019 and the Alien Without

I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die.

—Roy Batty[1]

How is it that we have created an economic system that tells us it is cheaper to destroy the earth and exhaust its people than to nurture them both?

—Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins[2]

A Homeland Diary Entry

Season 4 of *Homeland* takes the action in a new direction on several fronts. Maybe audiences found the hanging of Nicholas Brody in Season 3 too much to take; maybe they just found Brody's family, those three hapless civilians who are the domestic collateral damage of Brody's war-fighting, insufficiently interesting. Whatever the case, none of the Brody family surfaces in Season 4. Even my end-of-Season-3 assumption that Carrie Mathison would come back to her own humanity through her baby by Brody turns out to be dead wrong. The baby bears a passing resemblance to her putative father (red hair and a dyspeptic disposition, to judge from her newborn facial expressions), but that doesn't bring Carrie around. Mother and daughter seem to be bonding as the season closes, with Frannie now an almost toddler, but given what we learn of Carrie's

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[1] *Blade Runner*, dir. Ridley Scott (1982), "Final Cut" DVD (Warner Bros., 2007).

[2] Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins, *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* (New York: Little, Brown, 1999), 321.

own missing mother, it's hard to say how their relationship will evolve in Season 5.

More importantly for our purposes, the action moves from Iraq to Pakistan. Carrie and her team become immersed in internal Pakistani politics after her boss Saul Berenson is kidnapped by Taliban working with ISI, the Pakistani intelligence service. Washington breaks off diplomatic relations with the Islamic state over a bloody raid on the embassy in Islamabad, then engineers a possible countercoup that may place the warlord who carried out the raid in a position to orchestrate a united and presumably more manageable and U.S.-friendly front. As committed a public servant as Carrie has tried to be, she suddenly confronts the possibility that she is dispensable: it seems that even her mentor, Saul, will do what it takes to achieve larger organizational goals, including an alliance with a mass murderer. The season ends with Carrie driving in confused dismay through the leafy suburbs of the Washington Metro area; her moral compass has finally failed her.

The sense of bewilderment that she expresses is a *topos* of the stories that war generates. The veteran returns to a civilian world that he or she no longer understands, or if the connections to a pre-war life remain, they demand much more patience and effort than was previously the case. Vets coming out of World War II had a comparatively easy time re-integrating with daily life, in part because so many had contributed to the war effort at home and overseas. Vietnam vets faced a much harsher re-entry, and unlike those coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan, had no war to return to if they found re-entry too stressful or simply too boring. Even for those who redeployed to the Middle East, though, the net effects of such continuing, extended service warrant close examination.

It is important to note that Carrie Mathison is not a veteran in the literal sense. She has not worn a uniform; she moves with relative fluidity between the civilian world of the office-park atmosphere at Langley, her family, and her noncombat-related medical issues, on the one hand, and a world where firefights, complete with personnel in uniform, can erupt at any moment, on the other. It is also true that in season 4 of *Homeland*, the United States is not at war with Pakistan. However, the country's proximity to Afghanistan and the cross-border activities that that proximity allows effectively make it a war zone and the subject of

nonstop, high-level diplomatic wrangling. In that sense, Carrie's personal and professional situation captures the reality we have already confronted of a country on a permanent war footing.

This chapter addresses the social environment that such circumstances generate and launches us on a search, to be carried out over multiple chapters, into ways of altering how we operate, for the benefit not just of our uniformed combatants but all of us citizens the military has committed to serve. We focus here on philosophical and psychological frameworks for the argument in *War Stories* in anticipation of an applied approach in succeeding chapters.

Fear and Loathing in Baghdad

Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* (2008) stands out among films on the Middle East conflicts in many ways. It is the first war film to win a Best Picture Oscar since *Platoon*, the first feature film by a woman to win Best Director, and the lowest-grossing film to win Best Picture ever.[3] It won five other Academy Awards for 2009 and numerous awards from other entities. It also unambiguously foregrounds fear and what that emotion costs us as its subject matter. That, perhaps more than its phased release, may account for a much smaller viewership than Clint Eastwood's *American Sniper*, which we will discuss in Chapter 5. *The Hurt Locker* combines documentary immediacy with a gripping fictional story line provided by screenwriter Mark Boal. Boal, who had embedded as a reporter with the military in Iraq several years earlier, had won an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay for his contribution to *The Hurt Locker*. The result is a story that knowingly externalizes a persistent internal state. The film follows an EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) team operating in Iraq. The cast includes then relatively unknown screen faces: Jeremy Renner, Anthony Mackie, and Brian Geraghty as, respectively, Staff Sergeant William James, Sergeant J.T. Sanborn, and SPC Owen Eldridge. The lack of star power may deprive the film of theatrical scale, but the intense psychodrama that Bigelow evokes benefits from the decision to cast relative unknowns.

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[3] "The Hurt Locker (2008): Trivia," http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0887912/trivia?ref_=tt_ql_2, accessed March 13, 2015.

Though the three men are surrounded by fellow soldiers, the film maintains a tight focus on them in their operations. They seem effectively to exist in a bubble in which the anxiety and tension grow almost by the hour. At the beginning of the film, Sanborn and Eldridge have just lost James' predecessor, in part, it seems, because Eldridge was reluctant to shoot an Iraqi standing nearby and dialing on a cell phone. Their new chief displays a tendency to put himself and his team at extreme risk whenever the opportunity presents itself. Since their company is nearing the end of its rotation—the countdown in days appears intermittently onscreen—Sanborn and Eldridge find James' risk taking particularly stressful.

The sound design of *The Hurt Locker* follows the documentary feel of the story. We hear the larger environment: the traffic, the cries of children, the wind; the sounds that things make, fabric on fabric as James dons the bomb suit or the crunch of debris landing after an explosion; and the men themselves, panting in the heat or exchanging cryptic assessments of the situations in which they find themselves. The local inhabitants occupy the screen in large numbers, watching the Americans as they go about their business—"We've got a lot of eyes on us, James. We need to get out of here"[4]—but not interacting with them. The film is full of bystanders never identifiably friend or foe. During one disposal incident, an Iraqi videotapes the three Americans at length, even as he waves—perhaps signals—to friends in the tower of a nearby mosque.

The three soldiers seem completely alone in a world that teems with a life to which they have no access yet is as diverse as the soldiers' lives are uniform. Claustrophobia rules: the bomb-suit helmet becomes a measure of that enclosed feeling, and late in the film a group of boys stones the buttoned-up Humvee in which the team drives back to base. A repeated camera shot has James walking down an empty city street in the bomb suit; he looks like an alien newly arrived on Earth or a re-enactor playing the American astronauts' landing on the moon or a very bloated reincarnation of the gunslinger in a classic Western shoot-out. Only there's rarely anyone at the other end of the street: his foe is hidden, and he faces instead the hostility of the inanimate.

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[4] *The Hurt Locker*, dir. Kathryn Bigelow (Summit Entertainment, 2008).

Faced with that hostility, the characters find that even the team camaraderie they might wish to share cannot be sustained. Jeremy Renner's damn-the-torpedoes demeanor as Sergeant James pushes the us/them divide into heroic territory, but while he seems immune to the atmosphere of distrust, it takes its toll on him as well, and he ultimately succumbs to it. His two teammates simply want to survive and ship home; he seems either to embrace the risks of what he does or to have numbed himself to the point where they do not penetrate his consciousness. During one disposal operation, he throws aside his radio headset so that he doesn't have to respond to Sanborn. Midway through the film, he calls his ex-wife (played by Evangeline Lilly) but hangs up without responding to her voice. We later see him briefly at home with her or, more precisely, at the supermarket, where he confronts a whole aisle of cereal—"Okay, cereal,"[5] he mutters as she disappears—and clearly decides that neither she nor the cereal nor their infant son warrants his staying out of harm's way.

He has moments of visible emotional insight and the ability to translate them into operational success. In that sense, he actually demonstrates more effective leadership than Tom Hanks does in Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*. James helps Eldridge find the courage to fire his weapon and has a more equal relationship with Sanborn, who needs it to maintain an authority as coordinator that James keeps undermining with his solo style. Yet a brief friendship over soccer with an Iraqi boy in the market on base mutates into misjudgment, recklessness, and anger. James takes the team beyond its assigned mission, puts them all in jeopardy, and ends up shooting Eldridge even as he saves him from abduction. As Eldridge is medevaced out of Camp Victory, he names the problem to James' face: "We didn't have to go out looking for trouble to get your fucking adrenalin fix, you fuck!" As the two remaining team members end their rotation, Sanborn is on the verge of a breakdown and asks James why he is so unflappable. But James turns it around: "I don't know why, J.T. Do you know why I am the way I am?"[6]

The possibility that some men love war or that even if they don't love it, it nevertheless improves on what the civilian world can offer them,

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[5] *The Hurt Locker*.

[6] *The Hurt Locker*.

comes up again and again in the stories on the U.S. engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan. That said, the environment Bigelow creates in *The Hurt Locker* registers something other than the visceral draw of love, fellow feeling, group identity, or adrenalin—despite the accusation Eldridge hurls at his superior. The loneliness and abstraction of James' mission is a factor here: as noted above, it is usually man against object and only indirectly man against man. The unremitting tension in the film arises from James' intimacy with the very thing that may kill him as he does the delicate work of disarming a device, but he chooses that proximity over the use of a robot and is constantly looking to dispense with the safety measures that are meant to protect him. Late in the film, he tries unsuccessfully to cut a suicide vest off a bomber who has had a change of heart; he apologizes to the man and flees as the bomb detonates, but he might as well be wearing the vest himself.

In that sense, this is less the profile of a hero than one of a highly skilled automaton. As played by Renner, James offers a primitive psychological prototype for the soldier-as-a-system that military researchers now imagine waging our future wars.[7] The concept depends for its viability on ever-greater amounts of ever-more-enabling technology, the extension of the individual's abilities through implanted, attached, or otherwise mediated, usually digital devices. Superheroes like Captain America and Iron Man come to mind, but the unique strength that those cultural icons possess and the sense of mission to which they devote its use is lacking in Will James and may well be equally lacking in any individual soldier of the future, regardless of high-tech connectivity. The apparently happy match of purpose to skill makes James stand out, but we don't know how he came to serve and the absence of a patriotic rhetoric makes him and the rest of his team a study in adaptation rather than inspiration, men with a mission void of values beyond their own competence.

Scenes from boot camp commonly lay the groundwork for patriotic rhetoric in war stories. They may undercut the message—for example, the opening scenes in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*—but the initiation into service signals indoctrination into values that are taken for granted in

[7] Also called "Future Soldier 2030" in Sharon Weinberger, "Soldier of the Future," *New York Post*, May 23, 2009, http://nypost.com/2009/05/23/soldier-of-the-future/, accessed March 17, 2015.

the service. Boot camp is always value-laden; indeed, boot camp uses the recruits' physical training (some would say abuse) as a route to securing and ingraining those values. In *The Hurt Locker* those initiatory moments are missing, like most other collective action. James operates solo or, at most, with disgruntled support from Eldridge and Sanborn, who at one point suggests fragging him. In that sense, James reveals a potential and significant flaw in the soldier-as-a-system model: he fails to manage his solitary role but nevertheless re-ups, suggesting that such a war fighter might not have the moral fortitude to survive and live by the values for which he or she has been asked to fight.

The absence of that ethical framework in James speaks to something very specific about military leadership. An all-volunteer military consists of people who choose to share in the hierarchy and drilled competence of the services; they seek out the discipline others will impose on them. With exceptions that we will discuss later, enlistees do not have to make the radical, if still high-minded, solitary commitment that most superheroes do. In one form or another, superheroes must live up to a gift, even if it is only the wound that drives Iron Man and that makes him an echo of a much more ancient mythical leader, the Fisher King. Their uniqueness obligates these figures, and in that obligation they find their ethical code. By comparison with that ineluctable responsibility, James' solitude signals dysfunction, not transcendence; his re-upping at the end of the film—the countdown begins again at 365 days, with a different company—bespeaks his inability to master himself or his talent.

The men he has been called to lead are less skillful than he. They may, in fact, be lesser beings, racked with fear, aware of their own frailty, and longing only to get back to a less challenging life. In that fear and longing, though, they have a brighter future than James: they need only to survive him and the horror of a conflict that he has deliberately, if compulsively, exacerbated. If James is the soldier of the future, we need to tweak the model before we put too much faith in it, because he is still wearing the vest into which we have strapped him.

Soldiering 2019

The commercial release of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* in 1982 did poorly at the box office. It took a "director's cut" (1992) and a "final cut" (2007)

to illuminate the film's evident artistic merit, but by then it had already garnered a cult following, some of it based on ever-improving cinema technology but some of it also in response to the film's prescience. Set in 2019, it speaks volumes about our current political and socioeconomic situation. We may succeed in the next few years in avoiding a Los Angeles where it rains 24/7, we haven't yet started building gated communities in the "Off-world," and we may not yet have done in the planet's biodiversity, replacing it with an all-dominant bioengineering industry. But the attitude behind the *Blade Runner* apocalypse on Earth feels all too familiar, the product of socioeconomic forces that have emerged ever more clearly since the film's original release.

In the world according to *Blade Runner*, the sources of power are hidden, unavailable to ordinary people. There is no path from dank L.A. streets to the seat(s) of power. Those at the bottom know it, and those at the top do what they need to do to ensure its absence. The world of *Blade Runner* takes what was in 1982 a dawning social and economic trend and drives it to an extreme, literally dehumanizing those who do the jobs we deem necessary but will not do ourselves. The Tyrell Corporation produces

> a being virtually identical to a human—known as a replicant. The NEXUS 6 replicants were superior in strength and agility, and at least equal in intelligence, to the genetic engineers who created them. *Replicants* were used Off-world as slave labor, in the hazardous exploration and colonization of other planets.[8]

These demographics signal the triumph of a Darwinian social vision, one in which the fittest can leave Earth for an extra-terrestrial "golden land of opportunity and adventure." The motto of the Tyrell Corporation, "More Human Than Human," captures a brave new social order in which all that is left on the home planet are the sick, minorities, criminals, and an obsession with the cultural markers of bygone days, when human beings knew they were human. Even the slaves in the Off-world are more beautiful and able than the average of their creators on Earth, which goes

[8] *Blade Runner*.

far to explain why they are forbidden there: "After a bloody mutiny by a NEXUS 6 combat team in an Off-world colony, *replicants* were declared illegal on earth—under penalty of death."[9]

Rogue replicants' designated executioners are called "blade runners." The title of the film originated with science fiction writer Alan E. Nourse, who used it for a 1974 story about a world in which medical care is available only to those who undergo sterilization. The Beat Generation writer William S. Burroughs prepared a story treatment for a film adaptation of Nourse's novel and it, in turn, became a novella under the title *Blade Runner (a movie)*. Having acquired the rights to Nourse's title, Scott adapted the Philip K. Dick novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* for the substance of *Blade Runner*. His is the first of a series of now more than a dozen film adaptations of Dick's often-dark work, including *Total Recall* (1990), *Minority Report* (2002), and *The Adjustment Bureau* (2011), and *Blade Runner II* is in development at this writing. Nourse was a physician by training and vocation, and that background factored into his version of the "blade runner" world. His "blade runner" smuggles medical supplies ("blades" = scalpels) to those who want or need them for medical procedures but also wish to avoid the sterilization mandated to qualify for them.

As will already have become evident, the "blade runner" of Scott's world radically alters the mood of its title source. In the film, human blade runners hunt those replicants that or who (?) return to Earth in spite of the ban. The film focuses on one such blade runner, Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford), and his four quarry: Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer), "combat: colonization defense program"; Leon Kowalsky (Brion James), "combat: loader"; Zhora (Joanna Cassidy), "off-world kick-murder squad"; and Pris (Daryl Hannah), "military/leisure." While each of them has a military designation of some kind, it is clear that any replicant could provide a good approximation of what our real-life military planners have in mind when they anticipate the soldier-as-a-system.

Deckard is in danger of being outclassed by his prey, and he knows it from the start. The hunt takes place on the crowded and always twilit

[9] *Blade Runner*.

streets of Los Angeles, but it begins with the one shot of sunlight in the entire film. Deckard has been ordered to see Eldon Tyrell, the genius engineer and business leader behind the company that designs and manufactures replicants. Tyrell wants Deckard to test Rachael (Sean Young), a "Nexus-6" replicant and the latest generation of the company's core product. Deckard uses the Voight-Kampff test, which consists of a series of questions that will detect emotional content in the subject's responses, a first-level indicator of actual humanity. Disgust, love, and pride surface as Deckard quizzes Rachael, but as he proceeds, the questions increasingly focus on eliciting what the test designers—and Rachael, too, though she is apparently a machine—regard as moral or ethical judgments:

> Deckard: It's your birthday. Someone gives you a calfskin wallet.
> Rachael: I wouldn't accept it. Also, I'd report the person who gave it to me to the police ….
> Deckard: You're reading a magazine. You come across a full-page nude photo of a girl.
> Rachael: Is this testing whether I'm a replicant or a lesbian, Mr. Deckard?[10]

When he is done, Tyrell dismisses Rachael and confirms Deckard's test results: Rachael is so perfectly crafted that she doesn't recognize her machine identity. "How can it not know what it is?"[11] Deckard asks.

In the sunlight glow that suffuses Tyrell's penthouse, the brilliance of the company's achievement is palpable. Still, Tyrell confesses to a problem: even when the replicants don't know that they are machines, they do know that something is missing, and the anxiety they feel as a result produces the kinds of dysfunction that blade runners must then resolve. To counter the problem, he explains, the company has begun producing objects—family photos, diaries, memorabilia—that are given to replicants at inception. These "memories" endow them with the appearance of a genealogy and that calms them sufficiently to deliver the services their users require.

Why does Tyrell choose to explain all of this to the blade runner? Deckard's former boss, Captain Bryant, pressured him to return to work

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[10] *Blade Runner*.

[11] *Blade Runner*.

with one short phrase: "If you're not cop, you're little people."[12] Deckard knows where he sits relative to the industrial titan, and for purposes of law enforcement, the niceties of replicant *angst* seem irrelevant. Yet the session in Tyrell's penthouse has planted a seed: Rachael is plagued with doubt about her identity and seeks out Deckard. He doesn't spare her the truth, but in response to her distress, he doubles down on the challenge their society as a whole faces:

> Deckard: Say "Kiss me."
> Rachael: I can't … rely on … my memories …
> Deckard: Say "Kiss me."
> Rachael: Kiss me.
> Deckard: "I want you."
> Rachael: I want you.
> Deckard: Again.
> Rachael: I want you.
> [*pauses*] Put your hands on me.[13]

And so the relationship is consummated, a connection that may be one more expression of Tyrell's engineering genius. At the same time, though, we again encounter the fear factor that dominates Bigelow's world in *The Hurt Locker*. Rachael is frightened of the truth that she has no self, and in turning to Deckard for reassurance, communicates that fear to him as well. The claustrophobia and isolation of Bigelow's film recurs in the darkness of Deckard's apartment and the loneliness that both he as a blade runner and Rachael as a now-outed replicant feel. Here, too, they experience their respective differences in the midst of a population that feels no connection to them and indeed wishes them ill.

The Ethics of Slavery

After all the metaphysics, though, it is the threat of imminent physical death that unites *Blade Runner* and *The Hurt Locker*. During the initial

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[12] *Blade Runner*.
[13] *Blade Runner*.

meeting between Tyrell and Deckard, the CEO confirms what Bryant has already told his blade runner: the replicants have a four-year life span. Bryant presents it as a programmed means of controlling the product, Tyrell as a shortcoming in the science. Either way, Roy Batty and his fellow rebel replicants know that whatever their extraordinary abilities, they are doomed to a short life span, and they have returned to Earth in the hope of altering their fate. Rachael seems to have joined their ranks by contagion, eager to become what she originally assumed she was—a person.

By mid-film, Deckard has retired two of the escaped replicant group, Leon and Zhora. The remaining two, Roy and Pris, con and then coerce, J.F. Sebastian, a genetic designer for Tyrell Corporation, into bringing Roy face to face with the company founder and CEO in his penthouse. The outcome of this second visit to the seat of power is a foregone conclusion. That is the tragedy of *Blade Runner* and its great artistic merit: we know how this story will end. The characters in the story know it, too, but that knowledge doesn't stop them from having the conversation about why things must end as they do. The brief intellectually and emotionally charged exchange between Roy and his creator sums up a conflict in values that provides a commentary on where we are today:

> Tyrell: You were made as well as we could make you.
> Batty: But not to last.
> Tyrell: The light that burns twice as bright burns half as long—and you have burned so very, very brightly, Roy. Look at you: you're the Prodigal Son; you're quite a prize!
> Batty: I've done (pause) questionable things.
> Tyrell: Also extraordinary things. Revel in your time.
> Batty: (smiling wryly) Nothing the God of biomechanics wouldn't let you into heaven for.[14]

How does Roy know that he has done "questionable things"? To reverse Deckard's earlier question about Rachael, how can Roy know that he only mimes humanity, albeit at an exceptional level? What allows a machine to conceive of its self or indeed *a* self?

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[14] Scott, *Blade Runner* ([1982] 2007).

Roy's very being raises ethical questions for him, and with them, questions about the ethics of Tyrell's corporate undertaking. Even if one chooses to believe that Tyrell created his replicants in the name of a greater good for humanity or in the name of pure science, we are left with Roy's challenge to his creator: what are the outcomes of his invention and what is the corporate purpose that drives it? In a world where the dominant visuals, seen through the rain at ground level, are giant floating ads, the earthly emphasis on corporate control is manifest. In this brave new world, does the willed intimacy between Deckard and Rachael have a place? Can we, and our representations of our selves, plausibly expect romance or are we limited to an algorithm of desire, and if so, what do we lose in the process?

The second scene in Tyrell's penthouse ends when Roy crushes his creator's skull with his bare hands. In so doing, he effectively admits that he has failed in his quest for "more life." Yet he has more life to live, and his anger and apparent regret at previous misadventures brings us to the question of how the replicants have acquired emotions at all or if the angry edge they consistently display qualifies as such. Like Roy with Tyrell, their behavior always feels marginally malevolent, even when the scenes in which they appear would seem to warrant a different emotion. Like Deckard and Rachael, Roy and Pris mime a romantic connection, one enhanced by their Aryan resemblance to each other. They are bigger, blonder, and in every way more perfect than any other character in the film, and yet, in the midst of their superman performance, they never rise above the cruelty born of too-great comprehension. Their interaction with J.F. Sebastian, for example, whose humanity seems certified by a visible disability, most resembles a pair of cats playing with a mouse, and Sebastian's response runs the very real human emotional gamut from pride at his invention to a longing for company to unease at the replicants' unstated intent and—in the night scene in the penthouse—terror at his own imminent demise.

The replicants' search for more life approaches what has become a dominant ethical and philosophical concern for 21st-century technology thinkers: When does the difference between machine and human consciousness disappear? Can one speak of one's own kind when the difference between machine and human identity has largely been erased

yet remains a matter of life and death according to social norms that privilege the authenticity of the human? The androids see themselves as fighting for the values that would guarantee them survival over engineered mortality; they are effectively cross-examining the human ingenuity that made their existence possible. Yet none of the features of life before the age of replicants has gone away in *Blade Runner*, and we apparently accept that continuity. War, prostitution, even mere heavy lifting: in the world according to *Blade Runner*, we have exercised our imagination not to change the way the world works but to find someone else to do what we no longer want to be bothered to do ourselves. If we don't want to do the work and we have the means radically to alter how we live, why would we not do so? What risk do we run by instead perfecting machines to do it for us?

What Is a Self?

> When a little girl learns a word … her brain makes a record by altering the connections themselves. When she learns to ride a bike or sing "Happy Birthday," a new constellation of connections takes shape. As she grows, every memory—a friend's name, the feel of skis on virgin powder, a Beethoven sonata—is recorded this way. Taken together, these connections constitute her connectome, the brain's permanent record of her personality, talents, intelligence, memories: the sum of all that constitutes her "self."[15]

The definition of the self is the central puzzle of *Blade Runner*, 20-plus years before Princeton University's Sebastian Seung was featured in the pages of the *NYT Magazine* for his work on the neural connections that he believes make us who we are. The subject has been with us for

[15] Gareth Cook, "Sebastian Seung's Quest to Map the Human Brain," *NYT Magazine*, January 8, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/magazine/sebastian-seungs-quest-to-map-the-human-brain.html?_r=0, accessed January 11, 2015.

millennia—the author of the *Times* piece, Gareth Cook, mentions Plato and Aristotle—but it has now taken on the currency of a policy initiative:

> The race to map the connectome has hardly left the starting line, with only modest funding from the federal government and initial experiments confined to the brains of laboratory animals like fruit flies and mice. But it's an endeavor heavy with moral and philosophical implications, because to map a human connectome would be, Seung has argued, to capture a person's very essence: every memory, every skill, every passion. When the brain isn't wired properly, it can lead to disorders like autism and schizophrenia —"connectopathies" that could be revealed in the map, perhaps suggesting treatments. And if science were to gain the power to record and store connectomes, then it would be natural to speculate, as Seung and others have, that technology might some day enable a recording to play again, thereby reanimating a human consciousness. The mapping of connectomes, its most zealous proponents believe, would confer nothing less than immortality.[16]

Tyrell "gifts" his replicants with memories in order to settle them emotionally and thus make them effective at their jobs. He is effectively debugging his product: Unlike their human counterparts, replicants suffer "connectopathies" born not of genetic dysfunction but of inadequate programming. In the spirit of the Tyrell Corporation's slogan "More Human Than Human," one might also argue that the company improves on and simplifies the task of being human. With that technology and with Seung's broader optimism, why not simply program a humanoid machine with the retrospective records we have of life as we once lived it? Doing so would likely reduce the number of naturally induced pathologies, whatever their nature, and would put immortality in reach.

In spite of a systemic disinclination to change the way the world works, *Blade Runner* invites us to explore the possibility, and with it, a broader definition of self. During Deckard's chase after the escapees, Leon, with

[16] Cook, "Sebastian Seung's Quest to Map the Human Brain."

a replicant's extreme physical power, briefly seems on the verge of overpowering his executioner. At that moment, Rachael takes Deckard's gun and kills her fellow replicant. She is clearly distraught, and Deckard tries to console her:

> Deckard: Shakes? Me too. I get 'em bad. It's part of the business.
> Rachael: I'm not in the business ... I *am* the business.[17]

Does Rachael save Deckard because he is human and therefore superior to a replicant and on the same level as her creator? Does she do so because Leon, human or virtually human, has broken the law? Here, we return to the initial encounter between Tyrell and Deckard and a possibility that the cult followers and interpreters of *Blade Runner* have themselves long since articulated and Ridley Scott has at least tacitly blessed: that Deckard himself, apparently a perfect example of imperfect humanity, is a replicant. In a world where the androids are "more human than human," he may be an early model, thus accounting for his less-than-stellar qualities, or he may himself be a Nexus-6, so finely tuned that, like Rachael, he doesn't know it. If the latter is true, it would seem that Tyrell has taken his quest for humanoid machines so far that his inventiveness turns back on itself, producing perfect imperfection in the quest to create humanity as we know it. Why bother?

Leading for Life

> The tortoise lays [*sic*] on its back, its belly baking in the hot sun, beating its legs trying to turn itself over, but it can't. Not without your help. But you're not helping.[18]

Holden, the first of the blade runners assigned to retire Roy and his group, is putting Leon through a battery of Voight-Kampff test questions. The turtle puzzles and frustrates Leon: does he have an ethical obligation

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[17] *Blade Runner*.
[18] *Blade Runner*.

to the turtle? The test assumes that he won't know whether he does or doesn't and that he has been designed not to feel that obligation. At the same time, the materials science involved in designing and building the replicants—they bleed when wounded—appears to bring with it a visceral awareness in them of their own mortality. They are purpose-built, but the means by which the Tyrell Corporation achieves its effects takes its machines down something like the same path that maturing humans travel: An expanding view of one's self ultimately includes the rest of the biosphere. As that view expands, it transcends the conventions of the moment and taps back into a universality that we tend to forget as we learn our way through convention and into adulthood.

The truth is that Roy Batty's "deathbed" speech could be spoken by any living, sentient being, the specifics of his interplanetary combat experience aside. "All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain," he says. What flesh-and-blood mortal has not had the same realization, with perhaps the same regret? We come back here to the conundrum of Sergeant James and his men in *The Hurt Locker.* Men and women in the armed services are trained to risk their lives on command and are exercised to a point of physical performance beyond what is generally thought possible for the average human being. What happens, though, when the troops we engineer to replace real men or the real men we have already engineered to be less than themselves (this is Sergeant James' problem) decide that they, too, want to be real? Indeed, they may seem to have real, which is to say natural, visceral urges toward the autonomy that our democratic systems sanction and that military discipline must eschew or sharply curtail in the name of a still-imaginable improvement or simple fighting efficiency. Too much of the fighting we do violates the values that we are fighting to defend: What then?

The crisis of leadership in a *Blade Runner* future but also in a *Hurt Locker* present stems precisely from this tension between means and ends. We persist in fighting, perhaps have no alternative but to fight, given the global disparity in aims and cultures that characterizes the early 21st century. At the same time, the dissonance between potentially fatal service and individual self-fulfillment, whether the individual in question is Carrie Mathison or Roy Batty or Sergeant James, becomes more apparent by the year and the battle. The American notion of a future

soldier-as-a-system has the appeal of yoking learned killing competence and instinctual self-preservation in the service of national interest, and like Tyrell's replicants, the war fighter at the heart of this strategy relies heavily on technology for his or her success. Technology does not make leaders, though, it only enables them, and it does so at best within the limits of the technology.

In *Blade Runner*, the distance between those who create and run the system and those who protect it has become a difference in kind rather than a difference of degree: flesh-and-blood human beings call the shots and their apparently flesh-and-blood machine creations deliver. At the same time, the film registers the very real and apparently persistent human desire to create in our own image, with the result—for Tyrell the scientist, is this a desired or an unanticipated consequence?—that our creation aspires to equal status, to be one of us. In the *Blade Runner* of 1982, these possibilities may have seemed nothing more than hypothetical, but, as is so often the case, the articulation of a hypothesis becomes a factor in making it real. If we take the cautionary dimensions of Scott's film seriously, only a flawed but real human being can do the necessary work, a being whose authenticity will emerge in part from the sense of community that is essential to our definition of self.

The mystery of the man-machine Deckard is the mystery of Roy Batty and all the rest of us—the flaw of mortality that makes us afraid, but also invites us to imagine the grounds on which to celebrate our tenure, however brief. At least in the current state of technological progress, we remain mortal. Taking that as given, we must then set a social agenda to amend the conditions that produced the man-as-automaton called Sergeant James. The road of obsession and compulsion in Iraq must become the road not taken, for him or anyone else. Once we make that conscious choice, we can ensure that the discipline his experience imparts will actually improve his ability to be and know himself. When that happens, we will have assured him the right to life that we and countless others have, over time, collectively declared unalienable because it makes us powerful.

Post-Script/Pre-Script

When I discovered Ridley Scott's appropriation of Nourse's title, a carefully managed legal process that suggested he had given considerable

thought to its implications for the film, I also remembered another of Nourse's works that I have carried in my increasingly tattered personal library for almost 50 years. *Raiders from the Rings* is a classic of young adult fiction from the early 1960s. Nourse crafts a story with teenage protagonists and antagonists and, as the title suggests, a long-standing guerilla war waged by off-world exiles, the "Spacers," against their former fellow Earthmen. It is hard to generalize authoritatively from the content, the audience, and the date of publication of *Raiders from the Rings* to its sources, but it expresses the progressive spirit of those times: an internationalism in line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the technocratic optimism that fueled the American space program, and political projects including John F. Kennedy's New Frontier and Lyndon Baines Johnson's dawning Great Society.

The book is unambiguously utopian in its aspirations, and that utopianism mediates the leadership needed to fulfill it. At the heart of that fulfillment lies a story and a storyteller, a "mauki," or Spacer woman, who has been kidnapped, like all Spacer women, from Earth:

> "You've heard why the war must be stopped," Ben said. "We want you to tell the story, to Earthmen and Spacers alike. We know you can make them believe, if you will."[19]

And so the mauki sings the story that ends the war:

> Some said the woman sang in English, and others said in Russian. Some said she sang in the native dialect of the Indians of Mexico. … But whatever the language, there was agreement on one thing: that of all who heard her sing … not one had failed to understand the message she was conveying.[20]

We are perhaps closer here to the spirit of Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* than the Off-world of Scott's *Blade Runner*. Yet *Raiders* shares with the latter a psychological and sociological complexity, a sense of the

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[19] Alan E. Nourse, *Raiders from the Rings* (New York: David McKay, 1962), 198.
[20] Nourse, *Raiders from the Rings*, 207.

darkness in our stories and our history that the *Star Trek* franchise offers only topically. Even or perhaps especially for teens, the emotional and philosophical range Nourse achieves also encompasses the issues raised by Bigelow's *Hurt Locker*. In that realism, it gives us access to the elements of a less fanciful, more manageable future.

CHAPTER 5

Gettysburg-on-the-Gulf

***Major Gates**: I don't even know what we did here. … Just tell me what we did here, Ron.*
***Col. Horn**: What do you want to do—occupy Iraq and do Vietnam all over … again? Is that what you want? Is that your brilliant idea?*
—*Three Kings*[1]

Savage, despicable evil. That's what we were fighting in Iraq.
—Chris Kyle[2]

The Blue, the Gray, and the Difference

"What we did here." It's a little phrase, four one-syllable words of no extraordinary nature. When Archie Gates, a disaffected Special Forces officer, says it early in David O. Russell's film *Three Kings*, he probably doesn't deliberately echo one of the great American speeches made in time of war, Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" (1863): "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." Lincoln had come to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to memorialize the Union dead from a battle that cost the North and its Confederate enemy more than 50,000 men killed, wounded, captured, or missing over three days and ended General Lee's second attempt to invade the North. In November of the same year, following a more ceremonial two-hour oration by Edward Everett, a well-known political figure of the time, the president consecrated the land set aside for a national cemetery with a speech of just under 300 words.

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[1] *Three Kings*, dir. David O. Russell (Warner Bros., 1999).
[2] Chris Kyle with Jim DeFelice and Scott McEwen, *American Sniper* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 4.

The word "here" comes up eight times in Lincoln's address, a curious persistence in so brief a statement. Yet that one repeated word hammers home the immediacy of the location in which the president and his audience find themselves, the deeds that were done, and the lives lost there. In *Three Kings*, Major Archie Gates (George Clooney) stands in the desert in Kuwait at the end of Desert Storm, equally aware of his war-torn surroundings. Just across the country's northern border, Iraqi nationals have responded to President George H.W. Bush's exhortation to rise up against Saddam Hussein. Convinced the United States will support them, they are being slaughtered by Saddam's army as American forces stand by, watching.

Unlike Lincoln, Gates believes that his country has snatched defeat from the mouth of victory, and he substitutes anger and frustration for Lincoln's hallowing of the Union casualties. Whether conscious or unconscious, Gates' complaint reveals further disjunctions. Where Lincoln affirmed a national purpose—maintaining the Union—Gates clearly feels Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm have violated the higher principles implicit in that purpose. Freeing Kuwait may have some higher value, but we have fallen short. In the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation that freed all slaves in the ten rebel states, Lincoln used the Gettysburg Address to invoke the Declaration of Independence and the Founding Fathers' belief that "all men are created equal." A witness to the slaughter in Iraq, by contrast, Gates knows that for purposes of foreign policy decision making in the late 20th century, American lives are worth more than Iraqi lives.

The film is set in 1991. Released in 1999, it anticipates events just over the horizon; the United States would invade first Afghanistan and then Iraq in the wake of 9/11/2001. Many stories would be told about the wars, and war generally, in the years that followed. I have previously named a few of them: *Jarhead* (2005), *In the Valley of Elah* (2007), *Stop-Loss* (2008), *Restrepo* (2010), *The Messenger* (2009), and *Lone Survivor* (2013). Kathryn Bigelow followed *The Hurt Locker* with *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), which chronicles the hunt for and assassination of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden by a U.S. SEAL team in 2011. The film seizes on a key symbolic moment in the two Middle East wars that have dominated U.S. overseas engagements so far in this century. As I noted earlier, her take on the

story bears a strong resemblance to the cable TV series *Homeland* in that it focuses on a female Central Intelligence Agency analyst, the fictional Maya, who seems to have both a preternatural ability to imagine her way into the heads of her opponents and the persistence to make that insight pay off.

For all its potent symbolism, though, Bigelow's film seems not to have registered in the consciousness of the American public—certainly not so much as the killing itself, on which President Obama prided his administration and which garnered recognition from both sides of the aisle in Congress as well as from the average citizen. Indeed, none of the films mentioned above provoked anything like the public response to the release of Clint Eastwood's *American Sniper* in late 2014. Based on the book of the same name by SEAL team veteran Chris Kyle, both the film and the book respond unambiguously to Desert Storm veteran Archie Gates' plea for a meaning to U.S. involvement in the Gulf. Kyle puts it unambiguously in his book, and Eastwood does not blur the image in the film that emerges from Kyle's memoir. Together, they make a morally certain case for U.S. intervention in the wake of 9/11. It is, as Kyle puts it theatrically, about "evil" and the need to overcome it.

If Archie Gates were real and an audience to either the book or the film, he might well approve the invasion of both countries, with an eye to the viability of the strategy he sought in Kuwait. It seems equally likely, though, that he would not have accepted Kyle and Eastwood's rationale for the wars. The world of *Three Kings*, while blessedly free of more than a decade's worth of post-mortems on our initial defense of Kuwait, offers a very different preview of why the wars were fought and what leadership they needed to succeed. In the following pages, we will look at both these elements in films that were made 15 years apart and with a lot of history between them but that raise the same fundamental question about the American way of war.

The White Man's Burden?

The English writer Rudyard Kipling published "The White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands" in 1899. The title phrase has since become the label for practically every engagement

launched by the developed world—Europe, the United States, and other primarily white-skinned populations—whether military, economic, or philanthropic.

> Take up the White Man's burden—
> Send forth the best ye breed—
> Go bind your sons to exile
> To serve your captives' need;
> To wait in heavy harness,
> On fluttered folk and wild—
> Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
> Half-devil and half-child.[3]

The troops to whom we are introduced as *Three Kings* begins hardly break the mold. The three reservists who discover the map that will drive the action in the film thrash out the racial hierarchy implicit in Kipling's poem as they discuss what to call their Arab counterparts, whether friendly or hostile. Chief Elgin (Ice Cube), an African-American baggage handler "on a paid four-month vacation from Detroit," criticizes the language used by Conrad Vig (Spike Jonze), a white-trash Texan: "I don't want to hear 'dune coon' or 'sand nigger' from him or anybody else." He gets support from Vig's mentor, Sergeant Troy Barlow (Mark Wahlberg): "The point is, Conrad, that 'towelheads' and 'camel jockeys' are perfectly good substitutes."[4] In the armed confrontation with Arab culture, the three soldiers apply a political correctness that empowers only themselves.

Still, race and national identity aside, hierarchy plays out among the Americans as well. Gates is Special Forces, an institutional cachet he uses to bully the other three into sharing the map they have found. He knows more about the map than they do, knows it will lead them to the millions of dollars in gold bullion that Iraq stole from Kuwait during the invasion. He also has the field expertise to read the map correctly, and that gives him

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[3] Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands," *McClure's Magazine* 12 (February 1899), http://www.pitt.edu/~syd/wmb.html, accessed October 12, 2015.

[4] *Three Kings*.

the authority to set the terms of the mission on which the four of them will embark and the moral framework that will sanction their actions: "Saddam stole it from the sheikhs, I have no problem stealing it from Saddam."[5]

As a study in leadership, these early moments in the film bode ill for the reputation of the armed services, however entertaining those moments may be. *Three Kings* starts from the same premise as the World War II comedy *Kelly's Heroes* (1970). Clint Eastwood, Telly Savalas, Donald Sutherland, and others star as members of a reconnaissance platoon in France who learn that a cache of gold has been left in a bank behind German lines. After taking the loot and splitting it with a few cooperative Germans, the Americans under Eastwood's command find they have inadvertently advanced the Allied line, thus serving both their personal and professional obligations. In current business-speak, they have created a win-win situation. The morality of what they do doesn't factor into the outcome.

Under Gates' command, the three reservists initially display only their frustration at not having really experienced the war, even as they violate the cease-fire by sneaking into Iraq. Gates schools them in the costs of war with a simulated attack that turns gory and a clinical disquisition on the effect of a bullet on the human body. Once they reach Karbala, he correctly sees through a ruse the Iraqi Republican Guard uses to hide the gold from the reconnoitering Americans, and soon they are in possession of the gold they seek. However, in the process of discovering the gold they also discover a group of rebels who are being held and tortured by the Republican Guard. Here, *Three Kings* departs from the comedic formula of its predecessor and turns into a highly engaging yet deadly serious exploration of human rights and the principles on which they are based.

Gates' "no unnecessary shots" mantra for the operation does not hold when the four Americans prepare to make their getaway. In commentary on the film, much has been made of the film stock used and the way it was processed to achieve powerful visual effects. These are indeed vivid, but the first shot fired during the face-off sends a different and more visceral visual cue. A member of the Republican Guard puts a gun to the head of an Iraqi woman crying to the Americans not to leave and pulls the trigger. She is the wife of the captive rebel leader,

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[5] *Three Kings*.

Amir Abdullah (Cliff Curtis), but the image of her execution goes back to one of the iconic photos of the Vietnam War: "General Nguyen Ngoc Loan Executing a Viet Cong Prisoner in Saigon." That 1968 image won the photographer, Eddie Adams, a Pulitzer Prize and became one of the symbolic bits of evidence that fed antiwar sentiment in the United States. Adams later said he regretted having taken and published the picture, given the circumstances behind the moment and the impact it had on the executioner, who ultimately settled in the United States.

In Russell's restaging of the shot there is little doubt about the victim's innocence. She is a wife and a mother first and a rebel second, and an unarmed one at that. She also has the virtue for an American audience of appealing to Gates and his troopers for protection, even though we know that she and her fellow rebels have been effectively set up to fail and that no help will arrive. In that evasion of responsibility, and with Gates' "no unnecessary shots" lingering in the air, the camera dwells in slow motion on the impact of the bullet, the physics of a body that in the space of an instant goes from a pleading, sentient being to a limp corpse. In a film that will ultimately feature a host of explosions and killings, this early moment unambiguously signals the cost of armed conflict and the moral failing that has put the four Americans beyond their own lines and their country's stated mission.

Russell and his colleagues do not stop there, though. While Gates makes the choice for the team to intervene and save the rebels from their Iraqi captors, the gold that they carry with them becomes a significant obstacle to their escape and shows them for what they are, both to themselves and to the Iraqis they have temporarily adopted.

> Amir Abdullah: You know what I think? You're stealing gold, that's what I think. We're fighting Saddam and dying, and you're stealing gold.
>
> Archie Gates: You're wrong.
>
> Amir Abdullah: They have half a million men in the desert and they send four guys to pick up all this bullion? I don't think so.[6]

[6] *Three Kings*.

What the four Americans do at an individual level quickly mutates into a fractal representation of global American *realpolitik*. As the four flee the scene of both their and the Republican Guard's crime with the gold and their Iraqi rebel refugees, they come under fire and lose their vehicles. Gates, Vig, and Elgin are rescued by a larger group of rebels together with the gold and the refugees they have saved from the village; Barlow is captured by Iraqi soldiers and taken to a fortress. There he is interrogated by Captain Said (Saïd Taghmaoui), who speaks remarkably good street English:

> Captain Said: You know, I got weapon and training from America.
> Sgt. Barlow: Bullshit!
> Capt. Said: Oh yeah? How you think I learn my English? Specialist guys come here to train us when we fight Iran.
> Sgt. Barlow: What'd they train you in?
> Capt. Said: Weapons, sabotage, … interrogation.
> Sgt. Barlow: (mutters) Great.
> Capt. Said: It was a total waste for your army to come to Iraq, right? …
> Sgt. Barlow: Well, you invaded another country. You can't do that.
> Capt. Said: Why not, dude?
> Sgt. Barlow: Because it makes the world crazy. You need to keep it stable.
> Capt. Said: For what—your pickup truck?!
> Sgt. Barlow: No, for stability. Stabilize the region.
> Capt. Said: (wedges Barlow's mouth open with a cd jewel case and pours motor oil down the American's throat) This is your fucking stability, my main man![7]

The theft of the gold becomes a metaphor for the U.S. presence in the Gulf, and the interrogation a commentary on America's history of intervening in the region. The underlying identification of foot soldier with foot soldier across the national and ethnic divide only points up the degree to which they are driven by larger forces than their own individual

[7] *Three Kings*.

financial need. At the same time, the Iraqi seems more aware of the ground for American interventionism than the American himself, more familiar with American culture than Barlow is of the world in which he is supposed to fight. Therein lies the deeper meaning of the contact in this story between the Americans and their Iraqi counterparts, both the rebels and Saddam's troops.

Like Said, Amir Abdullah, the leader of the rebels, has experience with America. He informs Gates, Elgin, and Vig that he got his MBA at Bowling Green and returned to Iraq to open a chain of cafes. He notes with a combination of regret and irony that his start-up failed when the bombing started. Yet his familiarity with his American counterparts allows him both the initial insight that Gates and his team are on an illicit mission and the ability to negotiate terms of collaboration that will benefit his goal to save his people. In short, although Gates uses his superior skills to manage Barlow, Elgin, and Vig, he meets his match in Abdullah. The image of the white savior among less enlightened brown, black, or yellow people vanishes before a consistent collaborative dynamic between the two men. They move to secure their individual aims—for Gates, the gold but also, and with increasing urgency, the recovery of Barlow; and for Abdullah, an escape to Iran for the dozens of rebels he now leads—but they do so in unison.

Nothing signals this turn of events more clearly than the death and enshrinement of Conrad Vig. Initially the most unsubtle of the four Americans about his conqueror's relationship to the Iraqis, Vig goes into action to rescue Barlow from the fortress with Gates' advice in his ears:

> Archie Gates: You're scared, right?
> Conrad Vig: Maybe.
> Archie Gates: The way it works is, you do the thing you're scared shitless of, and you get the courage AFTER you do it, not before you do it.
> Conrad Vig: That's a dumbass way to work. It should be the other way around.
> Archie Gates: I know. That's the way it works.[8]

[8] *Three Kings*.

For all Vig's shame at his lack of education, he knows better than the others that he should think above his pay grade. In his search for redemption, he has already crossed the divide that appears most emphatically to separate the American soldiers from the Iraqi rebels. In an earlier scene, Vig has witnessed the ritual covering of a dead rebel in preparation for interment at a holy site and expresses delight at the idea. In the action during which the joint American and rebel force expels the Republican Guard and finds Barlow, Vig is killed. In the calm that follows the action, the Iraqi refugees wrap Vig's body for burial.

Chief Elgin: He said he wanted to go to one of those shrines.
Sgt. Barlow: Did he mean that?
Sgt. Elgin: That's what he told me.
Amir Abdullah: Qom in Iran—we can take him with us.
Sgt. Barlow: Then take him.
Major Gates: All right. Take him there.[9]

Christians and Muslims pray side by side, a moment of spiritual convergence. More importantly for everyone in the film, the scene confirms the evolution of a new vision for leadership: it is now relatively flat within the American group, with Gates following a lead set by Elgin and Barlow, and fulfills the joint leadership that has been developing between Abdullah and Gates. As the scene ends and the decision about Vig has been made, the two men bow their heads in unison over his body.

With *Three Kings* we see both an invitation to a late-20th-century affirmation of the "white man's burden" and a conscious rejection of it. One could read the film as a pious, politically correct reformulation of America's now-stereotypical relation to the rest of the world. This take extends to the key role a female reporter, Adriana Cruz (Nora Dunn), plays in the conclusion to the action: Not only do our white male heroes bridge the gap to the "native" people they have gone forth in our nation's interest to exploit but they also include women in the initiative. Still, to the very end, the film emphasizes the crooked origins of a mission that

[9] *Three Kings*.

almost in spite of itself delivers on the founding ideological assertion that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," etc.

How do we reconcile these opposites and resolve the tension? The legal scholar and novelist Stephen Carter, in *The Violence of Peace: America's Wars in the Age of Obama*, says that we don't; we simply ignore it. Carter dubs our 21st-century version of the white man's burden "the American Proviso"—the apparently necessary belief that

> attacking America is morally different from being attacked by America. … The moral equivalence argument holds that whatever the ethics of war allows us to do in war, our adversaries can do as well. The American Proviso says this is not so. On the contrary. If one accepts the Proviso, then the reason that there is no moral equivalence between "our" forces and "their" forces is that "we" are better than "they" are.[10]

And that, Carter argues, is how Barack Obama, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, has become another wartime president and how he has struggled to define what we could agree is a "just war." Despite the feel-good ending that *Three Kings* offers us, the moral ambiguity with which Gates, Elgin, Barlow, and Vig confront us frames and constrains the virtue of their and our actions and signals the need for more encompassing leadership at both the individual and the national level in both the military and the civilian world it serves. The ethical challenges to America in the Middle East and elsewhere beyond our borders have only grown more extreme since this film's release, as Carter's analysis a decade later demonstrates. The most significant impact of the American Proviso may also prove largely homegrown, though, a fact amply illustrated by Chris Kyle's book *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History* and Clint Eastwood's film adaptation of it.

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[10] Stephen Carter, *The Violence of Peace: America's Wars in the Age of Obama* (New York: Beast Books, 2011), 69–70.

Middle East, Wild West

Despite the pain registered in Kyle's autobiography, it is hard not to read the book as an act of provocation. One might suppose that the difficulties Kyle had reintegrating into domestic life during and after four tours of duty testify to a challenge we must all face as a result of the wars that have dominated the first years of the new century. The occasional sections in the book labeled "Taya" (Kyle's wife), written in her voice, point toward a deliberate strategy of balancing the author's experience of conflict abroad with snapshots of home. Moreover, those snapshots make no pretense of weighing the slaughter in Iraq against some theoretical domestic bliss: the demands of, and tensions at, home in some ways challenge both the protagonist and the reader as much as the scenes set in the real war zone. Kyle and Eastwood also chronicle moments where the two worlds blend: in the wars of the late 20th and early 21st centuries—*Three Kings* captures similar moments in Barlow's desperate cell phone exchanges from captivity with his wife—the two spill over into each other on a routine basis. The upside of easy, technology-mediated communication becomes the downside of a constant, real-time dissonance between family at home and warrior abroad.

The poignancy of these moments is only heightened in Kyle's case by the fact that he died at the hands of a troubled fellow veteran in 2013, a little over a year after the book was published and a day after Jason Hall, the screenwriter and producer for the film, delivered the first draft of the screenplay that became Clint Eastwood's *American Sniper*. The book ends, of course, without any indication of Kyle's fate, and that happy unawareness lends Kyle's story a resonance it could not otherwise have. The text has since acquired three brief postscripts: an author's biography that registers Kyle's death, a narrative of the making of the movie by Taya Kyle, and an even more succinct note from Hall, all chronicling the gap in time between the final pages of the book and the release of the film. With the advantage of hindsight, the film version stages a brief glimpse for Taya of the man who we know will end Kyle's life, but after all of the violence documented in the film, we never see that final moment. Instead, we track the funeral procession from the public memorial service at the Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas, to the funeral in Austin.

Thousands of mourners stood along the highway in the rain to pay their respects, and that is the note on which Eastwood chooses to end his version of Chris Kyle's story.

With that choice of closing content, the film directs us to a more pious view of the man and his deeds than he himself might have wished. In the opening pages of the book, he doesn't so much tell us who he is as take a position on how we might judge him:

> People try to put me in a category as a bad-ass, a good ol' boy, asshole, sniper, SEAL. … In the end, my story, in Iraq and afterward, is about more than just killing people or even fighting for my country.
>
> It's about being a man. And it's about love as well as hate.
>
> I was raised, and still believe in, the Christian faith. If I had to order my priorities, they would be God, Country, Family. … I've always loved guns, always loved hunting, and in a way I guess you could say I've always been a cowboy.
>
> I don't remember when I started hunting, but it would have been when I was very young. My family had a deer lease a few miles from our house, and we would hunt every winter. (For you Yankees: a deer lease is a property.) …
>
> I also got some attention from the buckle bunnies, rodeo's version of female groupies. It was all good. I enjoyed going from city to city, traveling, partying, and riding.
>
> Call it the cowboy lifestyle.[11]

For all his opening resistance to labels, Kyle crafts an image of himself that feeds naturally into the work he carried out during his time in the military. His parenthetical explanation of a deer lease for "Yankees" may simply register as his authorial recognition of cultural difference across regions of the United States. In the context of his stated values, though, it implicitly recasts the conflict in which he was engaged abroad as a lingering conflict or series of conflicts at home: Gun control, gun

[11] Kyle with DeFelice and McEwen, *American Sniper*, 6, 7, 8, 13.

violence, and the Second Amendment of the Bill of Rights; the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer in schools; feminism and sexual assault in the military; the "1 percent" (in this case both the 1 percent of the population that controls a disproportionate share of America's wealth and the 1 percent of America that serves in the military)—all of these debates seem to be on the table for him, and for us.

In Kyle's version of himself, he becomes the Marlboro Man and confronts "the best and the brightest," code since Vietnam for the graduates of elite schools like Harvard who, according to Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Halberstam, shaped our engagement in that earlier war.[12] Kyle offers instead a populist vision of America and builds it into his vision of his own service. He is proud to be a SEAL, but he is deeply skeptical of what he refers to on multiple occasions as the "head shed," short for the officers who were running the war in Iraq and the civilians behind or above them. For him, the measure of a man is his ability to face up to, and master, the challenges that boot camp and various stages in SEAL training put before him. As mentioned in the previous chapter, we have seen similar material in such classics as Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*. Kyle devotes significant space to this ideal in the book, and Eastwood's team goes the same route in the film.

The authority Kyle can accept lies in the role he plays most often as a sniper. The key term here is "overwatch," the protective function that he performs for the marines who operate at street level in various urban battles in Iraq, clearing streets and buildings of the enemy during the counterinsurgency. In his articulation of that role, he establishes a continuity with the person he became after he left the service, helping veterans at home come to terms with their experience and, in many cases, their loss of friends and comrades or their own mental and physical well-being. On this, he is quite clear:

> My regrets are about the people I couldn't save—Marines, soldiers, my buddies.[13]

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[12] David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (1972; repr., New York: Ballantine, 1993).

[13] Kyle with DeFelice and McEwen, *American Sniper*, 377.

The fellowship that Kyle evokes here factors into the veneration that some viewers have felt for him and his story, but it doesn't quite align with the individual agency on which his military expertise depends. When the film came out, commentators noted the shift in the status of snipers that Kyle's story reflected, given a historic distaste in and out of the armed services for personnel in that role. Kyle becomes the "Legend," a designation that updates a long line of fictional figures from American westerns, loners who have a keen sense of justice but can deliver on it only by standing a little outside (or above) their fellows.

The type is perhaps best captured by Will Kane in Fred Zinneman's *High Noon*. Kane (Gary Cooper) has rousted a gang of thugs from a town of right-thinking citizens, but when the gang returns for revenge no one will stand with Kane to fight them off. Like Kyle, Kane has the help of a good woman (Grace Kelly), but more than anything, he has a way with guns; his expertise is his—and his adoptive but reluctant flock's—salvation. In one notable dramatic departure that Eastwood's film makes from the book, Kyle faces off against an enemy sniper—an Olympic medalist—who has acquired the same notoriety among the Americans that Kyle has acquired among the Iraqis in Ramadi. In the book, "Mustafa"[14] gets a paragraph; in the film, the two of them have the sniper's equivalent of a shootout in the sun, one that Kyle wins with an impossibly long shot. That moment, perhaps more than others, makes it obvious why Eastwood directed *American Sniper*. Whether by inclination or conditioning, from the "spaghetti westerns" in which he starred for Sergio Leone relatively early in his career to his Oscar-winning tale of revenge and the seamy truth beneath cowboy legends, *Unforgiven*, Eastwood has made a career interpreting the American cowboy archetype. In that sense, *American Sniper* may only be his most recent take on the genre.

The emotional and intellectual connection between Kyle and Eastwood also surfaces in the former's stated views on the enemy he was assigned to subdue in Iraq. As much as he and his comrades-in-arms fought to unseat a dictator, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq also formalized our encounter with the suicidal determination of Islamic fundamentalism. The combination of violence, ruse, and selective moral rectitude that

[14] Kyle with DeFelice and McEwen, *American Sniper*, 139.

characterizes Eastwood's films also inhabits Kyle's book as he reflects on his mission to defeat the jihadis:

> I have a strong sense of justice. It's pretty much black-and-white. I don't see too much gray.[15]

One might argue, from this line alone, that Kyle meets fundamentalism with fundamentalism. He talks at length in the book about his Christian beliefs, but a Crusader element creeps into his later views of himself in action, and he makes no bones about the pleasure he takes in executing his mission, having dismissed the enemy's rationale for resisting the invader as demented fanaticism:

> The first time you shoot someone, you get a little nervous. You think, can I really shoot this guy? Is it really okay? But after you kill your enemy, you see it's okay. You say, *Great.*
>
> You do it again. And again. You do it so the enemy won't kill you or your countrymen. You do it until there's no one left for you to kill.
>
> That's what war is.
>
> I loved what I did. … I'm not lying or exaggerating to say it was fun. I had the time of my life being a SEAL.[16]

It is conceivable that had Kyle not served four tours of duty in Iraq, he would speak in less absolute terms than he does here. Post-traumatic stress takes many forms, and self-justification plays a part in many of those cases. At the same time, his formulation of the act of killing echoes the unconflicted testimony that Hutu *génocidaires* offered after they and their fellows slaughtered 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu in 100 days in 1994; we will return to these events in the next chapter. Here, Kyle goes beyond the psychological mechanism that allowed him to do his job and ends *American Sniper* with speculation about his Judgment Day:

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[15] Kyle with DeFelice and McEwen, *American Sniper*, 7.

[16] Kyle with DeFelice and McEwen, *American Sniper*, 6.

> I believe the fact that I've accepted Jesus as my savior will be my salvation. … Everyone I shot was evil. I had good cause on every shot. They all deserved to die.[17]

As is the case for any human being, it is hard to disentangle the motives that drove Kyle to his four tours in Iraq. Religion, patriotism, the thrill of combat, the discipline and self-discipline, the opportunity to hone a talent, the camaraderie that he experienced in the service, and the opportunity to protect his kind both at home and abroad—all of these seem to have played a part in his devotion to duty. At the same time, we are miles from the recognition of the Iraqis as human beings that gradually works its way into the consciousness of the adventurous foursome in *Three Kings*. In the film version of *American Sniper*, Bradley Cooper does a plausible job of conveying the soul of the man who wrote the autobiography, in part because he muscled up to look like the kind of man who could deliver on Kyle's embrace of nonstop action. Still, under Eastwood's careful direction, Cooper often has the gaze of a man who doesn't really grasp the larger implications of the circumstances in which he finds himself at home or abroad. The same incipient helplessness that characterized his performance in *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012), where his character suffers bipolar disorder, haunts his assumption of Kyle's persona in *American Sniper*.

To Think or Not to Think (Stop-Loss)

The phrase "stop-loss" refers to the policy of redeploying troops up to the end of their contractual obligation to serve to ensure adequate boots on the ground. The practice was legislated after the Vietnam War, applied in the first Gulf War, and continues into the new century, despite controversy and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' insistence during President George W. Bush's second term on limiting its use. If the United States has employed it with an eye to fulfilling its perceived obligations in the Middle East, it seems equally clear that, compulsively or not, both Archie Gates and Chris Kyle did what they did—stole the gold, re-upped for an additional three tours—in order to maintain their individual sense of purpose. The question remains whether that purpose justified what they, and we, did there.

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[17] Kyle with DeFelice and McEwen, *American Sniper*, 377.

With *Three Kings* and *American Sniper*, we have moved along the trajectory from the frustrated agency that characterized Sergeant James' role in *The Hurt Locker* and Roy Batty's situation in *Blade Runner* to a sense of opportunity and, with it, responsibility. Both Archie Gates and Chris Kyle, the first a fictional, the second a real-life elite warrior, serve America's military aims in the Middle East, and that experience allows them to step into leadership roles. Each has his team, displays expertise, and produces results that some segment of their audience will regard as positive. Kyle counters the disappointment Gates feels about U.S. efforts with an apparently unquestioning belief in the good he does. Gates counters Kyle's apparent indifference to his enemy's humanity with a concerted effort to distinguish the good from the evil and turns the war to both American and Iraqi advantage.

However, they exercise their leadership on radically different terms relative to the organization that has brought them to Iraq. Gates has effectively gone rogue, and while his and his companions' adventure produces positive outcomes for the rebels they rescue and for three of the "kings," he does so in defiance of the system that has given him his authority. He knows enough to ask questions, but the answers he gets (or fails to get) lead him to a place outside the narrowly determined role he and his fellow combatants have been assigned. By contrast, Kyle plays by the rules, with an allowance for minor high jinks that seems to be part of his status as a SEAL, and turns that embrace of convention into his guiding principle. Where *Blade Runner*'s Captain Bryant tells Deckard, "If you're not cop, you're little people," Kyle replies, 'I am both cop and little people, and that's how I lead.' His stature with his colleagues and his organization appears to derive from his technical expertise, not his ability to ask questions: His is a strong case of not thinking above one's pay grade. Where Gates is socially liberal to the point of insubordination, Kyle prides himself on his social conservatism and delivers with the assurance of his own rectitude.

In both cases, the relation of the military to the civilian population becomes a key factor in how we evaluate the characters' success as values-driven leaders. In *Three Kings*, the home front consists of Barlow's wife and two embedded news reporters, both women. The gender differentiation is significant, albeit undeclared: the first woman reporter puts Gates onto the story of the Kuwaiti gold, Barlow's wife ultimately

supplies the coordinates that save her husband, and Adriana Cruz bears some responsibility for Gates', Elgin's, and Barlow's success in seeing the Iraqi refugees across the border into Iran and protects the three from military justice and ultimately ushers them into a better place in the working world at home. Beyond that, the film's civilian population is all Iraqi, and it is given a role sufficiently substantial to erase the "white man's burden" as a way of framing American intervention in the Gulf.

For Chris Kyle, Iraq exists as a place where one cannot distinguish civilian from warrior. All Iraqis are at least potentially assailants and therefore targets. One could argue that this improves on the isolation of the bomb-disposal team in *The Hurt Locker*, but the benefit seems marginal at best. The civilian here can exist only in the protected environment of home. Kyle gives his wife room to contribute to his autobiography and Eastwood and his team do the same in the film, but the two spouses' relationship is fraught with misunderstood signals and misaligned objectives.

As we think about the relation between the values of the military and those prized in the larger society, Kyle has the advantage over Archie Gates that he really existed and at first blush, therefore, doesn't raise the potentially distracting question of authorial intervention. Yet his autobiography comes fully equipped with a series of postures that we have identified here, and his "true" story raises if anything more questions about the military's relation to society than Archie Gates' flagrant disregard for the rules of engagement, as defined by both those above him in the military hierarchy—Chris Kyle's "head shed"—and the society on whose business Gates and the rest of the military in Kuwait embarked for Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

What did we do in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan? The idea of defense is enshrined in Kyle's provision of "overwatch" to countless marines and soldiers, and they may well owe him their gratitude. Even against the backdrop of the attacks on 9/11, though, it isn't clear that the homeland needed that kind of protection, and in Iraq, the history of the war almost from the beginning suggested that we had a mission other than self-protection, however one chooses to define national security. For both Kyle and Gates, a coherent statement of "what we did here" is the only corrective to their individually flawed assumption of leadership, one that would make it meaningful for all parties to the engagement.

CHAPTER 6

The Manager, the General, and the Entomologist

The true resting state of human affairs is not represented by a man hacking his neighbour into pieces with a machete. That is a sick aberration. No, the true state of human affairs is life as it ought to be lived.

—Paul Rusesabagina[1]

"Acts of Genocide"

The attempted genocide of the Tutsi population in Rwanda by their Hutu countrymen in 1994 was not, strictly speaking, an American war. Indeed, the U.S. government quite deliberately avoided intervening to stop the slaughter, which in the space of three months cost some 800,000 Rwandans their lives. At a first, domestic level, the American position involved a choice to refer to what was happening as "acts of genocide" rather than "genocide," a terminological sleight of hand that allowed the Clinton administration not to commit troops or other aid to the United Nations force that had been assigned to keep the peace following the Arusha Accords of August 1993. At the level of nation-state relations, the Western powers did not give the UN the mandate it would have needed to stop the killing, and while President Clinton later apologized for his inattention to events in Rwanda, during the genocide he represented a broad global consensus on inaction that French, Belgian, and other national interests confirmed once they had extracted their nationals from the war-torn country.

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[1] Paul Rusesabagina with Tom Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man: An Autobiography* (New York: Viking, 2006), 202.

Clinton's later apology, a belated U.S. military involvement in re-establishing the peace, and then a flood of commitments from the social sector—nonprofits and other nongovernmental organizations, businesses, etc.—made Rwanda into a symbol both of what could go wrong in a country left to its own, poorly managed devices and what a positive world order could be. Beyond those organizational engagements, a flood of books, films, and individual statements on the genocide made it a *cause célèbre* among a public that might otherwise not even have known that the United States had, for a change, chosen not to go to war, even when that war offered itself up for intervention. Among those cultural products, none captured the public imagination better than Terry George's *Hotel Rwanda*. The film tells the story of a hotel manager in Kigali who saved 1,268 Tutsi and moderate Hutu from the Hutu military and militia rampaging outside the hotel gates. As with the *Blade Runner* cult, a subgroup specific enough to be identified as "*Hotel Rwanda* watchers"[2] measures the fascination the film exerts. I will argue in the following pages that it does so because it captures better than many war films the ideal of human rights that Americans brought to light in our founding documents, that the French evoked at roughly the same time in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and that the UN created in the wake of World War II, echoing the U.S. Declaration of Independence in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In a successful film, of course, ideals are not enough. The story of Paul Rusesabagina is compelling because it gathers all of those noble abstractions into one figure, giving us a story we can follow and a person we can identify with. It should be said right at the start that Rusesabagina and the portrait he offers of himself in *An Ordinary Man: An Autobiography*[3] have aroused much controversy; we will explore that aspect of his story as it relates to our theme of war and leadership. At the same time, he lays the first stone in our discussion of a definition of leadership that does not involve the military or a military-style hierarchy. To make the difference

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[2] Samantha Power, "A Complicated Hero in the War on Dictatorship," TED talk, February 2008, http://www.ted.com/talks/samantha_power_on_a_complicated_hero?language=en.

[3] Rusesabagina with Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man*.

evident, we will also discuss the military component to the struggle, as seen through the work of the UN force commander in Rwanda during the genocide. In my introduction to this book, I mentioned meeting Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire at Havard in 2004. Later the same year, the general released *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*,[4] a soul-searching chronicle of the genocide from a military perspective. Side by side with the film about Rusesabagina and his autobiography, Dallaire's perspective illustrates the potential frustration of trying to lead humanely in a military hierarchy and with that frustration, the harm that the model can generate when applied to society at large.

Finally, among the excellent commentaries that have followed from the genocide, we will dwell on a book that actually devotes just four paragraphs to Rwanda but in so doing puts those events, and both Rusesabagina and Dallaire's testimony about them, into the broadest possible context. The socio-biologist and Harvard entomologist E.O. Wilson goes beyond the individual leadership that Rusesabagina provided and the organizational commitments that Dallaire represented for the Western powers to talk about the underlying natural systems that he believes produced not only this genocide but also genocides as a recurrent phenomenon. Together, these three men and their work will give us a sense of how one can and must lead beyond the military, a definition of which we will elaborate in the closing chapters of the book. We are, in short, at a moment of transition in our discussion of leadership in and out of the armed services.

The Manager

Rusesabagina's autobiography begins simply and directly: "My name is Paul Rusesabagina. In April 1994, when a wave of mass murder broke out in my country, I was able to hide 1,268 people in the hotel where I worked."[5] Terry George makes substantially the same point in the long opening sequence to his film about Rusesabagina and his role during

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[4] Roméo Dallaire with Major Brent Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004).

[5] Rusesabagina with Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man*, ix.

the genocide. The opening scenes show Paul (played by Don Cheadle) accompanying his right-hand man, Dubé, to the airport to collect a crate of lobster. On returning to the Hôtel Mille Collines, the Belgian-owned facility in Kigali of which Rusesabagina is the local manager, they discover that half the lobsters are dead. Rusesabagina comes up with a new dish that will allow the chef to stretch the meat from the surviving lobsters, thus demonstrating right from the start the ingenuity that appears to have made him an asset to his Belgian superiors.

Yet there is more to Rusesabagina than ingenuity. He passes money to a soldier who appears to be controlling access to the airport, collects a box of Cuban cigars from the pilots on the flight that brought him his lobsters, and, back at the hotel, leaves a couple of bottles of single-malt Scotch at the coat-check for Rwandan Armed Forces general Augustin Bizimungu, evidently a regular in the hotel restaurant. He collects cases of beer and other supplies from Georges Rutaganda, a wholesaler and a leader of the Hutu militia, the Interahamwe, who urges him to remember that there is more to life than business. Rutaganda (who in real life, like Bizimungu, would later be tried, found guilty of, and imprisoned for participating in the genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda) tells Rusesabagina that the time has come for all Hutu, of whom Rusesabagina is one, to embrace the cause. While the two men chat in Rutaganda's warehouse, a forklift driver inadvertently drops a crate, which splits open and spills machetes, soon to become the weapon of choice for the Hutu as they executed their Tutsi countrymen.

In short, *Hotel Rwanda* portrays Rusesabagina (who consulted for Terry George on the film) as a consummate businessperson. He understands the norms of the society, giving people up and down the social scale what they need, in order to ensure that he gets what he needs for his operation. As he puts it to Dubé, it's about "style." He has abundant people skills and puts them to good use not only for his employers but also for himself. It is—as he tells his wife that first night in the film, which is also the first night of the genocide—all about "favors," favors for him and his family, but not for the neighbor whom they watch being carted off by a group of soldiers in a jeep.

Rusesabagina's choice not to intervene, despite the store of favors he claims to have accumulated, repeats itself in the following days. Tatyana,

his wife (played with great emotional strength by Sophie Okonedo), consistently pushes in those early days for Rusesabagina to help their neighbors and acquaintances. He just as consistently chooses the less expansive route, maintaining the culture of exchange that he has so successfully used to his benefit before. It is hard not to see in this filmic portrayal the ground for later, real-life accusations that Rusesabagina extorted every penny from the Tutsi and moderate Hutu who sought refuge in his hotel. The Rwandan government under former Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) commander Paul Kagame continued, as late as 2014, to dismiss Rusesabagina's altruism during the genocide.

One of the deep ethical challenges that makes the film so compelling lies precisely in this dissonance: to what extent did Rusesabagina's apparent venality allow him ultimately to save the lives he saved? Here, he enters company with Oskar Schindler, the ethnic German businessman celebrated in Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-winning *Schindler's List* (1993), a historical drama about the Holocaust. Schindler saved hundreds of Jews during World War II by employing them in his factories, an engagement that started, as the film tells it, as a simple business strategy and ended as a series of choices dominated by humanitarian concerns. In *Hotel Rwanda*, every trick Rusesabagina used before the genocide to grease the wheels of commerce becomes a trick to keep his refugees alive during the slaughter. As played by Cheadle, Rusesabagina wakes up to his own self-seeking and ultimately takes his wife's community-minded spirit to a place where nothing else matters but saving the few lives over which he has, as he himself says in his autobiography, largely illusory control:

> The hotel could offer only an illusion of safety, but for whatever reason, the illusion prevailed and I survived to tell the story, along with those I sheltered. There was nothing particularly heroic about it. … Today I am convinced that the only thing that saved those 1,268 people in my hotel was words. Not the liquor, not the money, not the UN. Just ordinary words directed against the darkness. … Those words were my connection to a saner world, to life as it ought to be lived.[6]

[6] Rusesabagina with Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man*, ix–xvi.

The phrase "life as it ought to be lived" comes up at both the beginning and the end of Rusesabagina's memoir. He credits the idea to C.S. Lewis, the British writer perhaps best known for his science fiction Space Trilogy and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a children's fantasy series. As in those texts, Rusesabagina's musings reveal a strong Christian strain; he comments at one point in the autobiography that he considered going to seminary. Like Chris Kyle in *American Sniper*, Rusesabagina believes in the reality of evil and the necessity of outsmarting its acolytes. Yet his is a story of passive resistance, the work of a man who had no armed might on which to fall back, not even the UN peacekeepers, but who, by virtue of his position in society, saved the lives of a small group of people.

It is interesting to speculate on the degree to which Rusesabagina's training in the hospitality industry affected his response to the onrushing wave of genocide. Both the film and the autobiography end with a reference to shelter: "there is always room" in Terry George's film and "my hope is that there will still be those ordinary men who say a quiet no and open the rooms upstairs"[7] in the autobiography. Providing shelter and comfort defines any innkeeper's professional engagement, even when the inn has become an impersonally uniform, global chain of packaged amenities. Rusesabagina's "quiet no" links that engagement to his emphasis in the autobiography on words. His autobiography itself and the speeches he has given worldwide since it appeared confirm that vision, setting a modern standard for the values we must bring to our daily lives. Does it lift him beyond the accusations that he exploited his involuntary guests? If the book and the film themselves make the case for the quiet heroics that readers and viewers have detected in his work, then Rusesabagina's words and example have aided many more than the 1,268 refugees he harbored at the Mille Collines. That, too, can be the value of a war story.

Moreover, Rusesabagina demonstrates a systems awareness that goes beyond his personal faults and virtues. Late in *An Ordinary Man*, he cites a "culture of impunity"[8] as one of the factors that allowed the genocide to occur. Beginning with the push for independence in 1959, he says, the rule of law effectively vanished in Rwanda; people took one another's

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[7] Rusesabagina with Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man*, 204.

[8] Rusesabagina with Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man*, 198.

property and lives and seem to have gotten away with it. While the film does not capture this component of Rusesabagina's thinking, the portrait of him that George starts with makes it clear that he shared in that culture. The lingering question for viewers must then be: If Rusesabagina the entrepreneurial hotel manager had refused the "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" ethos that those early scenes capture and if others had followed his model, could he and his countrymen have stemmed the cataclysm that they unleashed upon themselves in 1994?

In the end, Rusesabagina has it both ways. He quotes Camus: "Happiness, too, is inevitable,"[9] and yet he also argues that much as we would like to certify the position we appear collectively to have taken on any and all genocide—"Never again"—we are very likely to repeat the crime. Looking beyond his own potential culpability, he demonstrates a vision that is the essence of leadership. It frames an example of independent thinking and daring action that others might follow, given the necessity of solving a life-threatening problem and the opportunity implicit in it to rise to one's own potential. Note that in *Three Kings*, Archie Gates uses the word "necessity" to explain why the Republican Guard doesn't stop the four Americans' incursion into their space. At the same time, necessity drives his own turn to the humanitarian later in that film. Rusesabagina is working under somewhat the same compulsion, but both the film and the book make the case that in the end, much more than Kuwaiti gold is at stake.

The General

Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire's *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* documents a calculus about human life that differs from the one we encountered in *Blade Runner*. There, in the hands of a society dominated by the likes of Eldon Tyrell and the Tyrell Corporation, it seemed largely commercial. Dallaire is unambiguous about the arithmetic that underwrote the UN engagement (or lack of engagement) in Rwanda in 1994 as dictated by the Security Council and the interests of the great-power nations represented in that body:

[9] Rusesabagina with Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man*, 203.

> Several times in this book I have asked the question, "Are we all human, or are some more human than others?" Certainly we in the developed world act in a way that suggests we believe that our lives are worth more than the lives of other citizens of the planet. An American officer felt no shame as he informed me that the lives of 800,000 Rwandans were only worth risking the lives of ten American troops; the Belgians, after losing ten soldiers, insisted that the lives of Rwandans were not worth risking another single Belgian soldier.[10]

Here, Dallaire echoes Stephen Carter's observations about the "American Proviso" under which the United States has continued to operate in the 21st century, despite President Obama's stated intention to set a new standard. In that spirit, how might one explain the strategic assessments to which Dallaire testifies? At first glance they seem less overtly economic than political. Much has been made of the fact that the Clinton administration wanted not to intervene in events abroad following the "Blackhawk Down" incident in Somalia in 1993, in the belief that Americans would not tolerate any more scenes of American fighters being dragged through the streets of a foreign city by rebel forces. It has also been asserted that in contrast to the intervention in Kuwait, we had no evident national interest in stability in Rwanda or Africa more generally. This version of American policy informs the Third World skepticism about the United States expressed by Captain Said in *Three Kings* as he pours motor oil down Sergeant Barlow's throat.

Dallaire knows that economic and political strategies more often than not go together, at the potential cost of the higher principles to which America as a nation and the West as a geopolitical force have committed themselves. Those principles, which Western nations collectively trace back to the Enlightenment that led to both the American and the French Revolutions, take physical and spiritual form in real persons whose lives are or are not preserved by military intervention from the outside. In

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[10] Dallaire with Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 522.

that sense, they express not so much *realpolitik* as a fundamental ethical challenge: At what point does a similar commitment under the UN Charter to national sovereignty trump an individual's physical (and spiritual) integrity? Does it matter more, or at all, if the number is 800,000 individuals and if they are targeted because of a particular ethnic identity or religious commitment?

At the policy level today, developed nations and the UN are doing considerably more to address global hotspots than was the case in the mid-1990s, in part in direct response to Rwanda. Susan Rice, who served as U.S. ambassador to the UN and was appointed national security advisor to President Obama in 2013, explicitly recognizes her witness to the events in Rwanda as the source of a markedly more interventionist stance for the United States in subsequent conflicts on the African continent.[11] Her successor as U.S. ambassador to the UN under Obama, Samantha Power, is the author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (2002).[12] The book offers ample intellectual ground for Power's similar inclination to greater foreign policy activism on clearly humanitarian grounds.

In the context of our discussions so far in *War Stories*, however, following the interventionist path involves discriminating among conflicts. At what point did Saddam Hussein's genocidal impulse against Iraqi Kurds become a valid motive for intervention, and how does one separate that from the larger struggle the United States initiated in the wake of 9/11? Dallaire looks beyond the individual wars to a larger pattern across the various conflicts raging at the time of the book:

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[11] "Ambassador Susan Rice Speaks at the 15th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gObYUmn3w58; and Elias Groll, "5 Highlights from Susan Rice's Diplomatic Career," Foreign Policy, June 5, 2013, http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/05/5-highlights-from-susan-rices-diplomatic-career/, accessed August 28, 2015.

[12] Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide,* 2nd ed. (2002; repr., New York: Basic Books, 2013).

> Many signs point to the fact that the youth of the Third World will no longer tolerate living in circumstances that give them no hope for the future. From the young boys I met in the demobilization camps in Sierra Leone to the suicide bombers of Palestine and Chechnya, to the young terrorists who fly planes into World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we can no longer afford to ignore them. We have to take concrete steps to remove the causes of their rage, or we have to be prepared to suffer the consequences.[13]

In 2015, Dallaire's concerns of 2004 only seem more concrete. As the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) seeks to establish a "worldwide caliphate," it recruits youths born in the Third World, but it also recruits in a First World where young people may not have directly experienced armed conflict yet feel totally marginalized.

The institutional sources of the failure Dallaire documents, and to which he confesses, in *Shake Hands with the Devil*, stem in part from the military-civilian contrast we have sketched over the course of *War Stories*. Dallaire appears in *Hotel Rwanda* as the Canadian Colonel Oliver, played by Nick Nolte in a reasonable physical approximation of Dallaire. The military man is hampered from the start by the command structure and the degree of diplomatic sclerosis that the real-life General Dallaire encountered when he turned to his UN contacts for support. By contrast, however venal Paul Rusesabagina may actually have been up to and during the genocide, he had a freedom of action that his UN counterpart could only envy. Dallaire laments the lives that were lost because he could not take the steps that were necessary to control the Interahamwe—measures that would also, he argues, have been comparatively inexpensive to carry out. It seems clear that he exceeded his official mandate by working with the Western press to expose what was happening in Rwanda; he did so in hopes of forcing a more substantial intervention, but to no avail. Where Rusesabagina applied his professional training to an ethical course of action, Dallaire was effectively stymied by his similar commitment. *Hotel Rwanda* juxtaposes the two men's respective predicaments without commentary, but the evidence is there.

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[13] Dallaire with Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 521.

In 2004, on the 10th anniversary of the genocide, Dallaire returned to Rwanda to participate in events commemorating the victims. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation documented the general's return in a film directed by Peter Raymont, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire* (2004). The film confirms many of the observations in the book with which it shares a title. Not surprisingly, it lays out the personal costs of the conflict not only for its Rwandan casualties but also for those who intervened. By the time of the documentary, Dallaire had become a hero to his countrymen, yet his status as hero reflected in part the post-traumatic stress disorder from which he suffered visibly and publicly, at a command level in the military with which it is not often associated. All of the stories with which we have dealt so far recognize the psychological cost that combat can inflict on soldiers, but that most often means those on the front lines, not Kyle's "head shed." Dallaire comments at one point in Raymont's film, in a file recording from 1998, roughly four years after he asked to be relieved of his command in Rwanda:

> I became suicidal. There was no … there was no other solution. You couldn't live with the pain, the sounds, and the smell, and the sights. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't stand *(he pauses)* the loudness of silence.[14]

Raymont's film documents the suicidal impulses, the drugs, and the alcohol. It also captures Dallaire's confession to his wife, Elizabeth, who accompanies him on his return to Rwanda, that he had lost himself in what he referred to as "paradise." He is standing on a bluff overlooking the landscape that gives the country its nickname—the land of a thousand hills—and speaks of seeking that panorama, during his command 10 years earlier, as a way to become "human again."

Like Chris Kyle after him, like Paul Rusesabagina beside him, Dallaire characterizes the forces against which he struggled as the personification of evil. Like the other two men, he uses that confrontation with reality to posit equal good:

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[14] *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*, dir. Peter Raymont (California Newsreel, 2004).

> If I've been able to literally shake hands with the devil, it only seems absolutely logical that there's another entity. Because there is that extreme of evil, there is the other extreme of the purest of good.[15]

Against the backdrop of this profession of faith, it is hard not to see Dallaire and his force of UN peacekeepers as sacrificial lambs. His assignment to keep the peace in Rwanda speaks to global good intentions. Without the material means and spiritual support needed to effect that change, though, the outcome could not be other than it was. The same dynamic characterized the UN intervention at Srebrenica, and it provides the background for the disaffection that Archie Gates expresses as the rebellion in Iraq falters and U.S. troops stand silently by. In the context of a discussion of leadership, Dallaire may not be a hero or even an effective leader; but if not, he asks, how do we structure organizations to ensure a different and better outcome? His story challenges us to advance the humanity that would protect not just the children who will otherwise become child soldiers or sex slaves in yet another bush war but also the adults who go to serve and save them.

The Entomologist

As I indicated earlier, E.O. Wilson's comments on Rwanda and the genocide of 1994 occupy just four paragraphs in his conclusion to *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (1998). The book focuses on the principle of the concordance of knowledge, the idea that multiple sources of evidence can unite to provide so-called strong conclusions about a phenomenon. For Wilson, the term and title support his notion that the sciences and the humanities can converge. As an entomologist and socio-biologist, he sees this unity as anchored in an empiricism that informs culture and the memes of which a culture is composed.

In line with this reasoning, Wilson locates the source of the genocide not, as others have done, in ethnic hatred or a long history of economic inequality between Hutu and Tutsi or the divide-and-conquer policies that the European colonists put in place. All of these play a role, he argues, but they express something more fundamental:

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[15] *The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*.

> There was a deeper cause, rooted in environment and demography. Between 1950 and 1994, the population of Rwanda, favored by better health care and temporarily improved food supply, more than tripled, from 2.5 million to 8.5 million. In 1992 the country had the highest growth rate in the world, an average of 8 children for every woman. But although total food production increased dramatically during this period, it was soon overbalanced by population growth. … Water was so overdrawn that hydrologists declared Rwanda one of the world's twenty-seven water-scarce countries. The teenage soldiers of the Hutu and the Tutsi then set out to solve the population problem in the most direct possible way.[16]

For Wilson, the underlying cause of the genocide is a failure of carrying capacity. Population growth simply outstripped available resources, and young and primarily male Rwandans on both sides of the Hutu-Tutsi divide effectively reduced the population by approximately 10 percent in the space of 100 days.

Even observers with a strong commitment to environmental and social sustainability may find Wilson's argument difficult to countenance. It reframes the individual moral agency that Paul Rusesabagina demonstrates in saving his 1,268 refugees at the Mille Collines, and for that matter the actions of a figure like Paul Kagame, then leader of the RPF that wrested the country from Hutu control and since then president of what Africa watchers have come to see as a continental success story. It also reframes the organizational authority that Roméo Dallaire sought in vain from the Western powers and the UN, an authority that nation-states and the UN itself have seen fit to embrace in the years since. In that sense, the passage from *Consilience* is consistent with Wilson's thinking in *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (1975), the book on animal behavior that also claimed that there is a biological basis to human nature and social interaction.[17]

In the next chapter of *War Stories*, the sociobiology of human behavior in combat will factor into the discussion. Here I want to dwell

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[16] Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 315.

[17] Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

on its implications for leadership in both war and peace. To be precise, how do we align the individual ethical responsibility that drives Paul Rusesabagina, the organizational ethical support that General Dallaire sought for both his military and civilian allegiances, and the more visceral and often species-specific responses that Wilson argues determine human behavior?

Successfully integrating the three through strategy or policy requires an almost superhuman vigilance, if not omniscience. Whatever the source of the improved health care that helped boost Rwandan birth rates, the consensus at the time would have been, and would still be today, that better health care is by definition a human good. It is also, according to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), a right, one equivalent to the rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" that we Americans enshrined in our founding documents. So profession and practice appear to have dovetailed in Rwanda in the post-World War II period with results that, if we accept Wilson's analysis, had dire consequences less than 50 years later. In Rwanda, the law of unintended consequences casts a cataclysmic shadow.

The challenge does not end there, though. Wilson expands the Rwandan example to characterize previous social movements, assessing the role of biology in the rise and fall of empires, civilizations, and peoples across millennia. He also generalizes the issue of overpopulation to other countries in the late 20th century:

> Rwanda is the most overpopulated country in Africa. Burundi, its war-torn neighbor, is second. Haiti and El Salvador, two of the chronically most troubled nations in the Western Hemisphere, are also among the most densely populated. … They are also arguably the most environmentally degraded.[18]

Wilson argues for taming what he calls "the monster on the land," an approach that comes with ethical challenges of its own. On a nation-state level, the People's Republic of China put in place the "one family, one child" policy to forestall the systems failures that Wilson identifies in

[18] Wilson, *Consilience*, 315.

Rwanda and elsewhere. The implications for a definition of individual freedom are considerable. Who should decide how many children a couple has? Even more challenging, by Wilson's standards of group biological or chemical response, "one family, one child" has produced what the Chinese now regard as a widespread "only-child" mindset among young Chinese. For the population as a whole, that sense of entitlement compounds an effective shortage of sons and daughters to care for their elders, thus dooming a long-standing cultural expectation in China.

How must we build and implement the policy that will balance a nation's and a civilization's history with its present and with the short-, medium-, and long-term goals of its future? And where must we draw the borders within which a policy applies? These choices are no longer national, if they ever were, but now we can see firsthand the implications of not thinking beyond our borders to find a viable solution for the species and the planet. What the Chinese Communist Party decides on family size for the People's Republic will matter to communist and capitalist alike, farmer and urban dweller, worker in the plant that generates pollution and consumer of its budget product where the pollution settles, thousands of miles away.

A Manager, a General, and an Entomologist Walk into a Bar …

Faced with this reality, we might embrace not only the discipline that we associate with the military but also the flexibility of aims and desires that Paul Rusesabagina built into his operating procedures at the Mille Collines and in the close family he sought to engender and protect. At least in the one-to-one comparison of Rusesabagina and Dallaire, the former has the advantage of relative autonomy, the entrepreneurial impulse to come up with novel solutions because the system allows for it, indeed encourages it. Rusesabagina may be a particular type of man, one who favors quick wit and improvisation, and Dallaire may be another, one who prefers a structure in which he can operate confidently and with a more defined sense of black and white, right and wrong. One could argue that each wound up in the profession he did because it suited his personal style and values. Yet combining the two might allow solutions

to social ills that neither opportunistic goal setting nor organizational rectitude alone would secure. Where civilian and military meet we can imagine a modulated use of the biologically driven and group-expressed impulses Wilson identifies.

That assumes that we agree with Wilson about human nature. For many, his formulation implicitly threatens free will and the potential for consciously engineered social order. That order could take the form of a libertarian capitalist democracy, a social-welfare mixed economy, or an illiberal dictatorship, but whatever it is, people (if not *the* people) could claim it as their own rational creation. At the other end of the scale of belief, Wilson's views also threaten the religious perspective that both Rusesabagina and Dallaire bring to the table, particularly in their recognition of evil. Curiously, Wilson himself grew up a Southern Baptist, so the language that both Rusesabagina and Dallaire use to describe the forces at work during the Rwandan genocide would be familiar to him. The truth and a solution lie in our ability to balance these perspectives without letting any of them go. In the context of our discussion of war stories, General Dallaire may have the most plausible and inspiring take on how to do so:

> As soldiers we have been used to moving mountains to protect our own sovereignty or [remove] risks to our way of life. In the future we must be prepared to move beyond national self-interest to spend our resources and spill our blood for humanity. … No matter how idealistic this aim sounds, this new century must become the Century of Humanity, when we as human beings … put the good of humanity above the good of our own tribe.[19]

Coming from a warrior who suffered as much as he has—though not nearly as much, his wife reflects,[20] as the people he was sent to protect—Dallaire's aspiration sets the standard for any future we might wish on ourselves, individually, organizationally, and as part of a system we still like to call "nature."

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[19] Dallaire with Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 522.

[20] *The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*.

CHAPTER 7

Dragon-Slayers

You know, it would sort of be like, if you're a dragon-slayer and there just were no more dragons. And then you wonder, like, who am I and what am I doing here?

—Laird Hamilton[1]

Clausewitz, Updated

How must we engineer the turn to humanity that General Dallaire exhorts us to accomplish in the 21st century? Against the backdrop of the progression laid out in the introductory chapter from fighting to competing to imagining to leading, how do we civilize our martial impulses, even as we add the bite of pragmatism to our everyday civilian dreams? We can begin with the point where the two worlds cross over into each other and—at least for this chapter—with the young men who seem predisposed to make that happen.

In 2007–2008, the author and journalist Sebastian Junger made multiple visits to the Korengal Valley in Afghanistan. His goal was to capture the experience of combat. For his base he chose the 2nd Platoon, Battle Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade. Over 15 months, Junger worked with Tim Hetherington, a noted British photojournalist, to document the lives of the young men at an outpost named after an early American casualty in the U.S. Army's occupation of the valley. The visits generated pieces for the magazine *Vanity Fair*, and those became the basis for Junger's book *War*. Together with Hetherington, Junger also produced the award-winning documentary *Restrepo* (2010), which consists of video they shot while with the 2nd Platoon. Hetherington was killed a year later while on assignment in Libya.

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[1] *Riding Giants*, dir. Stacy Peralta (Sony Pictures Classics, 2006).

At the start of *War Stories* I quoted one of the classics in the literature on war and the military, Carl von Clausewitz's *On War*. Von Clausewitz and Junger come at their shared topic from very different places: Von Clausewitz was a general and a theorist of war and military strategy; Junger went into Afghanistan as an embedded journalist and spent much of his time with the troops who bore arms rather than the officers telling them how and where to fight. By virtue of his assignment, Junger witnessed not only the intensity and the minutiae of combat but also the long periods of waiting, recuperation, and preparation before and after those firefights. Those moments make up the bulk of *Restrepo* and many pages of *War*. They involve a very specific population under particular circumstances and as a result, come much closer to the testimony Chris Kyle provides in *American Sniper* or the experience of the fictional soldiers in *Three Kings* than the big-picture view of war that von Clausewitz and Dallaire offer.

At the same time, Junger makes time to address the theory of war in something like von Clausewitz's spirit and takes on the broad-gauge implications of war for our time that Dallaire sets forth. The language is different, and it takes us into the domain of sociobiology and neurobiology, territory that we began to explore with E.O. Wilson's assessment of the causes of the Rwandan genocide. Junger divides *War* into three sections—"Fear," "Killing," and "Love"—and after all of the empirical observations about the lives of the soldiers, pretty quickly reaches for science to explain why we fight and how and what responsibilities those realities put before us:

> Society can give its young men almost any job and they'll figure how to do it. They'll suffer for it and die for it and watch their friends die for it, but in the end, it *will* get done. That only means that society should be careful about what it asks for. In a very crude sense the job of young men is to undertake the work that their fathers are too old for.[2]

Junger takes care not to judge the value of the American presence in Afghanistan, but he captures here and elsewhere in his book the

[2] Sebastian Junger, *War* (New York: Twelve, 2010), 154.

importance of constantly assessing the value of the military engagements we undertake on the international (and by implication, the domestic) stage.

He also joins Roméo Dallaire in his concern about the next generation and puts a similar challenge on the table—how to turn a century that has begun for America with the longest wars the country has ever fought into something more humane:

> There are other costs to war as well—vaguer ones that don't lend themselves to conventional math. One American soldier has died for every hundred yards of forward progress in the valley, but what about the survivors? Is that territory worth the psychological cost of learning to cheer someone's death?[3]

National security may justify the small territorial gains, especially if one can make the argument that those deaths pave the way for a more humane world. Still, Junger takes the inquiry two steps further: one in a direction we have already gone with Chris Kyle, a second in the direction with which we have been concerned throughout *War Stories*. The first simply amplifies Kyle's explanation for why he served four tours in Iraq, with the added complication that it contradicts Junger's implicit skepticism about why a country would choose armed action:

> War is a big and sprawling word that brings a lot of human suffering into the conversation, but combat is a different matter. Combat is the smaller game that young men fall in love with, and any solution to the human problem of war will have to take into account the psyches of these young men. For some reason there is a profound and mysterious gratification to the reciprocal agreement to protect another person with your life, and combat is virtually the only situation in which that happens regularly.[4]

American Sniper makes exactly this point without the filter of a journalist who has chosen deliberately and objectively to assess what

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[3] Junger, *War*, 154–155.

[4] Junger, *War*, 234.

drives the troops. With or without the filter, it seems possible to generalize across populations as well. In *An Ordinary Man*, Rusesabagina tries to explain the phenomenon of the Interahamwe, the Hutu militia mostly made up of young men, and the human inclination to go along with others, even when—or perhaps especially when—the group favors extreme action:

> It is no surprise to me at all that the young teenagers in the refugee camps could have been organized into *Interahamwe* chapters in the winter of 1993. Something magical happens to you when you join a group, a feeling I can only describe as *freedom*. I felt it myself on various soccer teams when I was growing up. I also felt it when I joined the staff of the Hotel Mille Collines. It is possible to lose oneself in the purpose of the collective effort; we embrace this feeling of being dissolved into something bigger because at our cores we are lonely. We are trapped inside our own skulls.[5]

Going along with others means, in this case, saying "yes" to the genocide, although Rusesabagina insists that "ordinary" human beings can and should say "no." At a cross-cultural level, Rusesabagina's definition of freedom seems exactly the opposite of what an American audience would understand by the term: freedom as another word for "liberty," a keyword for American democracy but also for the American cultural inclination to default to solo agency, often in the name of principle. And yet we are a people of teams, if not soccer, then certainly football, baseball, hockey, etc. Moreover, the young men with whom Junger concerns himself have volunteered to spend years of their lives in a sector of our society that imposes the most visible constraint possible on individual freedom. How can this be?

Chris Kyle explains it by celebrating the "overwatch" that he, as a sniper, provided his comrades-in-arms. Junger similarly argues that his subjects are most drawn to the military life because it allows them to protect their comrades. His conclusion derives both from his observations as a reporter and from the neuroscience that he reviews in search

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[5] Rusesabagina, *An Ordinary Man*, 194.

of an explanation. The urge to protect, in this scheme, is a fundamental human driver. Like Kyle, Junger identifies other motivating forces in the troops at OP Restrepo, including the adrenaline rush of combat, the embrace of violence, a fascination with guns, and the comfort of black-and-white, them-and-us reasoning. These motives vary in strength individual by individual, and as became apparent with *American Sniper*, the psychology is bewilderingly complex. Yet in the "Afterword" to *War*, he lists the many soldiers he got to know in the Korengal Valley who, after U.S. forces withdrew from their bases there, were thrilled to settle into another deployment or otherwise found their way back to Afghanistan amid marriages, divorces, births, deaths, and all of the other lurking complexities of civilian life. There's a touch almost of astonishment to the sweep of his catalog, one that he extended in 2014 with two more documentaries, *Korengal* and *The Last Patrol*. In *War*, though, he ties it all in the end to brotherhood, something clearly beyond visceral response or mere emotion. It is a code, a standard of behavior that puts the group above the individual and imposes a responsibility on those who live by it.

The simultaneous mundanity and complexity of civilian life provides the second hook on which Junger hangs his explanation for the appeal of service, and it goes to the heart of my argument in *War Stories* that we should find a way to fuse impulses from both worlds into something new and more humane. In war, the smallest of details focuses the big picture of life and death:

> In the civilian world almost nothing has lasting consequences, so you can blunder through life in a kind of daze. You never have to take inventory of the things in your possession and you never have to calculate the ways in which mundane circumstances can play out—can, in fact, kill you. As a result, you lose a sense of the importance of things, the gravity of things. … At Restrepo, that connection was impossible to ignore. It was tedious but it gave the stuff of one's existence—the shoelaces and the water and the lost shirt—a riveting importance. Frankly, after you got used to living that way it was hard to go home.[6]

[6] Junger, *War*, 161.

For reasons that will become apparent, Junger himself knows better than to let his argument rest here. Still, he offers it as a perceived, partial truth and challenges us to examine the terms on which we live our lives beyond the battlefield. The challenge here involves more than bringing a few more vets home with a sense that they are both welcome and have something to contribute. Rusesabagina fears exactly the same spirit of inattention that Junger finds in civilian life and the threat it holds that "never again" could become "yet again" in the blink of an eye. And yet away from the battlefield, civilian life presents analogies in abundance for the commitment that Junger detects in his soldiers, with less ambiguous results. These are habits of the mind and the heart that warrant cultivation, even off the battlefield. To illustrate the point, we turn now to the politics of big-wave surfing.

Stoke

As the final credits roll on Stacy Peralta's documentary film *Riding Giants* (2004), a sign appears at the entrance to an unidentified beach: "DANGEROUS WATERS—OFF LIMITS TO ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL." Given the big wave-riding venues on which Peralta and his team focus in the film, the beach could be on Oahu or somewhere along the California coast, presumably near a military facility, and given the chronology of the film, it could be 1969 or 1999. Regardless of the geography and the time, nothing signals better the difference to which we have returned throughout *War Stories*—the divide between military and civilian social frameworks—than that sign. Although young men and women train to put their lives at risk in the military, their organization has here declared the temptation to dare the surf too high a risk. In the final seconds of Peralta's film, young men in swimming trunks walk past the barrier and paddle out to ride the waves. They could be disobedient servicemen or inattentive civilians, but their "uniform" erases the distinction, as does their goal: to have substantially the same emotional experiences that drive Chris Kyle and others in the films and literature we have considered so far about war, but through very different means.

Peralta divides his hymn to big-wave riding into three parts: the first is set in southern California and Oahu; the second on Half Moon Bay at

Mavericks, just south of San Francisco; and the third in Hawaii, Tahiti, and outer reefs beyond any identifiable shoreline. The three locations also sketch a progress in time, from the 1950s through big-wave riding today, and they center on a trio of celebrity big-wave riders: Greg Noll, Jeff Clark, and Laird Hamilton. I first saw the film on a flight from Boston to Denver, hundreds of miles from any discernable surf, having dismissed it in advance as just another airline film. By the time we landed in Denver, I realized that it crystallizes half a century of American cultural history through its apparently simple structure. I knew, too, that I had heard the story before but couldn't remember when or where. Multiple viewings later, it became apparent that the film describes not just key facets of modern American history but also how history is made across cultures and through time.

Why ride big waves? Various characters in the film answer this question, each in his or her own way. Sam George, a former competitive surfer, surf journalist, and co-writer with Peralta of *Riding Giants*, comments in the film on one of the moments in what became the legend of Greg Noll:

> On that classic day, the biggest swell ever seen, he essentially rode alone. And he faced it when it came to him, and that's what every surfer does in their own life. Everyone can relate to that.[7]

Jeff Clark, years later, stresses a different aspect of the big wave riding experience born of his years of solitary surfing at Mavericks before it was discovered by the surfing community:

> It was my sanctuary. I could leave the shore and go out there and be so focused and so in tune and feel the ocean with every fiber in my body and I was part of it.[8]

At the same time, more than any other location documented in the film, Mavericks brings out the menace that comes with the sport. One of

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[7] *Riding Giants*.
[8] *Riding Giants*.

the few women in the film, Dr. Sarah Gerhardt, elaborates on Clark's musings:

> I have to overcome the safety mechanism that wants to rise up in me and keep me from doing something that can kill me.[9]

Gerry Lopez, one of the older generation of surfers, comments in the same vein:

> I remember getting so uptight on the way out. … Jesus, I'm not going to be able to surf. And I remember finally having to go, "Okay, shit, I guess this is a good day to die!"[10]

Perhaps in response to that recognition of mortal danger, the last of the trio, Laird Hamilton, signals the difference that tow-in surfing created. In a way that Noll and Clark gloss over, it's about the team experience and the ethical imperative it generates:

> If one of those guys go down, I will put myself on the line … every time. … It's part of their nature, so when they go home at night, they sleep well.[11]

It is easy to spot the connection between soldier and surfer as each embraces the adrenaline rush of what they do. In that sense, the focus on the individual carries over from one medium to the other. In both, though, we see the urge to "protect" and the deliberate engineering of a lifestyle that makes that possible.

It is less easy to pick out the psychological differentiators between those who join the military, like Chris Kyle or the fictional Troy Barlow, and those who followed the early surfers out to Waimea and other parts of the North Shore on Oahu. The independence of spirit that Noll

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[9] *Riding Giants*.
[10] *Riding Giants*.
[11] *Riding Giants*.

documents includes the spirit of adventure that the first two embrace, but it unambiguously dismisses, at least at the outset, the wealth that Barlow and his fellow soldiers want in *Three Kings*. Noll and his cohort epitomize the stereotype of walking away from the mainstream in late 1950s and early 1960s America. Movie camera in hand, Noll recorded the lifestyle that he and his fellow big-wave riders cultivated in those early years. He testifies that they lived rough, stealing chickens and pineapples from nearby farms so they could focus on riding the waves, not making a living.

The choice to walk away also directly negates the soldiers' search for a disciplining authority. As discussed in earlier chapters, in films from Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* to Eastwood's *American Sniper*, boot camp plays a key role in the description and classification of the military commitment, and the autobiographical literature backs up that analysis. On the face of it, nothing could defy that submission of the individual will to organizational aim more clearly than those moments: for Kyle (and this would have been equally true for the fictional Special Forces Major Archie Gates), the experience is even more intense—a challenge to see how far others can force one to force oneself. The big-wave riders captured in *Riding Giants* share the instinct toward self-discipline and self-discovery through that discipline, but what they defer to is different—the waves themselves. Hamilton's comment about slaying dragons says as much, and the many scenes of waves that Peralta includes in *Riding Giants* drive home the point. The big-wave riders appreciate a reality that takes them not just beyond themselves as individuals but to a full-on encounter with the inexorable—and for that reason both inspiring and moderating—power of nature.

Extreme Commerce

For all the testimony of a possible mystical union with forces larger than ourselves, the three men who star in *Riding Giants* address another, equally real aspect of the surf culture that evolved in the post-World War II era and that came to fruition just as the United States began its engagement in Vietnam. Sam George comments:

> All the sort of ancillary artistic pursuits that surrounded surfing, they really did all come together in a rush, all of it happening from 1960 to 1965.[12]

Peralta documents Noll's marketing genius, starting with his signature striped black-and-white swimming trunks and the very successful surf business that grew out of those early years living rough. Noll set a pattern for some of the best of the big-wave riders, translating his experience and energy into the design and manufacture of surfboards. In that sense, his apparently steady documentation of how he and his fellow big-wave riders lived and surfed seems less a frat boy's documentation of their high jinks than an initial, perhaps unwitting, evangelism followed by carefully calculated image development. As Peralta tells it, the big-wave riders connected practice, exploration, and design and build. The impulse was constant and intense and continues to this day. In short, Noll, Clark, and Hamilton ultimately returned to the mainstream, indeed defined it for their time. For those of us who weren't riding big waves, that negotiation of the interface between individual exploration and popular appeal mattered as much as the spiritual self-fulfillment to which Peralta's three iconic surfers bear witness.

They and their cohorts also seem to have expressed the pattern for what we now think of as "extreme sports" in a whole range of media, from skiing to snowboarding, skydiving, rock climbing, and beyond. In this model, practitioners adapt or develop technologies and materials that will allow them to do more and do it better—a mindset that has come to be seen as the best of the modern American business environment. It underlies the now-historic success stories from the tech' sector of Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and others to whom we turn today as representative mythmakers. Peralta's chosen surfers personify the entrepreneurial business model: They laid the groundwork for their iteration of it, even as they walked away from the 1950s conformism documented in Sloan Wilson's 1955 novel *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*[13] and explicated

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[12] *Riding Giants*.

[13] Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955; repr., Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002).

at the sociological level by William Whyte's *The Organization Man*,[14] published just a year later.

As with so much of the cultural legacy of the 1950s, though, Wilson's book and the film made from it, starring Gregory Peck, Jennifer Jones, and Fredric March,[15] seems in retrospect much less conventional than received opinion would have it, and World War II plays a major role in that deviation from the stereotype. As for Whyte, he focused precisely on the clash of collectivism and individualism that we have detected here between soldier and surfer. For both types, the TV series *Mad Men*, which ended its seventh and last season in spring 2015, reminds us of what we haven't left behind from that era. *Riding Giants* chronicles the fullness of that time, leading away from Madison Avenue to the beaches of southern California, when surfing broke onto, washed over, and was absorbed into the mainstream.

Sam George and other commentators in the film peg the change to *Gidget*, the first of a series of films, starring Sandra Dee, about a teenage girl who discovers surf culture. Following the release of *Gidget* in 1959, they tell us, surfing went in a matter of two to three years from a practicing population of 5,000 to two million. Suddenly, an impulse among a few to reject mass consumer habits redefined those habits, changing the way young America thought about clothes, music, nature, and a meaningful lifestyle. Even as Noll profited from the discovery that surfing could make one happy, he and other veteran big-wave riders found the mass embrace of their private endeavor hard to take. As Noll himself puts it, "Man, it just makes me puke!"[16] And yet decades later, the link between big-wave riding and all of what Sam George calls "ancillary" activities remains: Witness Laird Hamilton and Buzzy Kerbox's appearances in magazines such as *GQ*. Madison Avenue may have yielded territory to social media, but the impulse to celebrate and profit from those who walk away continues strong.

Following 9/11, our military engagements in the Middle East have put a similarly substantial cultural and commercial phenomenon front and

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[14] William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (1956; repr., Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

[15] *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, dir. Nunnally Johnson (20th Century Fox, 1956).

[16] *Riding Giants*.

center for Americans. Many have argued that because of the geopolitics of the early 21st century, we have had no choice but to embrace this recasting of who we are, a people that lives in and with a permanent war economy. "Camo" has replaced Greg Noll's bold beach style, and the debate about concealed- or open-carry has as much symbolic cultural significance as the latest board technology did for Noll, Clark, and Hamilton. Regional militias have been with us for a very long time, but we now embrace paramilitary culture through our preferred political debates, an outsized focus on armed engagement in TV programs and video games, and our media-driven perception of how we relate to one another individually and in our ascriptive identities.

As was the case with surfing and the lifestyle it symbolized for Americans in the early 1960s, we have made choices to get to this place. Yet we have done so under the impression that our hand was forced, that larger, impersonal forces made our actions inevitable. Those who converted to surfing may have embraced the same illusion, albeit with a positive spin: they, too, may have thought that what big-wave riders showed us was just waiting to be discovered. In retrospect, though, one can read into the rejection of the 1950s treadmill or rat race a very early recognition on the part of a few, and then many more, that we had willingly committed to an unsustainable path for a growing global society, and that it was time to reverse directions. At all times, we should test for, and nurture, the entrepreneurial spirit that produced not just lineups on beaches around the globe, not just the first landing of a man on the moon, but also the social upheavals of the late 1960s and the rejection of a war that has left a bad taste in the mouths of people in and out of the military for generations.

As much as we might think we have entered the realm of mere taste or individual preference here, the impetus toward commerce expresses systemic forces that can be channeled for good or ill. That opportunity is as old as humanity itself, as the stories we tell ourselves and the way we build our societies around them. It integrates the discipline inherent in the military mindset with what Sebastian Junger describes as our more relaxed citizens' vision of who we are. Even as the surfers at the end of *Riding Giants* blithely stride by the off-limits sign on that unnamed beach to surf the next big swell, they are delivering on the project for our young

men that Junger cautions us to attend to: they are doing what it takes to satisfy a collective hunger for action. How do we as a society heed our better angels in articulating that assignment?

Culture Change—"A Few Good Men"

I mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter that the story *Riding Giants* tells seemed deeply familiar to me, even on first viewing. It wasn't the individual surfers: I had heard only of Laird Hamilton, and then only for his appearances in glossy magazines. It wasn't the landscape: I have never visited Hawaii. It wasn't even the sense of oneness with nature that the various surfers so ably capture and that I have experienced at a very attenuated level in amateur skiing or white-water rafting. It took me several viewings to realize that it was the social dynamic, first among the big-wave riders themselves and then in their relation to the rest of the world, that felt close and compelling. For all the similarities between the group dynamics of Junger's 2nd Platoon and the surfers Noll captured with his movie camera, the locus of authority made all the difference, and that difference is, and was, a big one. In all of the testimony captured in the film, even after the turn to team integration that tow-in surfing necessitated, the individual remains dominant as do a hierarchy of skills and competence. Sarah Gerhardt, the physician who recognized that she had to overcome her impulse toward self-preservation in order to ride Mavericks, extends that autonomy to the moment beyond risk:

> When it comes down to it, it's up to me whether I live or die. It's up to me whether I go on a wave or not.[17]

This is not the world of Sandra Dee, but it expresses the same sense of freedom and empowerment that *Gidget* so neatly conveyed, using the paucity of women surfers and stereotypes of women as less physically adventurous than men to emphasize the point. Into that world, one can pour one's ambition and abilities: for all of the informality and self-deprecation to which the film bears witness, the world of big-wave

[17] *Riding Giants*.

riding is the stuff of meritocracy, and the riders all know it. Sam George describes Greg Noll as the "most complete surfer of the 50s and 60s—by far. No one else could even come close."[18] Laird Hamilton is given equal recognition at a much later stage in the film's half-century history: "Laird's the king out there," and "There's no one that comes close to his abilities."[19]

This is the world of the warrior, but of a breed different from the men Junger encountered in the Korengal Valley. When Laird Hamilton describes himself, in an apparent flight of fancy, as a "dragon-slayer," he indexes his performance to a different standard. This is the world of the medieval epic, where knights go off to find the Holy Grail, slaying the dragons that impede their progress; this is, to return to a moment in our chapter on *The Hurt Locker* and *Blade Runner*, the world of the Fisher King. Only now the grail is the perfect wave or, perhaps more strategically, an ever-bigger wave. The perfect wave would mark the end of time because it would leave Hamilton without a sense of purpose and identity. *Riding Giants* effectively documents that progress: a search, however costly in human and even in material terms (as expressed through the application of more and more complex machinery) for waves that would enable big-wave riders to surpass all previous accomplishments.

Behind the quest lies the court from which the knights sallied forth on their missions, either individual journeys or the crusades against the infidel. Behind the swimming trunks and stolen chickens and pineapples, the story of Greg Noll and the other big-wave riders recreates the world of the Arthurian legends with Noll as King Arthur and the others of his generation as the Knights of the Round Table. Laird Hamilton is the next generation, pure of heart, exceptionally brave, one of a very few knights to find the Grail. The big-wave riders' story even has its Merlin, one of the "Ancients," in this case Duke Kahanamoku, a native Hawaiian, an American Olympic medalist in swimming (1912, 1920, 1924), and an evangelist for the then largely unknown sport of surfing. Kahanamoku's story links curiously to another evocation of the Arthurian legend, the

[18] *Riding Giants*.
[19] *Riding Giants*.

Kennedy administration's cultivation of its image as "Camelot," the seat of Arthur's court. In 1962, JFK visited Hawaii, and among the local dignitaries in the receiving line he reportedly singled out Kahanamoku, a childhood hero, for extended conversation. Thus do legends find and fulfill one another.

The story and the analogy have more than antiquarian interest for us. In much the same way that we can see in the cultural impact of the big-wave riders a sea change in the values to which a society commits, so, too, did the Arthurian legends come to symbolize a code, a standard of behavior to which the society committed as an ideal. The notion of chivalry that drove standards of behavior for centuries derives from this moment in Western, European culture. The tenets for which the Knights of the Round Table were admired may have been honored less often than Arthur could have wished, but that didn't, and still doesn't, diminish their power. They gave subsequent European cultures names and faces to associate with those standards. This, too, is about brotherhood.

It is worth noting that the social dynamic described here is not unique to Europe or the West. I first came across the phrase "the world of the warrior" when I taught Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in China.[20] Multiple audiences of Chinese MBAs walked me through the world of *wuxia pian*, a popular genre of Chinese textual narrative that has long since translated into film. In these stories, warriors such as Ang Lee's Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun Fat) and Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeow) demonstrate their martial prowess in defense of the world of the emperor that rules China. The warriors distinguish themselves through their fighting prowess, their standards of behavior toward one another and the rest of society, and their commitment to service: they are the model of the professional, upholders of an ethic that the society has deemed suitable for all, even if it is practiced only by a fighting elite.

Whatever Greg Noll, Jeff Clark, and Laird Hamilton may think they were doing by becoming big-wave riders, the social dynamic illustrated here makes them an elite and gives them the power to effect change that human societies have apparently always assigned to elites. It is important

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[20] See Leigh Hafrey, *The Story of Success: Five Steps to Mastering Ethics in Business* (New York: Other Press, 2005).

to note that the relationship confers moral authority on what might at first seem like a purely mechanical competence: big-wave riding for the surfers, fighting for the warriors of the *wuxia pian*, and the chivalric acts of the knights of the European Middle Ages. To the extent that the knights ultimately sallied forth on crusades against what they perceived as heathen Muslims, the warrior ethic became one with the evangelical impulse to fulfill an established, faith-based agenda. On balance, though, the recursion to elites seems more frequently to enable a change in, or renewal of, ethical standards, a re-centering of social priorities.

Does Junger's 2nd Platoon qualify as such an elite? It is one thing to talk, as various figures in *Riding Giants* do quite comfortably, of individual aspiration, individual excellence (Hamilton is the "king out there"), and therefore, ultimately, individual authority. It is another to dismiss that authority, as Chris Kyle does in *American Sniper*, as the "head shed" or to focus, as Junger does in *War*, on the men in the trenches, at the outposts where rank is largely assumed away because no one has it. One might characterize this trend as leveling and, as such, an expression of our ever-more-democratic vision of the world. With Junger's war fighters in the Korengal Valley in the early 21st century, we seem no longer to seek moral guidance or, if we do, the lesson we take away speaks to equality and a commitment to mutual support. These virtues emerge in the absence of guiding authority or in the presence of an authority that serves primarily as a disciplinary force, not the leadership that, willed or unwilled, results in visible, modeled behavior. In *War*, no one seems to know why he or she is fighting, so the dominant return on the individual investment is the fighting itself. Between Kyle's Manichean vision of good and evil, on the one hand, and the 2nd Platoon's sense that they are on the cutting edge of the fighting but shouldn't ask too many questions, on the other, the individual soldier has to find it hard to reintegrate into society stateside.

And yet Junger ultimately reconciles these apparently irreconcilable worlds and the values that animate them. I noted earlier that *War* is divided into three parts—"Fear," "Killing," and "Love." The last of the three, "Love," is ominously theoretical, as though the journalist in Junger found and cathected with the first two categories but allowed his reporter self to be replaced by his researcher self when it came time to talk about

the redeeming virtues of what he had witnessed. He plausibly introduces elements of sociobiology to identify the physiological and psychological drivers that made combat, if not war, so appealing to the men of the 2nd Platoon. It is only when they come home, though, to a place that so many of them seem eager to avoid, that we understand the significance of what they have lived. In the final paragraphs of the "Afterword," Junger attends a Medal of Honor award ceremony for one of the soldiers in the platoon. The families of two soldiers who died in the same firefight that earned the other his medal are also present. Junger describes the closing moments of the ceremony at the White House as President Obama hugs a crying mother:

> The room stood silent now, everyone crying, everyone at attention—the medal forgotten, the war forgotten, the politics forgotten, everything forgotten but the one irreconcilable fact that a mother had lost her son and there wasn't a damn thing anyone in that room could do for her to make this story turn out well.[21]

In that moment, the military and the civilian worlds come together and it suddenly becomes possible to measure the cost of the war, the latest of the projects we have assigned our young men. They go eagerly to the battle, as Junger documents, yet this closing story alone gives full meaning to the many stories that capture their and their fellows' life in combat. Even more, in a world where the leaders have been largely invisible, suddenly the leader in whose name the 2nd Platoon went to war in the Korengal Valley confronts the real cost of the project over which he presides, however remotely. In that confrontation, which is also a deliberate commemoration—the reason why we award medals—*War* acquires a poignancy that outstrips all of Junger's firsthand, well-crafted, nonjudgmental field observations. At the White House at that final moment, with the press and the brass in attendance, whatever the Medal of Honor recipient may be feeling, or the mother of his fallen comrade, or

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[21] Junger, *War*, 278.

the President himself, they are all in mourning, and we with them. This is not how the story is supposed to end.

One can imagine all parties walking away from this event in sorrow but resigned each to his or her own role and fate, and yet in a world where such an encounter is possible, even expected, it becomes equally possible to imagine a different outcome. In that world, the energies that went into fighting a war can be redirected to fighting for peace, if only by virtue of small efforts made in the belief that the next wave matters. Here the law of unintended consequences comes back as an opportunity, if only we have the imagination, or perhaps merely the desperation, to seize it. And in seizing it to find the humor that will balance the mourning and allow us to go on.

CHAPTER 8

The War at Home

Ultimately the deepest objection to a racial truth and reconciliation process in America is that it would be hard. … We want our stories—and our Story—to have happy endings. We want reconciliation on the cheap.

—Eric Liu[1]

It is a fact, that whatever makes for the wealth or for the reputation of Americans, and can be had cheap! will be found by Americans.

—Frederick Douglass[2]

Show me the money!

—Cuba Gooding, Jr.[3]

Just My Imagination?

I saw *Citizenfour* for the first time two days before it won the 2015 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. By then, the scope of the leaks Edward Snowden launched in mid-2013 was very clear, as was their import: widespread information gathering by the National Security Agency at home and abroad, unbeknownst to people from all walks of life, at all levels in the United States and abroad. The director of the film, Laura Poitras, was a MacArthur Fellow, winner of one of the Foundation's

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[1] Eric Liu, "Can America Handle the Truth on Race?" *CNN*, May 14, 2015, http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/18/opinion/liu-mlk-day-truth-and-reconciliation/, accessed March 26, 2015.

[2] Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" speech delivered July 5, 1852, Rochester, NY, http://www.thenation.com/blog/168721/what-slave-fourth-july-frederick-douglass, accessed March 26, 2015.

[3] *Jerry Maguire*, dir. Cameron Crowe (TriStar Pictures, 1996).

"genius" grants for her work in documentary film. In interviews on and off screen, she spoke compellingly about the war footing on which we had placed ourselves after 9/11.

I saw the film at the IFC Center in Greenwich Village and quite consciously made the connection between the countercultural, art-house history of the facility and the film I had come to see. As the pocket theater in which we were sitting darkened, I was struck by the old-Left tilt of the previews and the theater's declaration, posted at the ticket counter and online, that the cinema would disregard the film's R rating,[4] in the interest of informing a younger generation of the urgent historic truths it contained. For the 5 p.m. showing on that Friday the audience looked more middle-aged than adventurously teenaged, as though customers and cinema both had chosen to linger in their glory days. Online, the Center explained how management saw this film:

> Poitras is a great and brave filmmaker, but she is also a masterful storyteller: she compresses the many days of questioning, waiting, confirming, watching the world's reaction and agonizing over the next move, into both a great character study of Snowden and a narrative that will leave you on the edge of your seat as it inexorably moves toward its conclusion.[5]

Maybe I had seen too many war films; maybe I missed the guns. As *Citizenfour* ended, I was struck most by the degree to which I still had no sense of Snowden's character. Where Kathryn Bigelow deliberately casts relative unknowns in *The Hurt Locker* to help capture an atmosphere of isolation in her EOD team, Poitras' real-life protagonist seems to achieve the same anonymity and isolation all on his own. He wants simultaneously to take full responsibility for the leaks and not to make the story

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[4] "While the MPAA has assigned CITIZENFOUR a rating of R, recommending that no one under 17 be admitted without a parent or guardian, IFC Center feels that the film is appropriate viewing for mature adolescents. Accordingly, we will admit high school-age patrons at our discretion." "Citizenfour," IFC Center, http://www.ifccenter.com/films/citizenfour/, accessed March 8, 2015.

[5] "Citizenfour."

about him; from an artistic angle, he simultaneously damps the drama and yet seeks to make sure the story registers.

Working through Poitras' lens, Snowden casts himself as anything but a hero, and that seemed appropriately un-self-seeking. Poitras registers this aspect of her story in an interview published in the Italian periodical *Mousse* in the fall of 2013:

> [Snowden] said he didn't want to ruin the lives of everyone who worked with him, and it would all ultimately lead back to him. He told me what he wanted me to do was not to try to hide his identity, but to actually point toward him. After I learned that, I asked to interview him on camera. His first response was no, he didn't want the story to be about him. Then I explained why, given the work that I do, for him to tell it was important. And not just because I knew the mainstream media interpretation would be predictable and narrow, but because to have somebody who understands how this technology works, who is willing to risk their life to expose it to the public, and that we could hear that articulated, would reach people in ways that the documents themselves wouldn't. So I put forth that argument, and he agreed that we would meet, and it was several weeks later that we met.[6]

In the film, this deliberately self-effacing behavior on Snowden's part sets a certain mood. In long sequences of film, he and Glenn Greenwald, the columnist for *Guardian US* whom Snowden had tapped to cover the story, converse about massive violations of individual privacy against a backdrop of Snowden's minimalist hotel room in Hong Kong. We see pillows, covers, and a pale and reticent hero whom we know to be isolated because leaving isolation would mean instant incarceration. But the threat of incarceration does not give us the measure of the man. He and his foe appear incommensurable, so his defiance tells us nothing about his motives or his virtue.

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[6] Lauren Cornell, "Primary Documents," *Mousse*, 40 (October–November 2013), 62–73, http://www.moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=1020, accessed March 6, 2015.

The lack of drama also stems from a tension in Poitras herself about her roles as both artist and historian. Again, in her *Mousse* interview with Lauren Cornell, she comments:

> This is obviously a huge news story that I'm reporting on, but in addition I'm also doing it in the context of making films, or cinema, and I'm interested in talking about how those things intersect. For instance, how you can do on-the-ground reporting about the occupation of Iraq that gives insight into that war, that advances the public's knowledge, and yet at the same time produce art and make people care about things.[7]

And then again, ever more precisely defining her goals:

> So the primary document is to have a record, as a documentarian, or a journalist, but it also allows me a way to craft narratives that take you closer and give you a different perspective on events that you think you know about. Or that people who pay attention to the news and world events think they know about. I hope the work both builds compassion and informs people.[8]

Finally, though Poitras doesn't state it as such, the challenge for her and Snowden and Greenwald lies in their need to bridge the divide, primarily for American audiences but also for the world, between events that happen at a distance on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan and their often-opaque but very real significance for life at home. For there can be no doubt, Poitras' work aside, that the American response to events in the Middle East changed the nation after 9/11. The war overseas was prosecuted in part through a war at home; it was silent and invisible to most Americans, but that made and makes it no less real, not just for those warriors who, like Snowden, waged it, but also for its targets. Poitras hopes that we will recognize ourselves as the latter, but the artistic challenge is greater than she seems willing or able to acknowledge,

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[7] Cornell, "Primary Documents."

[8] Cornell, "Primary Documents."

perhaps in part because even as President Obama began to wind down the war in Afghanistan in 2013 to 2014, Snowden made clear through his revelations that the war it enabled at home continues.

One could argue that a film like Clint Eastwood's *American Sniper* achieves the goal of fostering national self-consciousness, but *Citizenfour* confirms that for all Chris Kyle's sacrifice and heroism, he largely missed the underlying menace of America's time in the Middle East. Eastwood doesn't correct for that blindness, and the film we set against it, *Three Kings*, only gets us partway to Poitras' and Snowden's truth. As I noted earlier, at one point in *Three Kings* Archie Gates (Clooney) explains that the Iraqi Republican Guard will let him and his recruits walk off with the stolen Kuwaiti gold out of "necessity." Saddam's troops have the rebels to worry about, so the Americans are free to do as they please, provided they exercise a minimum of decorum in their actions. The notion of "necessity" also applies to the secret war Snowden uncovered, insofar as his superiors saw—and still see—it as a matter of national security, and they would unhesitatingly define it, if challenged, as a guarantor of social and, by extension, individual good.

Snowden emphasizes in *Citizenfour* that he aims not to end the surveillance but to give his fellow Americans the opportunity to decide whether it should be allowed to continue. Poitras' combination of historical and artistic impulses seems designed to achieve the same goal: to alert the American public to a significant change in what we think of as our national way of life. Other social critics—legislators, policy experts, academics, and some members of the media—have identified the issue for what it is. In that sense, Snowden, Greenwald, and Poitras are not alone. The question is how, in a country committed to the possible, to the "I can" in "American," we can turn their urgent and substantive invitation into a reasoned and effective test for or against the war at home.

Here we return to the progression in the introduction to *War Stories* of fighting, competing, imagining, and leading. Whatever the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences intended by awarding Poitras an Oscar for *Citizenfour*, it was being true to the underlying truth about its own institutional commitment. The best products of the entertainment industry invariably help us recast incrimination as aspiration, problem as opportunity; that is the power of the human imagination and the art

that expresses it. We have seen various storytellers do so in preceding chapters, each for different but very specific aesthetic and ethical reasons: *Homeland*, *Blade Runner*, *Three Kings*, *Hotel Rwanda*, and *Riding Giants* all work a very particular magic, not just because they keep us engaged but also because they help us address common goals.

The leadership that emerges from imagination factors in the human element. That undertaking often includes war, but today we seek to define leadership beyond war, leadership in a society where we would understand collectively that war represents a limited and limiting opportunity and should not serve 21st-century America as a dominant frame of reference. The works we have discussed do so by daring us not to forget hard truths similar to those *Citizenfour* presents, even as we turn them into opportunities to determine a new truth, or equivalent truths.

I wrote the column on war stories back in 1992 because it seemed we had finally made our way into a place in our national history where we could focus, or refocus, our efforts on addressing unresolved social challenges: women's rights, ongoing racial tensions, and economic inequities that seemed actually to be growing rather than abating. Following Vietnam and other, lesser police actions in various parts of the globe, the 1980s had added an efflorescence of financial skullduggery—the downside of S&Ls, corporate raiders, and junk bonds. The Clinton administration promised change. In "The Man from Hope,"[9] the film that the Clinton team played at the Democratic National Convention and then made available to the broader public, soon-to-be president Bill Clinton emphasized people over trickle-down economics, the importance of personal story over policy.

Twenty-plus years later we have little to show for the opportunities that then apparently presented themselves. After the turn of the millennium and before 9/11 and the wars we launched in response, we saw the bursting of the first tech bubble and a major outbreak of corporate scandals: Enron, WorldCom, Global Crossing, and others. The impulses of the 1980s seemed suddenly only to have gone underground during the 1990s. The economic downturn of 2007 to 2009 that turned into

[9] "The Man From Hope," www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LntAEHG5vA, accessed June 16, 2015.

the Great Recession stemmed in part from financial reforms engineered under the Clinton administration. Like his Democratic successor in the new century, in the late 1990s President Clinton seems to have succumbed to systemic pressures: the agenda for enhanced political, economic, and civil rights that the American people never quite puts away was again put on hold. If we take the message of *Citizenfour* to heart, that agenda has since been subverted in ways that most of us didn't recognize when the subversion began and still can't fully grasp today.

In the next few pages, I would like to recall solutions that presented themselves before we went back to war overseas and at home and trace the path that, however subtly, we have continued to travel. Cameron Crowe's *Jerry Maguire* may seem an unlikely choice for the purpose, and some more politically and cinematically alert readers of this book will find it offensive to juxtapose a "rom-com," albeit one that was very successful at the box office, to the earnest, socially significant *Citizenfour*. That said, the challenge that *War Stories* seeks to meet lies precisely in such a juxtaposition, melding the hidden matters of fact that Poitras documents with the optimism that Americans openly prefer in their public entertainments. As will become apparent in the coming pages, the government contractor and the sports agent have much in common, despite Snowden's programmatically un-theatrical demeanor. Both men are whistle-blowers and entrepreneurs: as embodied in their stories, they point a way forward that combines where American society has been with where we need to go.

Fewer Clients. No Money

Jerry Maguire is several different stories. It is perhaps most obviously a romantic comedy, the story of an alpha male who goes off the rails and finds his way back, thanks to the love of a good woman and her equally endearing son. It is also a buddy film, the story of two men with very different personalities and ambitions who discover and recognize their respective strengths and weaknesses through their friendship. It is also a film about start-ups and entrepreneurship, returning us to *War Stories*' opening invocation of Calvin Coolidge: "After all, the chief business of the American people is business." It is finally, and perhaps most ambitiously,

a film about America and what it meant to be an American in the late 20th century. In that respect, it speaks directly to the agenda Snowden, Greenwald, and Poitras put before us in *Citizenfour*.

Crowe has written, directed, produced, or acted in more than a dozen movies including the Academy Award-winning *Almost Famous* (2000). *Jerry Maguire* was nominated for five Oscars in 1996 and won Best Supporting Actor for Cuba Gooding Jr.'s enactment of Rod Tidwell, a pro football player with a chip on his shoulder. The film was also a box office hit, earning close to $275 million worldwide against an estimated investment of $50 million. While the 2015 Oscars were criticized for a perceived gulf between critical and popular taste in the choice of "small" films like *Birdman* over box-office hits like *American Sniper*, in 1996 critics and the general public seem to have agreed on the artistic and entertainment value of *Jerry Maguire*.

Crowe sets the agenda for the film right at the start. The opening shot of planet Earth comes with a voice-over by Tom Cruise, who plays the lead character:

> So this is the world and there are almost six billion people on it. When I was a kid, there were three. It's hard to keep up. (The focus shifts.) There, that's better. That's America. See, America still sets the tone for the world.[10]

Maguire's America is unambiguously Coolidge's America, and the film explores, and occasionally eviscerates, American business as driven to extremes in the sports industry. Early on, Cruise's Jerry suffers what appears to be a breakdown, despite—or perhaps because of—his success as a sports agent. The opening minutes of the film make clear that he sees and cherishes the power of what he does, the way he does it. But those initial scenes also reveal his growing moral or ethical qualms about aspects of his work, specifically the costs it imposes on his clients, the athletes he so admires.

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[10] *Jerry Maguire*.

In the middle of the night at a company retreat, he writes what he refers to for the rest of the film as a "mission statement," the key line of which is "Fewer clients. Less money." He copies and distributes the document to all of his colleagues, and much to his dismay finds it being taken as a "memo"—a change that suggests, in business-speak, a practical call to action rather than a salute to the putative higher ideals of the industry. In this perceptual dissonance between author and audience, Jerry appears to have recommended voluntarily curbing the company's revenues and finds himself out of work a week later, fired by his own protégé. Though the term does not surface, this is Jerry's "whistle-blower" moment; his target is the sports industry and the firm responds to his whistle-blowing as most entities do—by ostracizing him.

That definition of Jerry's behavior goes a long way toward explaining why, despite the popular success of the film, Cruise's moment of self-recognition, moral challenge, and expressed idealism seems never to have generated a flood of Jerry-wannabes. Compare it in that respect to the impact that Michael Douglas had a decade earlier with his Academy Award-winning turn as Gordon Gekko in *Wall Street*. The magic—and to some extent the harm—of Oliver Stone's film lies precisely in his success at creating a figure who captures both the best and the worst of late-20th-century business in America. Gekko has the charm, bravado, and hunger of many self-made American businessmen, and he clothes himself in that persona, simultaneously patriot and revolutionary:

> Greed, for lack of a better word, is good. … Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. … And greed—you mark my words—will not only save Teldar Paper, but that other malfunctioning corporation called the USA.[11]

This is Horatio Alger for the 20th century. Alger's 19th-century books for boys have been labeled rags-to-riches, the quintessential American success story, but a look at the best known, *Ragged Dick*, reveals a street urchin who yearns for 10 dollars a week and "respectability." By the late

[11] *Wall Street*, dir. Oliver Stone (20th Century Fox, 1987).

1980s, that relative self-restraint had yielded to a smooth operator's ambition for "liquidity," his own jet, and squash matches at the best private clubs in the city.

Gekko's most famous line captures that ambition, but the times and the film's audiences have altered and intensified the divergence from Alger's formula. Gekko is almost invariably quoted as saying, "Greed is good," an elision ("for lack of a better word" has vanished) that conceals his fundamental lack of linguistic, but also moral, imagination. Stone and his screenwriter seem not to have anticipated the popular rewrite of the line, though they were drawing on real-life figures for the personality they gave Gekko and for the language that he uses in the scene. With that change, arguably, Stone opened the door to Gekko-like behavior on Wall Street on a scale that even the Street itself may not fully have grasped at the time.

Yet Stone also deftly captures the excitement of the world of finance: the opportunity, the pace, the potential rewards, even the generational conflict—the drama of succession. Gekko is betrayed in the end by his protégé, Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen), in a face-off that is really a battle of father figures and is all about values. Who will win Bud's heart and mind: Gekko or Bud's father (Charlie Sheen's real-life father, Martin Sheen, playing a familiar American archetype, the straight-shooting, tough-talking, heart-of-gold blue-collar shop foreman)? In a satisfyingly ambiguous resolution, Bud uses Gekko's own tactics to embrace his family's values and his father's trust. Still, mentor and protégé both appear to be headed for jail, and the drama of it has stayed with us ever since.

Jerry Maguire has a father figure and mentor, too. The last words in Crowe's film go to Dicky Fox (a mere coincidence in the names?), played by Jared Jussim in a walk-on part.[12] Jussim's Fox appears to have operated at a much more modest level than Jerry: in dress, voice, and choice of office décor, he epitomizes the heartland, taking us back to an earlier, simpler era with half a dozen of what can only be described as business

[12] Jussim was then and at this writing still is deputy general counsel and executive vice-president of the Intellectual Property Department of Sony Pictures Entertainment.

homilies. Dicky Fox is a happy, successful Willie Loman, rewriting Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* for a recipe to the good life:

> Unless you love everybody, you can't sell anybody. … I love my wife, I love my life, and I wish you my kind of success.[13]

The magic of *Jerry Maguire* stems in part from this succession of generations and the construction of, and positive value placed on, family. Jerry's examples of how "America still sets the tone for the world" are all teenage star athletes; his vision is implicitly founded on the wealth of young talent that he and his colleagues at SMI manage. At the same time, it is the young fan asking for autographs that his client can't sign—wrong brand—and the son of a football player who has suffered serial concussions—"Shouldn't *somebody* get him to stop?"[14]—that ultimately brings him to a reckoning with himself.

In a matter of hours, it seems, Jerry the whistle-blower goes from Gen X success to another incarnation of the biblical Job, suffering all the indignities he might secretly have imagined he deserved when he wrote his mission statement. He loses his colleagues, his friends, his income, his clients, his fiancée, and his self-respect. At ground zero, he turns around and begins the journey back, relying on one client and one former support staff person to build a new business. He has gone from successful pitch artist to reluctant and struggling entrepreneur, and the experience will teach him the true role of business in America.

The Home Front

We noted earlier that one strand of his story is a romance and another a "bromance." It is important to add, given the unambiguous focus on business in *Jerry Maguire*, that even these potentially extracurricular commitments are, in Jerry's world, inextricably entwined with his business identity. Furthermore, in the context of our continuing consideration of

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[13] *Jerry Maguire*.
[14] *Jerry Maguire*.

war stories, each strand leads him (and us) to a battleground: at home, the battle of the sexes; on the football field, the battle of race.

When Jerry leaves his employer, SMI, he manages to persuade one staffer to accompany him. Dorothy Boyd is a single mother and widow with a need for security but a romantic yearning that has now, thanks to Jerry's mission statement, idealistically yet unrequitedly settled on him. She knows he has a fiancée and she knows she herself will always travel coach class, while he and his fellow agents always travel first class. As played by Renée Zellweger, for whom this film provided a breakout role, Dorothy is an all-American girl—fresh, unpretentious, unassuming. With Jerry's firing, though, the differences in status vanish and she hesitates only briefly before launching his seduction.

Dorothy is somewhat hindered in her project by a disapproving sister, Laurel (Bonny Hunt), who sees Jerry as "hanging onto the bottom rung"[15] and at best a weak prospect in her sister's career ambitions. At the same time, Dorothy's scheme advances in large part because of the immediate bond between Jerry and her young son, Ray (Jonathan Lipnicki, who nearly steals the show from the adult actors in the film). The combination of budding romantic interest and business start-up produces a series of miscues on Jerry's part, including a drunken bit of groping early on—"I feel like Clarence Thomas"[16]—and a vacillating commitment to gender equality. Is Dorothy his partner or his subordinate? His language—"our little project"[17]—suggests the former, but the plate of muffins he asks her to serve at a meeting suggests the latter, as her dismayed expression clearly telegraphs.

The tension is further exacerbated—and here we return to Crowe's focus on America and contemporary American culture—by the women's group that meets intermittently at Laurel and Dorothy's house. The tensions that Jerry and Dorothy live out as they navigate the narrows between romance and work grow to the scale of social issues in those sessions. In them, Jerry appears unambiguously as an interloper, as "the enemy"[18];

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[15] *Jerry Maguire*.
[16] *Jerry Maguire*.
[17] *Jerry Maguire*.
[18] *Jerry Maguire*.

the film derives a good bit of its comedy from the stereotypes captured in these moments. At the same time, they communicate a broad, albeit demographically specific—urban, educated, Boomer/Gen X—gender hostility. It may update the so-called battle between the sexes in that the tension has shifted to include the workplace and a shared entrepreneurial venture, but it is a battle all the same.

The story of Jerry and Dorothy is complemented by the story of Jerry and Rod Tidwell, his one remaining client after SMI fires him. Initially, it seems as though Rod has been assigned the role in the film to make Jerry recognize his own foolishness. Played with enormous energy and good humor by Cuba Gooding Jr., Rod intends to get every ounce of use out of a man who, as he puts it at one point midway through the film, is "hanging on by a very thin thread."[19] Here, the complementarity manifests itself as a productive balance between the two men. For Rod, Jerry is too focused on an ideal—"do what you love"—that Rod has chosen to jettison in the name of a hard-driving, well-compensated career; Rod also sees that Jerry's relationship with Dorothy falls far short of the family love that he himself possesses. Jerry, for his part, sees Rod as "a paycheck player"[20]: he has a loving family but an attitude on the field that keeps him from playing his best.

Just as Dorothy and Jerry find each other against the backdrop of the women's group, Rod and Jerry find the utility and final meaning of their relationship as player and agent against the backdrop of Rod's large and sometimes deeply loving, sometimes deeply antagonistic family. Led by Rod's wife Marcee (Regina King), they put a diverse but unified face on the people behind the athletes, even as they reveal the tensions that any family experiences. In the relationship between Rod and Jerry and in the business-driven expectation that Marcee brings to it, the question of race looms constantly, even when it is unspoken. In the context of Frederic Douglass' scorn for American bargain hunting, one can read Rod's challenge to "Show me the money!" as a demand for equal pay for equal work, if not historic reparation outright. Similarly, his response to Jerry's

[19] *Jerry Maguire*.
[20] *Jerry Maguire*.

insistence that he change his attitude reflects a long history of white disdain: "I do not dance. I am an athlete. I am not an entertainer."[21]

As with many aspects of *Jerry Maguire*, the point gets made at a more subtle level as well and speaks to the question of leadership and the distribution of power. Jerry is desperate to hang on to one of his clients, Frank Cushman, an up-and-coming football star. Frank's father, Matt, initially commits to Jerry—"my word is stronger than oak"[22]—only to reveal, at a pro draft event, that he changed his mind while Jerry was walking the conference floor with Rod, to whom Matt refers as "the black fellah."[23] Needless to say, the Cushman family are white, and in Matt's one-line explanation, a moment that might feel very local—the connection between one agent and one client—becomes a larger commentary on patterns of social behavior that have not changed, despite an apparent abundance of fellow feeling in pro sports. Marcee similarly highlights racial stereotypes, fretting that she went "to see this so-called black film the other day … 20 minutes of coming attractions—all black films, all violent."[24]

Just as the interactions of Jerry, Dorothy, Laurel, and the women's group comment on the battle over gender equity, the broader social significance of race emerges in the friendship among Rod, Marcee, and Jerry. In his new entrepreneurial persona, Jerry no longer wears a suit, but the relation of agent to client takes on an edge here that goes beyond sports to the balance of power in the country as a whole. Jerry may have had relations with his white clients that resemble the push and pull of representing Rod, but Rod and Marcee attack a more significant and longer-standing social bias. The fact that Jerry doesn't personally embody that bias—"I love the black man!"[25] he declares at one point, in a desperate attempt to keep Rod on his roster—doesn't change the fact of his skin color and the allegiances it implies.

Just as Jerry and Dorothy overcome a larger social conflict on a personal level, Jerry and Rod achieve a measure of justice and balance through Rod's

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[21] *Jerry Maguire*.
[22] *Jerry Maguire*.
[23] *Jerry Maguire*.
[24] *Jerry Maguire*.
[25] *Jerry Maguire*.

touchdown in the closing minutes of a key game and his recovery from what promises briefly to be a career-ending injury. Thanks in equal part to Jerry's coaching and his own and Marcee's determination, Rod transcends the identities of entertainer he doesn't want to be and the athlete he is to become a role model, not just for his family but also for an industry and a nation. It may seem a stretch to read one fictional career in this light, but Crowe staffed his cast with a dozen real-life sports celebrities playing themselves: Coaches, athletes, sportscasters, and owners appear in cameos that mark this fictional partnership between an agent and his partner as very much a reflection of the real world, and a fictional model for how it should work.

Crowe doesn't stop there. In the end, he takes the challenges of race and gender beyond sports to an implicit assessment of the place where American art and politics meet. While the game Rod wins for the Arizona Cardinals provides maximum last-minute drama in the film, it is preceded by a moment of equal, if less obviously public, importance. When Jerry and Dorothy return to her house from their first date, they are greeted by Chad, the "child technician"[26] who babysat Ray in their absence. With love-making on the horizon, Dorothy goes in to change, and Chad (played as a geek-on-the-edge by Todd Luiso) confronts Jerry on the porch as he leaves:

> Jerry: Chad, how are you?
> Chad: Treat her right.
> Jerry: Yeah.
> Chad: She's … she's great.
> Jerry: Yeah.
> Chad: And, ah, I know this might be a little bit awkward, but ah, I want you to use this.
> Jerry: Oh look—God, Chad, oh no no.
> Chad: No, this (holds out a CD jewel case) is Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Stockholm 1963. Two masters of freedom … the *only* American art form—*jazz*. And I put some Mingus on there, too. No barriers, no boundaries.[27]

[26] *Jerry Maguire*.
[27] *Jerry Maguire*.

For all Chad's manic musical evangelism, he sets the stage for a far more meaningful, and more complicated, lovers' engagement than the couple's hormones alone might dictate. Like the rest of *Jerry Maguire*, this moment presents a fusion of politics and personal experience as the sole viable approach to a better life. But a challenge remains—how to disseminate that intimate experience and the social change it denotes. Listening to Chad's jazz, the couple doesn't quite get where we now understand that they need to go:

Jerry: You know this is going to change everything.
Dorothy: Promise?
Jerry: (pauses, then in mock shock) What is this music!?[28]

In the laughter the moment generates for the two of them—a fleeting, joyful abandon in which Laurel, eavesdropping from the kitchen, shares—the "promise" is left pending.

Who Are We?

Like everything else in *Jerry Maguire*, Jerry's moment of subtle evasion in bed betokens a much larger issue. At its heart—and despite all the heart that goes into the bridging of gaps between sexes and races—Crowe unambiguously uses the film and his characters to confront the puzzle of human nature and what it might mean to resolve it. We return here to the replicants in *Blade Runner*, the challenge they face, and the change they require. Crafted to be "more human than human," they appear to suffer all of the burdens of humanity without the rights their identity might theoretically confer on them. Roy Batty and his group want not so much to be answered as re-engineered. Roy confronts Eldon Tyrell with that demand, only to find himself killing his creator "father" in frustration over the absence of a solution.

Jerry may want to change his business strategy—"Fewer clients. Less money"—but his every step throughout the film is dogged by his commitment to making the business work and a view of the world that always puts that goal front and center. Dorothy comes to the relationship

[28] *Jerry Maguire*.

with a very specific agenda, though she may not realize it as such in the euphoria of the first morning after: "I love him. … I love him for the—for the man he wants to be, and I love him for the man that he almost is."[29] The various forms of breakup they subsequently experience come down to the same set of constants in Jerry's response: "You want my soul or something? What if I'm not built that way? Great at friendship, bad at intimacy."[30] "Friendship" is code here for the skill he has in acquiring and managing his clients; it has less evidently positive effects when he needs to take on the commitments that give this film its depth.

Crowe uses a light touch to take us onto a broader social stage. Rod repeatedly challenges Jerry to level with Dorothy. He knows Jerry loves his work and Rod, too—as his client, but as a son of a single mother himself, Rod also knows that Jerry is at best fond—or in merely visceral need—of Dorothy, however close he has grown to Ray. Like an ancient Greek chorus commenting on the main actors' stress, one of the women in Laurel's women's group gives it a clinical turn: "The neural pathways are set, and that's why it's hard for people to change. That's why behavior doesn't change very often."[31] Before Dicky Fox's sanguine send-off in *Jerry Maguire*, we are treated to one last scene of the newly reconstituted nuclear family—Jerry, Dorothy, and Ray—in what feels like a fragile truce between the adults and the possibility of massive long-term conflict as Ray demonstrates unusual athletic ability. The temptation to monetize an opportunity will not leave Jerry, even as Dorothy apparently declares their budding family life off limits for business purposes.

We talked in the chapter on *Hotel Rwanda* about the degree to which Paul Rusesabagina delivered on his professional training in the hospitality industry when he chose to save the lives of 1,268 of his Tutsi and moderate Hutu countrymen. With *Jerry Maguire* we confront the same question of personality or character as it manifests itself in society and how to find our way back to the inclusive diversity that Crowe's film invites us to practice. Is Jerry effectively hardwired to maintain the professional relationships at which he excels, even as that coding limits the reach of his more generous

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[29] *Jerry Maguire*.
[30] *Jerry Maguire*.
[31] *Jerry Maguire*.

impulses? And what to make, throughout the film, of his impulse to reach out? "I had so much to say, and no one to listen"[32]: he registers that apparent ambivalence consciously as he writes his "mission statement," a document that he compares to J.D. Salinger's hymn to adolescent disaffection and longing, *The Catcher in the Rye*.

With the best of intentions, Crowe shows us a new unity in the making but not yet achieved. We see it in Rod's touchdown and Ray swinging between Dorothy and Jerry after a visit to the zoo, but this is unfinished business. The realization of the consensus Crowe envisions depends, in the end, on the narrative we can collectively craft for America, and that, in turn, depends on the potential we see in our national archetypes for alteration or improvement. If this sounds like social engineering, it is; but it is engineering in the name of one of our dominant national values. Isaiah Berlin locates the possibility of such a consensus in pluralism and the means of reaching it in our individual and collective capacity for change in his essay "Two Concepts of Liberty":

> Pluralism … is more humane because it does not (as the system builders do) deprive men, in the name of some remote, or incoherent, ideal, of much they have found to be indispensable to their life as unpredictably self-transforming human beings. In the end, men choose between ultimate values; they choose as they do, because their life and thought are determined by fundamental moral categories and concepts that are, at any rate over large stretches of time and space, a part of their being and thought and sense of their own identity; part of what makes them human.[33]

On the horizon of this project lies what Rod Tidwell calls the "kwan"—"love, respect, community, and the dollars, too"[34]—but it

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[32] *Jerry Maguire.*

[33] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," (1958), in Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 31. https://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/wiso_vwl/johannes/Ankuendigungen/Berlin_twoconceptsofliberty.pdf, accessed March 10, 2015.

[34] *Jerry Maguire.*

depends on the accuracy of Berlin's assessment of us as "unpredictably self-transforming human beings." The rags-to-riches legend America has enshrined points to the possibility of such a definition of who we are. Yet the parties to the project in *Jerry Maguire* seem less sure that such transformations are possible. If Jerry believes in the rags-to-riches story (having himself started further up the socioeconomic ladder), then he delivers on it, finally and imperfectly, by adhering to a single playbook. He will overcome, through cunning, perseverance, and hard work, whatever obstacle the competition throws in his path. In the end, consequently, he may have to leave the caring to others because that distribution of labor offers maximum efficiency.

So we continue the wars on the home front, with the hope for some that uttering "the things we think and do not say—the future of our business"[35] will save Gordon Gekko's "malfunctioning corporation called the USA."[36] The trick lies in recognizing that the means may seriously constrain the end. Edward Snowden, Glenn Greenwald, and Laura Poitras say as much in *Citizenfour*. Like Cameron Crowe, they recognize that the narrative we articulate can significantly shape the reality it supposedly depicts. In one of the Hong Kong interviews for *The Guardian*, Snowden illustrates the potential for a complete sabotage of the pluralism project by an all-intrusive, efficiency-driven, totalizing government authority:

> You don't have to have done anything wrong. You simply have to eventually fall under suspicion from somebody, even by a wrong call, and then they can use the system to go back in time and scrutinize every decision you've ever made, every friend you've ever discussed something with, and attack you on that basis, to sort of derive suspicion from an innocent life and paint anyone in the context of a wrong-doer.[37]

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[35] *Jerry Maguire*.

[36] *Wall Street*.

[37] Glenn Greenwald, "The NSA Files: Glenn Greenwald on Security and Liberty," *The Guardian*, June 9, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2013/jun/09/nsa-whistleblower-edward-snowden-interview-video, accessed March 10, 2015.

Snowden wants to do it differently, and in that goal he realizes his own entrepreneurial impulse. As presented in *Citizenfour*, he has significantly fewer of the people skills that Jerry brings to the party, but he too is looking for a more true relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled. He too wants to offer the possibility for a different way of doing the business of America and seeks a market for the ideas that drive his revelations.

Given the magnitude of their differences in sensibility, we may need to allow *Citizenfour* and *Jerry Maguire* to co-exist unreconciled as two faces of the same American coin; authority and individual initiative, yet another complementary relationship, but valuable for the combination. Perhaps Snowden and Maguire also "complete" each other in the national spirit. Recognizing the limits we put on ourselves constitutes a substantial step toward the freedom that we have never stopped wanting and that we seem—at least as captured in Cameron Crowe's film—to have the collective means of reaching if we don't balk at fulfilling our promise.

CHAPTER 9

State of Grace

*Mrs. S*** stated in her Affidavit that five persons and their children were murdered un [sic] November/December 1941. According to Section 656 of the Latvian Civil Court, if two or more persons are dying of an un-natural death and it is not known who died first, then it is to be presumed that all died at one and the same time, but in case of ascendants and descendants then it is to be presumed that the descendants if minors, died before the ascendants, but if they are of age, then it is to be presumed that they died after the ascendants. It is well known that the Nazi system of murder was to kill who [sic] whole families at one and the same time. Therefore, it is to be presumed that the late F.J. and the late Lea Hanukajer [sic] and her son Gidal died at one and the same time, or even before as the Nazis used to kill the children first in the presence of their parents in order to cause them more pain. If you like we could prepare the necessary Affidavits.*[1]

Leaving Home

In June 1940, my father's family in Latvia sent him off to America for a college education. He was scheduled to enroll at New York University; the family had placed funds with a trustee in London to pay for his schooling. Because of the war, he went through the Soviet Union, Romania, Yugoslavia, and on to Italy, with plans to sail for the United States from Genoa. He arrived in Trieste four hours after Italy declared war on France and England; traveled to Genoa, where his ship had not docked; and was stranded there for much of the summer, trying to book a new passage. In the end, he transited through Franco's Spain, armed with

[1] Document dated 1964, Hafrey family papers, in author's possession. Nonfamily names altered.

a Latvian health certificate that he had "translated" into a confirmation of his Aryan birth and baptism, and sailed from Lisbon for America.

By the time my father's ship docked in New York, his visitor's visa had lapsed. His passport was found wanting: it belonged to a country under new management, since the Soviets had occupied Latvia just weeks after he left; and though the United States didn't recognize the legality of the Soviet occupation and subsequent annexation, he now faced deportation. Over the next four months, he appealed that decision four times. Like the Tom Hanks character in the film *The Terminal* (or, for that matter, Edward Snowden on his initial arrival at Moscow's Domodedovo International Airport, on his way from Hong Kong to Cuba), he stalled in transit and was interned on Ellis Island.

To judge from photos of the time, he was a dapper young man. He also seems to have had a well-developed sense of irony: Months into his stint on the island, he commented in a letter to a local newspaper that he had spent that time looking at the backside of the Statue of Liberty. He also claims to have become, during his incarceration, the ping-pong king of Ellis Island, a skill he used to good effect against Soviet diplomats in Vienna, Austria, 25 years later, when he was posted to the U.S. embassy there. The Russians referred to him sardonically as "the American from Dnepropetrovsk," the Ukrainian city where he was born; it was their way of claiming him, even a quarter of a century after his emigration, and alerting him that his KGB[2] dossier was well-filled.

After four months on Ellis Island, he was freed, thanks to appeals from a branch of his family in western Pennsylvania, with the help of their congressman. The latter apparently suggested to the immigration and naturalization authorities that it would be better not to return the refugee to the protection of a country whose claim on Latvia the United States formally disputed. My father's troubles were not yet over, though: his London funds had either evaporated or been sequestered, he was insufficiently documented to enroll at NYU, and the most welcoming of his relatives were also the most impoverished. In desperation, he lived hand to mouth sweeping floors in a silverware factory, under the assumed

[2] Committee for State Security, the main security agency in the USSR.

name of "Charlie Potter." He stayed in Brooklyn for a time, but some of the mail to him from that period also went to an address in the Bronx.

During that period, the letters he received and kept show that he maintained a steady correspondence with family and friends at home. His mother—the Lea Hanukajef of the epigraph to this chapter—covers dozens of onion-skin sheets in a fine hand, lines running from edge to edge and top to bottom of each page, as though she had to use every inch of the paper she had available. His younger brother, Gidal, or "Gigi," also writes regularly, much more legibly but much less frequently than his mother, complaining at one point that he rarely gets direct letters back from his brother; he even sends him a copy of his high school report card. Aunts, drinking comrades, and a middle-school girlfriend also write to him. Their letters reveal little about what he may be saying to them, but they are generally upbeat. One rejoices at the Soviet occupation of Latvia, arguing that the Soviets' ideological commitment to a collective humanity will end the persecution that the Jewish community has long faced at the hands of their anti-Semitic Gentile countrymen.

Why We Fight

About eight months into my father's sojourn on the American mainland, the correspondence abruptly ceases: a letter he has sent to his mother in June 1941 comes back stamped *Postverkehr eingestellt*—"Postal Service Discontinued." After a year's uneasy alliance, the Germans have turned on the Soviets and invaded the Baltic countries and Russia itself. At that point, my father begins writing letters home to his mother that he does not send. The letters begin in July 1941 and break off in midsentence in June 1942. They are by turns very adolescent and very adult—the work of a young man who is finally on his own but too much on his own, deeply concerned about those he has left behind but elated that he is finally off to college. Cousins with the Minneapolis Symphony have brought him to the University of Minnesota on a refugee scholarship and secured him a place in the only Jewish fraternity on campus. He tests out of his first five undergraduate quarters, majors in journalism, holds philosophical discussions deep into the night with friends, and discovers co-eds.

The letters also document the beginning of my father's life-long fascination with America, particularly with the promise and power of the country. He died in the late 1990s, in my parents' bedroom at home outside Washington, DC, with my mother to watch over him. On the walls and the bureau and his desk, they had the family pictures one finds in many parents' bedrooms. Less typically, they also displayed two very large photos from their Foreign Service days. One, a shot taken from the Apollo 12 command module, captures the lunar module *Intrepid* as it descends to the bronze surface of the moon. It is autographed by the three astronauts on that mission—Charles "Pete" Conrad Jr., Richard F. Gordon Jr., and Alan L. Bean—whom my father met when he provided press liaison for them in Bucharest, Romania, during a global goodwill tour. The second is a photograph of the *USS America*, an aircraft carrier that my father visited in 1977 while liaising for a group of foreign journalists covering the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea; that photo is signed too, by the ship's captain.

My mother reports that during the weeks before my father died, he was often delirious and that in his delirium, he spoke all of the languages he had grown up with or had acquired as an adult: German, Russian, English, French, Romanian. There were repeated English-language references to stairs he was trying to climb and a door at the top, an image that suggests death did not come easily to him. But he also repeatedly uttered the German phrase "Küss die Hand, gnädige Frau," the courtly greeting he would have learned and used often in his assimilated Jewish, upper-middle-class, Baltic European family. Was he honoring my mother, who tended him to the last, or had he traveled further back in time, to the world he had unwittingly left behind forever when he journeyed to America? That is how I still think of him today: a man who loved his past, though he had lost the people who embodied it, but also embraced his present, in the form of a country whose ingenuity and might had enabled his survival.

I have heard three versions of what happened to his mother and brother, my grandmother and uncle, for both of whom I am a namesake. My mother says that he learned in 1948 that his mother had died. In that year, another émigré from Latvia to the United States informed friends that when the Germans occupied Latvia, my father's mother began working

as a cleaning woman at a hospital in their home town, Libau (Liepāja), under an assumed name. Someone informed on her, and when she saw the black-coated Gestapo entering the hospital courtyard to collect her, she swallowed a cyanide capsule. This report does contradict the second version of my grandmother's passing, contained in the 1964 letter that quotes Mrs. S***'s affidavit. The postscript to that letter is also based on hearsay, of course. As my father told it—or at least as I remember him telling it once—he never learned his younger brother's fate and speculated that he had died in a Russian brigade fighting the Nazis. In this version, Gigi would somehow have been parted from their mother and met a separate end.

As for the third version, it could be taken to confirm either of the first two or offer yet another. In an undated typescript that my father must have produced in the mid-1990s—he refers to "Seventy-two-year-old ex-President Bush"—he notes, "Soon after the war I received a letter from Zelma, our long-time Latvian maid and family friend, telling me about the end of my mother, brother and step-father." That's it: no detail, no explanation, no trace of Zelma's letter. Normally so willing to chat in print about how he became who he was, my father says no more here and to my recollection said no more in life. He rarely spoke about his father, either, from whom his mother divorced when my father was seven years old, or his stepfather, "the Doctor," whom she married in 1937. The only living connection to a nuclear family ran through a stepbrother, who "disappeared from Libau in the mid-1930s" and resurfaced for my father at an Independence Day parade in Jerusalem in 1961, where family brought them together.

It is hard to imagine a better explanation for why we fight. Stories like my father's and mother's earned World War II the label of "the good war," which goes a long way toward explaining its persistence in our national memory. By the same token, the Vietnam War seems fated to provoke the opposite reaction, a perpetual grim reminder of how armed intervention can go very much awry. The jury is still out on Iraq and Afghanistan, it seems, especially since the wars we thought we were fighting there have turned into different wars in which we continue to fight with no visible end. Countenancing a still-open checkbook in people and money for these particular conflicts makes it all the more urgent that we gain clarity about

why we fight, and how. The Rwandan genocide, like the Holocaust of World War II that preceded it and the Armenian genocide that preceded both, confronts us with what Samantha Power rightly calls "a problem from hell." There are some things for which we must intervene, and as Roméo Dallaire argues, in so doing we must recognize human life as an absolute, the foundation of a global commitment to human rights and the political order that makes their realization possible.

War, Leadership, and Social Control

Early in *War Stories*, I quoted Alexis de Tocqueville's line, "In democratic countries the science of association is the mother science; the progress of all the others depends on the progress of that one."[3] In today's America, we continue to confirm our fascination with the "mother science." Here, perhaps, more than anywhere else on earth, management gurus, political scientists, legislators, military officers, and ordinary citizens craft repeatable organizational solutions to unique challenges. They mine statistics to achieve broad-gauge results because we are many—300 million domestically, six billion globally and counting—and need a template for making decisions that are only slightly less numerous. Those numbers capture a vision of America as a refuge and a promise, but they also register the difficulty of keeping the individual always in sight, even as each of us commits to the "free institutions" and "public associations" that de Tocqueville believed kept Americans from the paired threats of despotism and selfishness. He also noted the degree to which Americans of his time censored themselves, thus impoverishing, he thought, our public discourse.[4] It is not clear to many commentators on the current scene that things have changed.

As a people, we seem aware of the need to coordinate our personal goals, organizational realities, and systemic frameworks, but we also recognize that doing so is a monumental task. That is why, today as always, we are a restless people, constantly connecting and disconnecting and reconnecting, looking for a fresh start to an irresolvable challenge: how

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[3] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (1835; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 492.
[4] De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 244.

to coordinate the lives of many self-consciously disparate individuals into something like a working whole. That is also why we seem at this point in our national history to be obsessed with the question of leadership, or more precisely, the absence of it. I know, because I make a living teaching and writing about leadership and the ethics and communication skills relevant to leaders. My home base, the MIT Sloan School of Management, has in recent years posited leadership as the natural goal of our educational endeavor. Our peer business and management schools have adopted much the same view of what they do.

Theories of leadership abound, offering models to guide civil society communities and organizations—de Tocqueville's uniquely American associations—as well as major institutions in both the public and the private sector. We consider the virtues of servant leadership, leaderless leadership, transactional versus transformational leadership, Theory X, Y, and U leadership; we compare and contrast, looking for the men, women, and organizational structures that will move us toward our goals. The fact that the business education community has assumed the role of high-profile mentor to those in search of leadership skills does not indicate diminished interest in the subject in other areas of society. Still, it does reflect—again with Calvin Coolidge's business boosterism as background—the powerful influence that American theories of management continue to exert in our leadership at home and abroad. The Japanese have come and gone and the Chinese have not yet fully arrived, but American practice remains.

At the same time, as this book has abundantly documented, we are waging war, at this point the longest in our national history. Since the turn of the century, the United States has marshaled men, women, and the equipment to support them in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, thus ensuring that we bear persistent witness to a command-and-control model and the hierarchy to go with it as a high-profile example of how to lead. In this model, at a minimum, someone gives the orders on the assumption that everyone will follow them. On the civilian side, the corporate sphere similarly shuns democratic organizational structures, even in the comparatively flat organizational world of new media and the sharing economy. The two sectors differ, at least theoretically, in that the military commits to order in the name of saving lives, while the business community opts for order in the name of economic efficiency, placing a value on savings

in time and material resources. The net effect, however, is the same in both: microcosmic social control at a level de Tocqueville identified almost 200 years ago but that we call on our ideology of defense, in the case of the military, and free-market individualism, in the case of business, to ignore.

In the classroom I have emphasized that link between certain management models and military command structures. For the past several years at MIT Sloan, I have supervised a short course titled "Leadership Lessons Learned from the Military"; I have seen similar titles in special issues of the *Harvard Business Review* and other business publications and see the same fascination in the unending stream of books, movies, and video games that enshrine armed conflict and the organizations that support it. The Sloan course is assembled and taught by veterans of the various armed services, many of whom have served in the Middle East conflicts and have much more command experience than many of their classmates. They wear their wisdom well, but I worry more and more about the degree to which our reliance on military models, and the corporate applications that only partially conceal the social control they intend, defies the democratic spirit to which we pledge ourselves as a nation.

I should stress that I agreed to supervise the military leadership course because I have learned to respect deeply the men and women who serve in the military and the codes they consciously apply as they do so. The service academies in particular produce cohorts of thoughtful, well-educated men and women who will tell you that they employ all of the leadership methods I've enumerated above. They insist, too, that military command and control has never been anything more than a stereotype. In the business context where I meet these young men and women, I remember almost daily that it was Dwight Eisenhower, mentioned earlier as supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe toward the close of World War II, then president of Columbia University, and ultimately 34th president of the United States, who warned us of the threat to democracy that he foresaw in a rising "military-industrial complex."[5]

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[5] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Farewell Address to the Nation," January 17, 1961, at http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/indust.html, accessed August 30, 2015.

If the United States were not the leading arms dealer in the world today, if it did not spend more on defense than—according to a recent assessment—the next seven top-spending countries put together,[6] we might make less of the managerial wisdom of commanding officers or the warrior qualities that apparently win on Wall Street, but we do both with vigor. The moment that provided the immediate impetus to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the terrorist attacks on 9/11, makes exactly the same connection, from the terrorists' point of view, between America's commercial and its military interests. Under the auspices of truth in advertising, and setting aside the contractor culture that has characterized the first two large-scale military undertakings of America's new millennium, we owe it to ourselves to ask which comes first: the war or the leadership and managerial models—in effect the social values—that require the war for their fulfillment? Do we so desperately seek leaders because we have undertaken national engagements that many of us would not individually make? In the spirit identified in our discussion above of *Homeland* and many of the other films and books in *War Stories*, what story might we tell to free ourselves to do better by our values?

Leading for Virtue, Beyond War

The last question, about the story of values, is indeed a leadership question—the values that drive a leader and his or her actions. For me, it comes down to how best to teach the leadership skills we need in a conflict-prone world of terrorists and drone strikes, democracy movements and hegemonic corporate actors. One solution to the prospect of so much disagreement lies with the choice to trust that each of us knows what he or she means when we talk about values. As I write this, such an approach to ethics education appears to have taken not just the education industry but also private industry and increasingly the public and civil sectors by storm. In *Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know*

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[6] Peter G. Peterson Foundation, "The U.S. Spends More on Defense Than the Next Seven Countries Combined," http://pgpf.org/Chart-Archive/0053_defense-comparison, accessed August 30, 2015.

What's Right (2010),[7] business scholar Mary Gentile argues that we will do better with ethics education if we assume that participants in such discussions know what they value and why and then help them develop scripts to defend those values in the workplace. Gentile, who is now at Babson College and is a longtime veteran of the Harvard Business School, has developed a substantial body of exercises and short cases designed to make that goal possible.

The practicality of the approach codified in *Giving Voice to Values* goes far to explain its popularity. In this scheme, ethics no longer depends on preaching or complex metaphysical reflection for its application. Instead, we can think of ethics as the exercise of a muscle, our ethical muscle, and with that analogy comes the notion that we must practice and that practice will make, if not perfect, then certainly proficient ethical action. The values to which we give voice in Gentile's approach lie very close to the surface, so the philosophy is there, if somewhat masked by the focus on practice and the informal language in which she couches the cases, notes, and exercises that make up the series. She cites cross-cultural research by ethicist Rushworth Kidder and psychologist Martin Seligman in support of a small set of common values: Kidder advocates honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion, while Seligman speaks of wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Wharton faculty member Thomas Donaldson and his late colleague, Thomas Dunfee, write of "hypernorms" to designate the commonality in such values.[8]

The notion of practice laid over an already articulated code can be traced as far back as the Chinese philosophers Confucius and his philosophical descendant Mencius. For Confucius, the superior man or gentleman (*junzi*) seeks always to perfect himself, indeed has a responsibility to do so: That is one of the characteristics that differentiates the gentleman from the common man. Mencius follows with the belief that man is by nature good and that he has in him the four "sprouts"

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[7] Mary Gentile, *Giving Voice to Values: How to Speak Your Mind When You Know What's Right* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

[8] Gentile, *Giving Voice to Values*, 30.

of humanity, righteousness, decorum, and wisdom (*ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*). Without practice, however, those virtues may atrophy.

At first glance, Gentile breaks with this belief in both its Chinese and its Western forms (think of such philosophers as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Adam Smith of *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*), in that she makes no claims about human nature. And yet the assumption that we might already have decided what we value implies that we both have the values and are capable of reflecting on and leading through them. Moreover, the language of Gentile's recommendations points in the direction we have already traveled in *War Stories*. It seems hardly an accident that Gentile, a onetime scholar of film and literature (and the editor of the series in which *War Stories* appears), should advocate so strongly for "scripting" our adherence to what we value. *Giving Voice to Values* argues for a bundle of communications practices that draws on a theory that advocates negotiation, persuasion, and rhetoric. These are predicated on values such as respect, fairness, reciprocity, and harmony, all of which they express through the technical solution that Gentile calls "scripting." We might equally say "good stories"—narratives that show how such ethical drivers express themselves in daily life and in so doing invite us to apply them in our own name.

Gentile is not alone in positing a set of core values as the basis for principled behavior. Business scholar Patricia Werhane argues that we must collectively work from what she and others in various fields call "moral imagination," a basic set of standards that depend first on a business actor's self-awareness and attention to others' needs and aims. Werhane's common ground includes a prohibition on the infliction of harm, a commitment to honor contracts and respect persons, and a belief in the positive value of fairness and good character.[9] Psychologist Steven Pinker takes this identification of universal moral inclinations a step further, citing research in evolutionary biology and psychology that suggests we are hardwired for moral responses and obey a "universal moral grammar" rather like linguist Noam Chomsky's premise of a universal grammar of

[9] Patricia Werhane, "A Note on Moral Imagination" 1997, Darden Business Publishing, UVA-E-0114.

languages.[10] The latter is anchored in an assertion of man's unique knack for speech, which takes us back to ancient Greece and the philosopher Aristotle's *Politics*:

> Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, … the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and the inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust.[11]

Across millennia, then, we link language, morality, and human nature, even as our methods of inquiry and proof have changed. In speaking of a "moral instinct," Pinker invokes work by various philosophers and neuroscientists but perhaps most notably that of psychologists Joshua Greene and Jonathan Cohen. Greene took fMRI images of the human brain as experimental subjects confronted the so-called trolley problem developed by philosophers Philippa Foot, Judith Jarvis Thomson, and others since the 1970s.[12] Greene's images show that certain areas of the brain routinely light up when confronted with ethical challenges. On that basis, he posits physiological tensions between what we traditionally call our emotions and our reason. Web-based surveys by other scholars show that our responses to the trolley problem are constant across nationality, age, ethnicity, and gender.

And yet we wish to believe that our leaders are unique. If they have a moral compass, so the reasoning goes, it is uniquely theirs, or they would not be leaders. The absence of such a compass underlies the weakness of *Homeland*'s Nicholas Brody as a leader and can be seen as the proximate cause of his death at the end of a construction crane arm in

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[10] Steven Pinker, "The Moral Instinct," *NYT Magazine*, January 13, 2008.

[11] Aristotle, *Politics* (350 BCE), trans. Benjamin Jowett, Book 1, Part 2, http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.1.one.html, accessed March 24, 2015.

[12] Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem," *The Yale Law Journal* 94, no. 6 (May 1985), 1395–1415.

the public square in Tehran; his apparent flexibility, turning and turning again according to who controls him, leaves him confused about his own moral true North. On the plus side of such flexibility, of course, Paul Rusesabagina argues that anyone can do the right thing. That is the underlying principle of the title of his autobiography: He is an "ordinary man," and ordinary men can do the heroic thing when times demand it of them. The uniqueness of a particular leader may simply stem from his or her ability to find a way back to that quality that inheres, sometimes dormant, in every human being. Rusesabagina wants us to believe that.

At its core, the uniqueness argument rests on the perennially resurgent hypothesis that people are either born leaders or never become leaders at all. Here too, modern neuroscience has something to contribute. In *Exuberance: The Passion for Life* (2004), another of Kay Redfield Jamison's remarkably readable books, she explicates the physiological-psychological inclination that has given us some of the great figures of American history, such as Teddy Roosevelt, John Muir, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, P.T. Barnum, Richard Feynman, James Watson of *The Double Helix*. All appear here, along with the whirling dervish of a beagle, Snoopy, from Charles Schulz's long-running comic strip, *Peanuts*.[13] When tested—and Jamison makes clear that exuberance often is tested—these figures stick with their passions and lead by the strength of their conviction. The best leaders in time of crisis are the exuberant leaders (including those in the armed services—Jamison profiles George Patton and Winston Churchill, among others), the restless ones who will not, cannot conform.

Jamison also lends support here to a long-standing American self-portrait, one that the historian Frederick Jackson Turner conceptualized in his seminal essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893). For Turner, the constant push westward had generated a disregard for authority, a high valuation of small, local governance, a focus on commerce and indifference to high culture that kept, and keeps, Americans always pushing for the next good thing. He wondered, as the 19th century drew to a close and the country extended from coast to coast, what we would do to preserve our unique commitment to new

[13] Kay Redfield Jamison, *Exuberance: The Passion for Life* (New York: Knopf, 2004).

horizons and practical engagement against all odds.[14] Other scholars have since called Turner's thesis into question but the myth persists, in part motivated by Hollywood's deft mining of the legend of the Far and Wild West. In the Middle East, Carrie Mathison captures that leaderly quality for all of us, in spite—or perhaps because—of her focused commitment to our national security.

But if this is true, why bother even to try to teach leadership?

Leading By Virtue—War and Peace

In *War Stories*, I have argued that we can lead by virtue if we find and tell the right stories, the good stories, the stories to which people will listen or that they will tell and retell. To prove the point, we have taken a walk through nine chapters that play war against war, war against peace, each set of sources—as will, I hope, be evident in retrospect—showing that we need to balance the military with the civilian, the aspiration to discipline, self-discipline, and order with our equally great desire for individual and collective reflection, creativity, and change (there is much of Turner's American frontier here). If we wish to lead, we need to imagine when and how we unite these impulses: that is where story and storytelling comes to our aid, not only representing our circumstances but in so doing creating and re-creating them.

To recapitulate, we have extrapolated approaches to leadership from our sources, working through the progression of fighting, competing, imagining, and leading:

1. A Conflictual Vision: according to von Clausewitz, both war and "State policy" express the social nature of commerce and competition. Do Americans simply have a genius for struggle? How do the stories we tell about ourselves amplify or mitigate that impulse?
2. *The Assault* and *Saving Private Ryan*: How do we tell the story of the good war so that we understand why it was good?

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[14] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1920), Ch. 1.

3. 9/11 and *Homeland*: Are enemies really "others" or simply other versions of ourselves?
4. *The Hurt Locker* and *Blade Runner*: What does it mean to be human and how do we honor that identity?
5. *American Sniper* and *Three Kings*: When conflict occurs, how do we make it meaningful?
6. *Hotel Rwanda*, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, and *Consilience*: How do we align individual, organizational, and systemic responsibilities in the face of competition for resources and behavioral patterns that guarantee those resources to some groups and not others?
7. *War*, *Restrepo*, and *Riding Giants*: Why does it take outliers to imagine and then structure the forces that civilize us?
8. *Citizenfour* and *Jerry Maguire*: Can we reconcile social control and individual ambition and in so doing produce successful social enterprise?
9. Frontier Havens: What stories do we tell to ensure that we never lose sight of the horizon, even as we cherish the community it invites us to leave behind?

I could have chosen other sources, but each of the films discussed here has made a mark on popular consciousness, both mirroring and shaping it, because each registers a heightened reality: that is where the fiction, the make-believe, the entertainment of the story experience comes in. In both the private and the public registers, the storytelling process foregrounds the importance for us of surviving and recognizing that survival is not just about the material necessities of life: the story we tell refines and redefines "necessity," as Major Gates insists and Amir Abdullah makes inescapably and practically evident to him.

War Stories trades on the recognition that when we claim that our crises or concerns are unique by saying, "it's about me, not about you or anyone else," the story, film, musical piece, painting, or sculpture responds, "This unique story is about someone and it might be you. Try it on." In saying that, the art object asks us to recognize the communal impact of our choices, thus making even the smallest of gestures a commitment to truth. As we "try on" these gestures, we discover the implicit norms that unite us, thereby providing the bedrock for leadership that is individually

driven, but collectively conscious. As we try them on, too, they shade into the reality of our daily lives, ultimately conditioning our every instinct and ambition.

What are these norms or values? In *The Executive's Compass: Business and the Good Society*, the ethicist and leadership scholar James O'Toole posits that core American values such as liberty and equality, community and efficiency mark the terms by which we conceive and organize our individual lives and our communities, yet they are in tension with one another and generate, he says, what the historian and political scientist James MacGregor Burns calls "the deadlock of democracy."[15] The stories discussed here apply a set of artistic or aesthetic and imaginative and moral skills to the tensions among these values, and thus bring them jointly to life. My argument is that we, as readers, tellers, and citizens in a democracy must do the same if we wish to lead ourselves and others and that we actually do so in our daily lives, though we usually don't take or make the time to grasp and formalize our own practice. We must weigh the sense of duty that comes with military service against the foundation on which it is built of obedience under stress and the lack of a larger sense of responsibility that that obedience invites. We must weigh the freedom in our business endeavors to enrich ourselves against the loss of collective benefit. And we must recognize that as citizens, we have a stake in both enterprises and must constantly develop anew the rationale for them.

What We Might Become …

Where might such a project take us? The war stories that recognize what it might mean not to assume or default to war emphasize humanity and human empowerment through the organizations we build to meet our basic needs. Even in the name of pure entertainment, the path has been blazed and leads straight into the future. I have commented intermittently in the preceding pages on the links between the video-game industry and the world of war and the popularity of first-person shooters as an example

[15] James O'Toole, *The Executive's Compass: Business and the Good Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9.

of the interpenetration of the two ideologies. And yet even here we find room for alternatives that lead to the good story. The writer and journalist Tom Bissell comments in his book about video games *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter* (2010):

> Once a game comes along that figures out a way around the technical challenges of allowing a large number of ludonarrative decisions to have framed-narrative-altering consequences … an altogether new form of storytelling might be born: stories that, with your help, create themselves. There is, of course, another word for stories that, with your help, create themselves. That word is *life*.[16]

We don't conventionally look to video games, Bissell argues, for a meaningful narrative, but increasingly the industry itself feels bound to take up the challenge of providing one. Bissell sets the "ludonarrative," those moments in the game where players have the opportunity to improvise their own story against the framed narrative—the game's ineluctable, designer-crafted specificity. The gaming industry may not yet have sorted out the means to blend the two, and Bissell suggests that designers face a dilemma: the urge to entertain and be entertained inhibits a more evolved framework even as the technology limits the designers' reach. Be that as it may, the relation for which I have argued in this book—unique, real-life stories that motivate and shape our fictions so our fictions can then condition our real-life leadership decisions—is for Bissell nothing less than life itself. And indeed, it is life that we seek in telling our stories, an informed, principled, and effective life that promotes other life rather than the business of ending it.

How far are we willing to go in our expansion of that commitment? We return here to Tony Seung's "connectome," mentioned in Chapter 4 ("What Is a Self?"), as a potential avenue to neural immortality. Similarly, Martine Rothblatt's *Virtually Human: The Promise—and the Peril—of Digital Immortality* (2014) focuses on mind-clones as logical and

[16] Tom Bissell, *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter* (New York: Pantheon, 2010), 38.

scientifically plausible extensions of our individual consciousness. A lawyer, technologist, and medical ethicist, Rothblatt is also the founder, chair, and CEO of the biotechnology company United Therapeutics. All of the themes that *Blade Runner* addressed in the early 1980s surface in her work, including (1) the importance of recognizing virtual life forms as equivalent, once adequately engineered, to naturally generated life; and (2) the inescapable link between democracy and human rights, regardless of the life form that we invoke.

Rothblatt also brings back the utopianism that Nourse expressed in his work, even behind the partial dystopianism of *Blade Runner*. Like the replicants of Scott's film, she sees the potential for, indeed the inevitability of, revolution. A confessed Darwinian, she comments:

> Whoever creates the better futures will get the better prizes (including survival). Better minds are needed to create better futures, resulting in a cerebral "arms race" that has culminated in today's human mind—the first to use upward of one-third of a body's energy to do its magic.[17]

Or, more colloquially, she concludes: "**Humans Adapt. It's What We Do**" (bold text in the original).[18]

There's much to disagree with in Rothblatt's book: Are we really born blank slates? Does Maslow's hierarchy of needs really describe the way humanity works? Will human beings ever willingly embrace their very substantial similarities rather than celebrate their minimal genetic differences, a tendency in human beings that no less an expert on humanity than former U.S. president Bill Clinton, citing the human genome project, noted with some dismay?[19] Rothblatt's "unity in diversity"[20] is essential to any future peace, but we may be less malleable than she needs us to be in order to bring virtual humanity into the fold of rights-endowed beings.

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[17] Martine Rothblatt, *Virtually Human: The Promise—and the Peril—of Digital Immortality* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014), 94.

[18] Rothblatt, *Virtually Human*, 169.

[19] "Former President Bill Clinton Class Day: Harvard Commencement 2007," June 6, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY4rz_ga5nM, at 00:19:26.

[20] Rothblatt, *Virtually Human*, 167.

Fortunately, the discussion of our future is not all about science as the various disciplines move through their successive paradigmatic shifts. Where science doesn't provide an adequate rationale for modulating our thoughts about and behavior in war, faith also helps. In a speech that would have gladdened the hearts and minds of Tyrell's replicants, perhaps sobered Chris Kyle into a broader view of the enemy, reframed the terms of engagement for the peacekeepers in Rwanda, and might still today cause good Catholics to pause over Edward Snowden's revelations, Pope Francis articulated a vision for the present that would give us a more equitable future, and not just in former U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld's "old Europe"[21]:

> Today, the promotion of human rights is central to the commitment of the European Union to advance the dignity of the person, both within the Union and in its relations with other countries. This is an important and praiseworthy commitment, since there are still too many situations in which human beings are treated as objects whose conception, configuration and utility can be programmed, and who can then be discarded when no longer useful, due to weakness, illness or old age.[22]

If we stopped seeing people as disposable, might we also achieve a more righteous, more just application of war? As personified by Pope Francis, the Church seems inclined toward such a goal, after centuries of offering all-too-often questionable grounds for aggression. With that established sanction, we may need to commit more consciously to the Golden Rule. It turns up in almost every culture known to humanity. The trap door in the standard Western version, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," remains our definition of "others." That said, we may now have the means that both scientists and the faithful believe we need to

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[21] "Rumsfeld, Myers Briefing at FPC, January 22, 2003." IIP Digital, http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2003/01/20030123102517simmons@pd.state.gov0.1734735.html#ixzz3oMSPY1Ek, accessed October 12, 2015.

[22] Address of Pope Francis to the European Parliament, Strasbourg, November 25, 2014, http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/11/25/pope_francis_address_to_european_parliament/1112318, accessed March 3, 2015.

achieve the peaceful rather than the armed alignment of our multifarious aims. Nation-state governments continue more or less successfully to work through the United Nations to address challenges ranging from climate change to population flows; non-governmental and non-profit organizations continue to proliferate, to address those and other more local causes; and social and other media have made the communication of individual initiatives a constant and lightning-fast event.

Finally, the American business community recognizes the positive press that can follow from valuing and repurposing the skills vets bring home with them and the real operational benefit such targeted recruiting can bring. The growing alignment in companies big and small of financial and social aims makes this a matter of principle beyond gratitude to our veterans. Examples of the strategy at its most visible include United Airlines, which now starts their flight safety videos with footage on the vets who work for the company. A year ago, in the same spirit, Starbucks' Howard Schultz and Rajiv Chandrasekaran brought out *For Love of Country: What Our Veterans Can Teach Us about Citizenship, Heroism, and Sacrifice*. The book tells the stories of a number of veterans who distinguished themselves while serving and the standards to which they held themselves. Schultz and Chandrasekaran also follow some of the vets after they reenter the civilian world, marking how they have continued the tradition of service at home. For the two of them, the mission is simple: "The effort to bridge the civilian-military divide doesn't take much—just a little curiosity and a willingness to reach out."[23]

In *War Stories*, I have offered a recipe for leadership that recognizes both the importance of discipline and *esprit de corps* and the problem and potential of the "other." Balanced leadership differentiates and then aligns individual, organizational, and systemic norms to include the wide variety of attitudes and behaviors that we call humanity. I have already said that embracing this process could reasonably account, all by itself, for the restlessness that seems to characterize Americans as a people, but it can also account for our hunger for order as it is formalized in our military.

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[23] Howard Schultz and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *For Love of Country: What Our Veterans Can Teach Us about Citizenship, Heroism, and Sacrifice* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 201.

On the right and the left, the challenge lies in our conflicting beliefs that (1) our individual choices express our free will, the option to choose; (2) our institutions channel our individual impulses toward a more rational collective behavior; and (3) whether we argue from faith or science, our intangible morals are innate and therefore represent no choices at all. It is perhaps our saving grace that we have devised or are born into feedback loops that give us the necessary cues about what we and others might consider appropriate and at least intermittently productive behavior, despite the contradictions that I've just described: the process is called socialization, with all its pros and cons, and it is not uniquely American. As a people, though, we have taken it to a whole new level: that is the story I have sought to capture in *War Stories* and one that I hope we can rewrite and retell with a sense of new possibility.

… When We Don't Fight

At the beginning of this chapter, I outlined my father's odyssey from Latvia to Ellis Island, the Bronx, and the University of Minnesota. Beyond that point, he went back to Europe to fight, and after some years as a journalist in the Midwest, went abroad as a diplomat to represent America. In that sense, his story is the story of many, many people who came, and still come, to this country in order to make their lives, but also to make the life of the country. Of his first year in America, I remember best a story that surfaces nowhere in the written record but seems to me to capture the immigrant story for all ethnicities and all times. As my father told it, he went to the home of one of his impoverished aunts in Brooklyn, who seems despite her poverty to have run a kitchen that was open to all comers day and night, year-round. One of her specialties was meatballs, each of which, my father says, easily weighed a pound. One evening he ate two and politely declined a third, to which she replied, offended, "What's the matter? Don't you like my cooking?" and so he had a third meatball. You'd have to know my father's appetite and palate, the latter discriminating but open to opportunity, to appreciate the constraint under which he must have felt he was operating.

Why do I remember my father's story about dinners in Brooklyn, and the stories about his lost family not at all? I know that he shared the stages

of his search for his mother and brother with my mother, who still today remembers where he and she were when they heard each of the various theories of what happened to his (our) kin. Among his papers, I found a letter from the International Red Cross informing him, in response to his queries, that they could not locate Lea and Gidal Hanukajef. A close American friend commented once that my father was "very bitter" in the years following the war, though the friend didn't explicitly tie that spirit to what my father by then must have known about his immediate family. By contrast, he was anything but bitter when he told his meatball story: rueful, perhaps, but mostly delighted at the absurdity of his situation and perhaps indirectly poking fun at his own appetite. Self-deprecation was definitely part of his repertoire.

It may have been more than a rhetorical strategy, though. I remember the story he did choose to tell, finally, in part because of what it is not about—that suffering, that bitterness, the fatal if principled decision that his mother may have made to end her life rather than let others end it for her—but also because it so deliberately illustrates so many things that are the antithesis of that absence and loss: setting forth and arriving; family ties; food and community; hierarchy and respect for one's elders; and the fact that he was poor and hungry and his hosts were poor and generous. It is also about joy. In an oral history written with my father's help many years later, Joanna Graudan, the pianist cousin who with her cellist husband rescued my father from wage slavery in New York, remembered the meals this way:

> Unforgettable were the dinners in Brooklyn, where Uncle Max sat at the head of the long, wide table, surrounded by his large family of children and grandchildren. The table was bending under the veritable mountains of food—large platters of fish, meat, cakes, fruit—all this was devoured by my cousins, washed down with bottles of Coca-Cola. Before Uncle Max there was a small plate with some bread and a little piece of cheese; he was dieting. It was a very jolly family—loud, good-humored, and very close.[24]

[24] Joanna Graudan, *Three & A Half Lives: An Autobiography* (1989), 51.

Who were these people, and how did they live day to day? Who would have thought they drank Coke at these palpably old-country repasts in 1940 to 1941? Why was Uncle Max so abstemious? And who got the tone of the family right: my father, who intuited a domestic tyrant in his aunt, or his older, wiser cousin, whose "autobiography" is a paean to music and the performer's life and a fervid thanks to the myriad people who helped her and her husband persevere? Was the challenge over the third meatball after all just a good-natured jibe, not a hostess's offended dignity? And if so, why did my father turn it into a challenge to which he had to respond? We don't know, and part of the memorable charm of the story lies precisely in the uncertainties that it generates, inviting us to read ourselves into it, to imagine what we would have done, who we might have been, and wonder, of course, who those other figures really were.

What these stories are not about is fighting. They do not dwell on that very real backdrop to the world they conjure up; they do not militate for the suppression of personality in the name of discipline and uniformity (and uniforms). This civilian life may have some of the sloppiness that Sebastian Junger believed his soldiers found so disquieting, but it also has the wealth of possibility that the replicant Rachael and the bomb squad's Sergeant Eldridge and football player Rod Tidwell sought to make their own, each in his or her own way. Their uniqueness is our uniqueness. It doesn't occlude our own, it enhances it, and we respond to the invitation by communicating a shared experience of difference.

This is much more than the difference of reality TV. It is plenitude, unfolding beyond the actors' control against a backdrop of the "affidavits" of death. It is a juxtaposition of joy and horror that has not been concocted in a studio and for which we cannot find the coordinating authority who will guarantee a suitable ending. When faced with *this* reality, we choose to forget, in many cases *must* forget, in order to go on. Yet these people did tell what they knew, and their stories then inspired the stories of those who had the time and inclination to shape their material for a wider audience. The literature of the Holocaust is superabundant, and the literature of succeeding holocausts not much less so. It all takes root in simple stories, which turn out not to be simple because they are a shorthand for entire lives and worlds—real lives and real worlds—that are in

jeopardy but somehow survive. They survive because people made choices that became decisions, personal preferences that proved over the long term to have implications for many, many people. That magic represents the magic I have tried to capture in *War Stories*, stories that represent it and that we share as we move toward our American state of grace.

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Leigh Hafrey

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Leigh Hafrey is a senior lecturer in ethics and leadership at the MIT Sloan School of Management. He has taught at Harvard Business School and served as co-master of Mather House, one of the undergraduate residences in Harvard College. Hafrey is a senior moderator for the Aspen Institute, an international educational and policy studies organization focused on values-driven leadership. A former staff editor at *The New York Times Book Review*, he has published translations from French and German and reporting, essays, reviews, and interviews in *The New York Times* and other periodicals, as well as blogs and cases for MIT Sloan. He is the author of *The Story of Success: Five Steps to Mastering Ethics in Business* (Other Press, 2005).

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